



DELIAN
by
Terence Sellers

DELIAN

One

“The Diary of the Valet Renard”

I was born under the protection of the Baroness Rothschilde, as both my parents were in her service; to be in service is the calling of my family since 1740. In a few of the great Houses of Parisian society I have held the position of valet. My taking the position as Master Valet to the great couturier Delian was considered a bit outre by my two Aunts, who hope still for a more conventional position for me. Both of these venerable ladies' companions comfortably reside with la Duchesse de Broglie and her three daughters. A sumptuous life they do lead, but mine the moreso - in the pure contemplation of the actions of a genius at Work.

If I affirm that my Lord and Master Delian is one of the great modern aristocrats, I do not mean that he is actually of blue blood. That distinction has unfortunately become meaningless. Delian's imperium lies on an entirely unique plane. We agree that the depredations of filthy lucre have undermined the honor and spiritual strength of what elite class is left; Delian now helps restore it.

But this genius is not even French, as am I. Worse still, he was born an American. But he has been able to acquire all the Arts, not to mention a flawless accent - this in itself proving he is no idle being, though he labours in that idlest of contexts: fashion.

Through that famously mysterious dual function within his Superior soul, my Lord Delian is, at this moment in time, the winter of the year 2011, in Paris, the most exacting of cities... THE most highly revered of fashion-designers. Renowned for both for original vision, and the uncanny power he wields when he models one perfect ensemble in each of his shows, Delian is a very rare genius, both creator and his own subject - both couturier, and his own sublime mannequin - entirely self-created, from some obscure yet vital American mud.

This visionary artist I have the privilege of calling my Lord and Master.

I may also satisfactorily state, that on this day of my twenty-seventh birthday, that I, Renard Beaumont have attained my heart's one desire. For some time now I have considered the necessity of keeping a diary: for it seems to me

my life is very charmed, and I fear it cannot last. So I mean to start writing it all down - how I live - of what happiness my life is made - so I might one day remember every perfect detail.

(For this grace must eventually abandon me to my innate banality.)

Most people live out their lives without achieving anything. Or they aim towards the wrong end, and finish in slovenliness. Or, more tawdrily still, they never love anyone - and so does no-one ever love them. But I do love the most perfect of men, though I am not loved in return. Nor has this love been corrupted by any carnal enjoyment, no! Yet still I want for nothing, have been only happy for four years now - ever since the employment agency sent me to him.

Two

On the surface it may seem that I am leading but a minor key of a life; the vulgar mind observes me to be a mere servant to one of the great artists of our modern era - yes, I am only Renard, butler and valet to the Maestro Delian Bellechasse.

But I tend to him - serve him as he requires - and he requires me for everything - dare I say it. And such as I am, I of course do not imagine I am any kind of 'mate' for such as he -

Living in his presence, I have come to comprehend well there is a price to pay in manifesting so potent an individuality: that there may be no such thing as a mate for such as he.

So do I rest content that he is a congenital solitary, that I may 'have him' to myself.

This afternoon when I brought him his tea, which he will have served like a proper Englishman... as I came into the Salon as silently as he wills me to - I saw him as if for the first time. No doubt that perspicacity is a function of my decision to write this life down, to describe the perfection that is my existence with him. I see more - what I see is surcharged with a new beauty, over-heightened, hyperaesthetic. I only pray my eye upon us does not change us.

...I saw my lord Delian as he always is, staring into space, or rather, hyperspace - the great, glowing screen above the rococo mantelpiece. In mute contemplation of his Ideal, as the long, articulate hand waves seemingly idly over the engraving paten, setting yet another vision into the harddrive.

...the image of that vast, always darkened room, the Louis Quinze chairs wrapt in severest gray leather. In this room, constructed in the early 18th century and stripped, like the day it was made, to its original naked wood - it was as if I had, in one blink, stepped into that room when it was new, three hundred years ago. The colours of the dusk light, ineffable watery grey of Parisian winter light, I knew these colours rested on elegant furnishings then. But now the light is infused by the flickering gold and sepia of the strangely living computer screen.

