

Chapter X

Shivaree Bewitchery

TSK it a tasket and somewhere the uninvolved are truckin' on down the avenue, not being figuratively unfrocked and literally depantsed here. *Jangle* go the pants (keys, coins, belt buckle) and *pluff* goes another record onto the stereo stack. *Click crackle hiss* and then the latest from Stevie Nicks singing *La la la la la, la la*, in the wildhearted twilight dreamtime. Stand Back. I Will Run to You. Nothing Ever Changes.

Break out the belladonna, lady: here and now it's no shirt, no shoes, no service.

How would the old you be handling this?

Well, for one thing it'd be YOU doing the handling, the unfrocking and depantsing, the managing of buttons and zippers and such. Hamhandedly perhaps, but at any rate upperhandedly; taking and having the advantage instead of being taken and had. So this is what passive compliance is like, as seen from the inside: stretched out here on the discarded huckaback like a neck-wrung feather-plucked cold dead rooster. With the Lady of the House standing over you, preparing to perform nameless kitchen abracadabra.

(Not among your top-forty adolescent fantasies.)

Brace yourself for the final phase—the chicken-choking *coup de grâce*. She reaching in, wrenching out your heart and holding it aloft before your very eyes, still beating, still beating like the proverbial bat out of hell! Exposure; immolation; obliteration—all thanks to the banshee's malediction. And this at the hands of one who's already knocked you down, sat on your chest, proven you can bleed. She laying you out (again) spreading your eagle

(again) surveying you through lenses glinting green and yellow in the candlelight from those many-scented tapers, so there's even a fresh-wax aroma (again)—

ZAP.

FLASH.

(Are you ready to *rrr rrr rrrumble?*)

She shrugging off your bearskin. Tossing it aside like a seventh veil.

So this is what compactification is like, as seen from the outside: bare essentials exemplified. Yes, it stands to reason that a worthwhile angel would *not* be some long-waisted flat-bottomed no-bosomed fashion model, nossir—an *authentic* angel would have (as she herself phrased it) the Boobs and the Buns and the Legs. All scrunched down into a trim little tight little NIFTY little package: the Cutiepie Manifesto!

Some might claim the exact opposite—who else but a she-devil, a babe of Babylon, would be so fittingly arrayed? Complete with Li'l Hot Stuff exaggerations hither and thither that, if anything, only make you gape the more?

Same difference. Stripped to her be-all and end-all, she is (in short) a spellbinder—an enchantress, like the sweet Welsh witch singing now about seeing shadows against the back of your mind oh baby.

Yes, curtains and casements left open to the night air, to admit the gloaming breeze that causes candlelight to oscillate and frizzy hair to undulate—oh my God she HAS come to do for you! Not as old Mrs. 'Iggins but Circe, Medusa, an Aztec executrix with an obsidian knife! Her colorful huckaback serving as a slightly damp altar cloth—absorbent, you see, to soak up the bloodletting! Let your teeth start to chatter for it's not early September anymore but late February again, for a few more hours anyway: Leap Night in another clime and place and there SHE stands, rosy mantle fading, pallid-wan and all a-shiver, hair and eyes resuming their shiny blackness, their brittle fragility, and her touch—

—her touch—

—*click crackle hiss*—

—is like static electricity, but more fluid; shiver-me-timbersy, double-dash-of-liquorish. Calling to mind that tipping hodcarrier who fell down and broke his crown but

had a noggin of poteen scattered over his corpse:

Tim revives! see how he rises!
Finnegan rising from the bed
Says “Whirl your whiskey around like blazes—
“Cushlamochree! d’ye think I’m DEAD?!”

As your own *rrr rrr rrrumble* gives sudden way to a whinker WHINKER BONK like an old steam radiator after a long summer hiatus, or an out-to-pasture man-o’-war hearing the bugle sounding chaaaarrrrge—

So this is what engorgement feels like, from the inside, on the outside, after two, three years. (Who says you don’t grow cucumbers?)

It stands to reason and up she looks with the triumphant delight of a co-ed who’s singlehandedly unclogged a dorm drain for the very first time. Zootsuited flashdancy facefissure WHEEEEE; gone is the guise of the muted banshee. Undo the hoodoo, nullify the hex; be dumbstruck no more.

Kiss the one-eyed frog. Restore him to royal membership. Ensheathe him in full latex panoply.

With a flourish she doffs her glasses then, revealing a luminous sky-blue regard.

More discreetly shedding her Holy Week padding, not entirely finished with but hey! you gotta clear the way if you wanna serve the consommé. Bottom line? A slight timely trickledown, petite like everything else about her, but more than enough to transfuse you—
 —as she hops aboard—

—Beauty astride the Beast—

—down and down she goes, round

and round she goes; and here come the black magic giggles, felt before heard:

HEY PEYTON! WATCH ME PULL A RABBIT OUT OF YOUR LAP!

“Again?”

(And again, *and* again—)

