

I see other women

by Lillian Ann Slugocki

I see other women dancing before your eyes. The possibilities. I do. As you entered me, on top, your eyes closed, I saw them. A panorama. When you left the house, I remained in bed, completely naked, slippery between the damp sheets, but....untouched. And this more than anything is what is most painful. To feel so alone and untouched even with your tongue down my throat, your arms on my breasts, so deep inside of me. And ashamed that when your fingers sought me out, I was not wet at all. Embarrassed and sad at losing the formula for arousal, the elixir of passion. A cold, cold witch, barren, like the women in fairy tales. The princess, now the old queen, barred from the hive. Our friends think we are the perfect couple, but I think in silence, "Yes, but I am frigid." That is the terrible secret I carry in my heart. Because, there is nothing wrong with you. You still get hard. That is proof of your passion, of your love, of your desire to make this work. But I do not get wet, I am not "juiced up", I am not aroused. And my dreams don't count because people fly in dreams, descend down to hell in dreams, people do impossible things in dreams.

After you left the house this morning, I sat outside at my cafe, because the day felt preternaturally warm, the harbinger of spring, right? So I took some joy in that, or rather felt a measure of peace. I wished for someone to drop a red rose at my feet, a token, a talisman of passion. I wished that a tall dark stranger would enter my life, enter me, and wash away my fear that my sex is frozen, encased in a glittering block of ice. Move me, melt me down. More and more, I feel that the mirror is not kind to me.

More and more the light has to be right. It has to be soft, pink, it can't be over-head lighting, it can't be fluorescent. It can't be so muscular. Thirty-nine is not an easy age to be not on this precipice. All this should've happened years ago when I still had a chance at

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redemption. And then I forgot about love and the lack thereof, and became passionately engaged with the movement of the clouds over my head, shot through with sunlight. As the day dropped off into the horizon, I watched them form and re-form again and again. It got colder and I still sat there. I willed time to stop moving. I could not face the empty house, the unwashed dishes, the unmade bed and your absence. I wanted to sit there forever, meditating on the symbols inherent in the sky, because surely there must be meaning there?

When I return home, there is a message from your mother. For once I am glad to hear from her. You are enjoined to visit your parents, assist them in the sale of their condo. We smile the whole time you are packing, but they are smiles of relief. After I bundle you off in the cab, with promises to call each other constantly, I realize it is Sunday. I have nothing to do. I am so happy to have the house to myself; a reprieve.

Condensation slides down the kitchen window, while off in the distance church bells ring. Steam heat sizzles inside the pipes. My head reels. It is extraordinary, this morning is extraordinary. My head reels. My eyes are bloodshot. My head reels but a small prayer is answered: You are gone for a week. What bliss to step out of the bath, out of my clothes, and into bed without a disapproving audience. What bliss to make coffee and sit here, at the computer. I wear only my pink brassiere, a faded pair of flannel pajama bottoms, my head a rat's nest of dark roots and gray hair. Dark circles, no make-up, chipped nails, yes, say it!! A veritable witch.

I wish the river outside the window would over-flow, come roaring through this apartment, and wash everything away. I wish a hurricane or a tornado would flip me over so I could land upside down. So I could plant begonias in my twat and fuck every stranger I see on the street. So I could wander the streets like a crazy woman muttering poetry by Yeats or Pound or Eliot. Unwashed,

untethered. The joy, forgive me, forgive me, of not having your unsatisfied sullen face before me is wondrous to behold.

Today I am not the ice queen unable or unwilling (I'm never sure which) to give you a blow-job, perform a strip show, totter on high heels to stir your libido or breathe life into mine. I am just what I am...unwashed. Just a woman. Listen, I peer down at my tits, and I think: These are still young tits. Firm yet ripe. Surely there is a mouth or two left on this planet who would enjoy sucking on them. Perhaps from a champagne glass?

I know the price I will pay for this. I am sure that there will be a price to pay for this exuberance. I know this must be the high before the big crash. Please, I am not naive. I remember thinking when we made love; his cock is such a perfect fit! It is like a key that has been made to fit my lock. Together, we were smooth, shining and oiled. I used to wear a crocheted bikini around the house and I felt like such a dirty girl, dirty but delicious. I used to wait for you to come home wearing a long T-shirt, pure white, with nothing on underneath. I couldn't wait for you to slip your hands up inside me. I didn't even want to speak to you, didn't even have time to say hello. There is no time to say hello! Just do me. Immediately! Right here on the kitchen floor. And then with our last five dollars we'd go down the corner bar for beer and peanuts.

It is Sunday morning and you are out of town for five more days. While you are gone, I am trying on my new identity. I am giddy with the possibilities and also half-crazy, more than half-crazy, two-thirds crazy. And the worst part is I still love you. I have never have stopped loving and I am afraid that I always will. There is a very good chance that as the sun sets on this Sunday, as I shower, wash my hair, brush off the crumbs from the bed (as any sane person must do), I will end the day the same way I ended the day yesterday; my head buried in the pillows, desperate for your smell, your touch, your laugh, your smile. But right now? Right this minute? I am an

unwashed witch, music blasting from the stereo, and in just a few moments, I will be dancing by myself in the middle of my dirty kitchen, deliriously free.