I saw him again (as does the world) as uncannily imbedded in the eighteenth century - which aligned with a rigorous modernity and pragmatism, creates that new beauty known popularly as 'La Belle Moderne'. But that 300-year distance in aesthetics translates as well, for me, into an emotional distance.

I knew at once how alone he was. One aristocrat amidst a sea of rabble. Despite all his honours, his wealth, the grand notoriety: he is alone. A rarity unparalleled, untouched, impervious...

yet he is unloved.

The vulgar age falls away from us as I place the tea-service just so, and see to serving him. In his acceptance of this emanates the deepest calm - that heralds the resumption of the most proper, ancient hierarchies.

Not the faintest tremour of any false 'shame' on my part, to be a servant - but honouring my place as right and just. No false 'embarrassment' either on his part, at receiving a refined attention - that so perfect a being as he is properly heir to.

As I bent over his divine head, darkly glowing; as I glanced again at the incomparable profile, my eyes filled with tears. I have been in his service for four years, and still have not developed a resistance to the effects of his beauty.

And I write these words out of an overflowing joy, almost insupportable, I feel the need to write it all down, to no longer be selfish in the pleasure I have, but to leave an intimate record of this genius' powerful effect upon one very close to him... for I am in fact the only person, in four years, who has been in constant contact.

In this poor way will I reflect to the world what love he is capable of inspiring, to silence his critics who say he is inhuman, cold - some even say he might be an alien, (as some have been found to live amongst us...) This diary must silence them, increase his fame, and show my gratitude.

He is almost too famous... and I could do quite well for myself by publishing all I have observed of him, the doings of this house, his daily habits. But never would I turn this love to filthy lucre. These words are my

self-sacrifice, and when I am quite dead, the one who finds this diary may do with it as they will.

But if only one person should read this diary, it would have to be its inspiration, he to whom I owe my transfigured life and every joy - Delian, my Lord and Master.

Three

How did this celestial being come to be made flesh? Through what miracle am I blessed to know him, and Joy?

So now I shall - I must describe him.

He stands taller than even the average too tall American, well past ___ meters. His form is all of stark angles, conjoined to surprising rounded moments. Hair of natural lustrous dark brown, he dyes it black which flattens its lights, so the long flow of it down his back can at times impress one as a painted wing... it springs most luxuriantly up from a broad brow marked by a pristine whiteness... and a slight hump (a genius bump, my old country-aunt would call it.)

His complexion remains quite pale, tinged with blue at the lips and eyelids. He always affects a certain level of macquillage - the eyes drawn round in black, at least, and the brows plucked and darkened in severe commas. Otherwise he has no brow at all, only a naked brow-bone over an eye I remark as 'feminine' in gaze - though I admit when I attempt to use such terms as 'masculine', or 'feminine' I become confused - as nothing is thus typical in him, but subtly admixed and thus created anew. This 'feminine' gaze, so tender and receptive, I might more accurately re-term as only myopic ... slightly teared, even 'mystic'...a gaze strangely, constantly serene, and mild, and completely disarming as it beams down from the aerie of his intimidating height.

Yet he is at the root of him a virile being, making his feminine accoutrements more compelling, serving to aggrandize their essentially masculine source... again, a strange daintiness in him acts as visual perfume, contradictory, disorienting, utterly seductive.

He has thin, balletic arms, recalling the elongations of a spider ... his breast gently swells into that famous shape of the adolescent girl's tenderest new bosom. He is shy of this formation, I have only seen a few times before he instantly covers himself. Needless to say it is never displayed; yet as mannequin it is apparent...

I have come to comprehend this hermaphroditism is the source of all his power and thus his wealth and influence.

