

figaro's christmas eve

I felt a tenderness that led me to caress everything: book spines, knife edges, cat's snouts, pubic hair, ice prisms, moldy cockroaches, dog's tongues, sable furs, maggot-infested wounds, and crystal balls.

My hands touched something cold and disgusting. First the ears, then the nose, and then the eyebrows of the body of a man about fifty years old, horizontally foreshortened in a tight cinematic close-up that could just as well be a large painting. The man had one eye half closed, the other, glassy, wide open, and a sickly week's growth of beard. Instead of shoes, he wore black socks of very poor quality, with holes at the heels and toes. His head was recently shaved, and his already macabre humanity's only cover was a lady's overcoat, impeccable, without a single wrinkle, the overcoat of a tailor-shop mannequin, too long for the dead man, leaving free only his feet. Sewn to the side of the coat was a piece of paper on which could be read: "M.A., unmarried, 16 years of age, unknown."

All of this amidst two rows of place settings, on the white tablecloth of a dining-room table set for the great Christmas Eve supper. The raggedy feet grazing the whiteness of some coconut cakes, and the lightweight architecture of a puff-pastry castle; one hand, with dark, curved nails, half-submerged in a dish of whipped cream.

On a nearby table stood several bottles of champagne and a splendid hog's head, with long tusks that looked a bit too much like the dead man's incisors.

Its horizontal position lengthened the cadaver's stature a bit, but in any case it couldn't have measured any less than two meters.

It couldn't have been brought there without great effort. Not to mention placing it on the table, without overly disrupting the complicated rhetoric of the banquet. All that remained now was to separate the head from the trunk, and none of the ornate silver knives cut well. The fear of having to invest more time than planned began to distress me.

I was filled with a tenderness that led me to caress everything: door knockers, stair railings, rotten fruit, gold watches, sick-bed excrement, electric light bulbs, sweaty brassieres, horse tails, hairy armpits and bloody chemises, nipples, crystal glasses, beetles, and lilies, naturally moist.

Though I only caressed the ears, the lips, the cheeks of a man whom I had murdered hours earlier in his own room, in order to substitute a more classic head for his: the final whim, on Christmas Eve, of a woman with red hair and ample thighs. For whom I had gone as far as murder. And who waited, meanwhile, voluptuously, my imperious return to her house, bearer of the magical supper, in which I would be at once butler, butcher, and besotted guest.