

Slander and Neutral Zones



Gossip, Felix Vallotton, 1902

Slander

Since I will be taken to court for exposing names,
please allow me to use metaphors to intimate
the megalithic rumors that have hounded my fame.

I cannot be the mistress of King Henry the eighth,
who had been dead for hundreds of years.
My head has not met the inevitable end
of being severed by the executioner's hand.
I have not the beauty or purple blood
to make me eligible for a monarch's lust.

With the wealth amassed from a teacher's job,
I have not purchased a spaceship or a yacht
to transport me to work.

It's true I once ceased my vigorous walks,

but no withdrawal symptoms were involved,
or reclusive inclinations to become a monk.
I simply sat and wrote the plot
of a novel that decries slanderous folk.

The Loulou Spitz I take on strolls
is a kindred soul and nothing more,
nothing that mirrors your filthy core.

Neutral Zones

I would like to dwell in a neutral zone
and take no sides in rows at home
or feuds at work.

And where can I find a zone immune
to the schism that various colors enthuse,
be it physiognomical or of a religious hue?

The needle of the compass is now imbued
with class distinctions,
with the well-to-do,
a geographical segregation
that distorts the essence of being a human.

I would like to breathe the air that's pure,
no right,
no left,
no extremist views,
in a zone of absolute, egalitarian rule.

In a Huge Top-Drawer

He keeps his future in a huge top-drawer:
a pair of tinted, contact lenses
meant to enhance an amorous gaze
for an ever-tarrying first date.

A bottle of perfume has slumbered for years
next to an aftershave, purchased in a sale,

all hoarded for a prospective, nuptial day.

A breath-freshener flavored with mint
lies next to a pamphlet on how to kiss.

In an elegant envelope lies a certified will
in which he details his funeral bills,
a plot with a view,
a dark-blue suit,
and an epitaph with a quotation from *The Moody Blues*.