His torso continues thin, flat-bellied but wide-hipped, though there is no flesh on the flaring hip, like some bone wing. The legs are slim and finely muscled, with strong thighs supporting a substantial but eminently male buttock

The eye is small, almond-shaped, and darkest hazel green; one's eye slips down to his utterly straight, perfectly pointed nose - perfect too because marred - broken twice as an adolescent by bullies too well-moved by his then no-doubt even more pronounced feminine ambiguity. This nose was set so well that only at one angle does one see the special assymetry - which does relieve the eye anyway after so much delicate perfection in feature -

I feel too exhausted now to try for his mouth ... though his mouth is the only part I have attained. He smiles readily, seems always slightly amused... (perhaps by me, by my eager subjection). He has a mischievous disposition at times. Those lips in themselves are a hermaphroditic conundrum, the upper thin, almost strict and flat, and the lower broad, and full and luscious to bite ...his lipstick doesn't seem to stay on for long...

...For he does love me a little, you see, and when he asks me to kiss him, I do so, quite readily.

I receive these few caresses gladly, I am blessed to have these slight attentions outside of my more proper and dutiful role.

I said at the commencement of this entry that I want for nothing. But perhaps that is not strictly true. For it doesn't really matter, you see, doesn't matter what I want. For that is only the stupidest reality, still, you see - what I desire... what is essential is what He wants, what His celestial Will might be as the new day dawns.

Yes, I am only pathetic, a slave in love with his Master, how ordinary. This minor key of a life: his minion. Yet it is my place, and I know happiness in fulfilling the precise function he has for me designed.

Four

Merci a Barbey d'Aurevilley

My Master is given to nocturnal wanderings, on which I accompany him always. Whatever the weather, he must have this constitutional. He loathes the daylight hours, and indeed to peruse Paris in the hours before dawn is a rare pleasure. The place is unsullied, then, by modernity. We once again breathe in the air of the ancient life, absorb the spirit of its earliest days of creation.

My Master in particular enjoys the denizens of those dead hours, the wastrels and rejects of the daylight hours. He feels something deeply in common with them, though it is hard to say what. Why whores and street urchins fascinate him so one can only blame on perhaps his attenuated tastes, his over-refinement, that craves every so often something totally disgusting.

After our travels have chilled us, we sometimes end up at a peculiar establishment, maintained by one Madame Laure. There an overflowing hospitality makes but a minor impression upon my Lord, who only goes to enjoy the view... observing Madame's proffered sweets, acrid beauties under glass - as so many hot-house flowers, letting them as they will shimmer before us, or, at a late hour, fade.

Delian is a favourite, of course. His fame crowns their desperation with glamour. But he worries them not, pays only to see them pose and chatter (though advising never on gowns.) He helps them drink champagne, which Madame dares not water down.

Let me tell of one strange adventure we had some few months ago.

We were passing along the Rue de Rivoli when we came upon a young scamp of sixteen or so... a pale-faced, shifty-eyed child, with still however the sweet unbearded face of a girl. We stood by the fountain before the rotting cathedral of Ste.Paul and observed the boy laboriously sucking away at a home-made cigarette, the paper of which had burst where the coarse caporal had cut it - cursing the stuff, the lad was rubbing kitchen matches down his thigh, streaking his dirty jeans with red sulphur. They would not light but for an instant in the whimsical breezes playing round that puny square.

Catching sight of us watching him, then staring as if disbelieving at Delian, whose perfection always elicits that doubletake of awe... the boy came up, affecting politeness, and touching his cap asked us for a light.

I laughed and remarked his cigarette was not really up to it, but before the red-faced child could rebut, Delian had snapped open his black lacquer cigarette case and was offering him one of his own scented Dubeques.

We then struck up a conversation of sorts with this "Auguste Lampoï" ... his biography could not have been more ordinary... he worked at making pasteboard boxes, and had lost his mother, though he still had a father who beat him when drunk, which was daily.

During this coarse, sad recital I could see Delian's thoughts were elsewhere than engaged in the rough bravado of this child's biography. No, he was busily 'detailing.' For all at once he invited the boy for a drink, and conducted him with some urgency to the nearest cafe where he was plied with a strong, sweet hot rum punch - which the young degenerate, a congenital drunkard we understand, downed very readily.

