

women at the bar

by Jerry Ratch

"First I had two men in my life," she says. "Now I have no men in my life." And I watch her adjusting a strap to keep her shoulder bare. It's the aspiration of flesh to beauty that is keeping us alive. Cool and warm pastels above her bare arm, warm red and blue in the shadows under the cheekbone, as she reaches back to adjust her strap. Oh, and the bulge of her breast! The colors in streaks side by side, so that the eye must put them together in this muted light.

And I am waiting. She's late, she won't be here. I stop breathing when she arrives, gliding along on her sexual axis. The soul is in her eyes, the animal is in her body. I come back to my senses. Clocks work again.

And I hear the howling of the animal. The howling of the animal!

Is it possible to view the chic women differently, as they descend the staircase in a long dress, not undressed anymore, as they used to be. Is it possible to stop undressing them? How? Picture them in a different light maybe. Or wearing lipstick. Their hair done up in a swirl, with some curls hanging down at the neck, as she reaches back to adjust her strap. But see them again, and the bulge at her breast, as the nudes keep descending the staircase, as in a painting.