But the entertainment seemed about to end... the child drank his liquor without a word, when my Master broke in, "Look here, would you like to have some fun this evening? I'll pay the piper..." Thereupon was the boy spirited off with us to Madame Laure's.

As usual an assortment of pretty girls decorated the third floor of the old house in the Rue Mosnier. Their series of rooms in varied reds were diversified by circular mirrors - one of which offered a two-way view.

Petrified with surprise our Auguste kneaded his dirty cap in his fingers, and stared with round eyes at the battalion of women, whose painted lips exclaimed all together:

"Oh, little lad! Sweet, sweet!"

"But tell us, my angel, you're not old enough yet, surely?"

Quite at his ease, and very much at home, Delian was speaking in a low voice with the Madame in a corner...then turned to the child to say,

"Don't be afraid, stupid, come now, make your choice... it's my treat," and he pushed the boy gently towards a divan, onto which he fell to a klaxon of hilarity from the whores.

I must say this plot of my Master's sickened me... I thought it no happiness to introduce this child to such rareities... to ruin a boy's taste for the precious fruits of love, with these obscenely sweet flavorings wherein dwelt a specific sick aftertaste.

But that was Delian's intent - to ruin.

"Make your choice, boy!" The child struggled to stand, and straightaway tripped and landed between two sumptuous cushions of female flesh. He grappled against one, who with a gesture that could only be described as lugubrious, scooped the young male up and dragged him off to her lair.

Madame smiled knowingly upon my Master, who gave her only the coldest stare in return. He understood well she considered him an invert, as he never himself indulged. She treated me with even less consideration, as a kind of fob appended to the elegant wallet that was Delian. The presence of the boy made sense to her perversity, assumed the proportions of a vicarious thrill.

"There're so nice when they're young," the Madame tried.

My Master subverted her presumption. "Young is not enough. There is a specific psychology within that body. I sense the boy has it..."

"And what psychology do you speak of?"

“That of the assassin.” Madame visibly started. “First he is of that age where the blood boils most furiously. He might chase the little girls of the neighborhood and bring down their flowers, and in time hook up with one little specimen. Ordinarily he would then have tried to have that simple pleasure in love and marriage that even the poorest may know.

“But I have changed all that. By bringing him here tonight, plunging him into luxury - the existence of which he had never even suspected - I have made the strongest of impressions upon his sensuality: that of the availability of orgiastic pleasure, unattached to sentiment.

“Should I decide to repeat this indulgence every week, say for half a year - have him acquire the habit of these pleasures, substantially providing the means of enjoying them - and then, suddenly withdraw my ‘subscription’?

“I guarantee he will be robbing passers-by within a week for the money to have his pleasure again!”

“And one fine day he will meet with some resistance from his victims, someone will catch his hand as it reaches into the well-lined pocket ... his rage and impatience will easily kill the one who thwarts him in his apparent Will.”

I suppressed the urge that I felt rise up in myself (and in Madame Laure, as I could read her eyes) to contradict my Master’s take on the education of the masses. But it is one of his manias, and brooks no argument - that to force open the eyes of the rabble-poor with education only results in their seeing the terrible inequities: riches gained without merit; their own inability to rise, except through crime; pleasures keen and brightly gilded and impossible to come by, except through crime.

In short: the acts of crime are the freedom of the poor.

And that pain the Superior inflicts? The more the poisonous ideas develop, the pain grows greater and more poignant - being the first effect of their betters’ ‘education’ of them. The more the rulers endeavour to polish the intelligence, and refine the nervous system of the poor and unfortunate, the more are developed the germs of moral suffering and social hatred.

Five

My Master Delian has not always been a celibate and libertine. There once was a Woman in his life - the painter Therese Malcroix, a strange and powerful woman whose biography is only beginning to be widely known. Her Death I think was a mercy to him. Or so it is my opinion. If he speaks of her it is always with a slightly vacant tone, is it regret, or guilt? - still deeply affected he seems to be by her image. As if no time had passed at all, though she died some eighteen years ago.

This woman Therese was herself his age - 38 - when at the ripe old age of twenty he met her on the Boulevards. She was a painter, never famous, a hard-driven bohemienne, something of a drunkard, and still very beautiful, though 'blown.' when Delian was first ravished by her.

I know more of her than he has ever told me, as he keeps certain records of that time in his Altar-Room... along with her self-portrait. Far be it that he would ever have confided in such as I his one apparent passion.

The diary of his first year in Paris is sketchy, yet at moments delineates some shocking details of a wayward existence in this most ordered of cities. Even a lowly servant does not live as some of these tourists think they can. He only planned to be in Paris a few months... and, as far as he was concerned, was going to return to his midwestern mud-hole and the poor excuse of a higher education proffered there.

But through some prime piece of stupidity, he had allowed his passport to be 'borrowed' by someone for an illicit transaction in money-changing. So it was at the Cafe du Nord that he met the woman who was to determine the course of his life, irrevocably.

His name then was of course not Delian. I hate to say what it was ... the American sound of it unwieldy against the soul of he whom I revere...

My youthful Master had gone back to the cafe several times, like the proper victim he was, to find the friend of the friend he had loaned his passport to. Therese fairly lived in the Cafe, and the anxious, beautiful features of my Master, those of a celestial being, unreal and at the age of twenty wholly feminine drew her attention, and sympathy.

The diary entry after he met her is different from the others... a less careful handwriting deeply engraves the page, the strokes are longer and less even. His excitement is palpable ... as he writes that he has met 'a Goddess of Art'. I think that such goddesses only exist for youth of a certain age - which does not make them any the less real.

Her painting evinced an especial talent, though not a fashionable one. For an

American tourist she was definitely a rare creature, and for our beautiful young artiste manque a stroke of Fate. Delian would have been lost to France forever, had it not been for Therese's propensity to while away the afternoon over red wine and caporal... and talk!

Talk is an elixir of love, and talk they did, between furious bouts of love-making. Her mastery of Art History, her classical technique, had been burned into her fingers by the strict drawing-masters of the Paris ateliers. All of this she manifested through flesh (as well as her artistry) and every drop of it he absorbed, and was destined to retain: all the best of her as his own.

That he had almost no money left, and was even in danger of being arrested for vagrancy without his proper passport (in those days before the imbedded hand-chip) only made her more avid to have him. The more helpless that beautiful perfection, the more she loved him.

I have no doubt she loved him - how could she not? He is above all an eminently loveable creature, he magnetizes that emotion from the deepest part of us. Even if he never returns that love in kind... or perhaps because he never does.

So why do I say that her death was a kind of mercy to him?

Because I believe the greatest Art does not spring from any ground but that of the Solitary. It is my Work to hold him within that Hermetic seal, the elements of which I merge with his personal requirements. I draw the curtains round him protectingly... in Solitude, through whose sounding depths I drift noiselessly.

As had this Lady, early on. Being an Artist, she understood the needs of the Artist. The thrill she must have daily known to cultivate his fledgling soul! She 'spoiled' him, in the best possible way, created in him those aristocratic imperatives no artist can survive without!

As the benevolent Dominatrice of his soul, she sparked to his combined libidinous and creative drive; sounded out in him the principles of artistic discipline; guided his hand through the classical elements of drawing. These lessons he dutifully notated in the diaries, along with descriptions of her clothing, her hair, her mannerisms, her kisses. In spirit and in body, she rendered up to him the template of his Ideal, which has never changed.

She worshipped his youth and manhood as well, drew out the male to its fullest expression despite the fragility of his form. As she trained his male strength to gratify a newly resurgent lustfulness in her, he must have been daily challenged!

Before long, his diary entries speak of marrying her, and indeed he grew quite angry and almost left her when she laughed at this chivalry ... She was too old, she told him, for such nonsense. And besides, marriage was no suitable state for the artist to dally in, as it reeked of bourgeoisie concerns, threatened her with the idea of children, all the gross tedium of quotidienne

concerns that both lovers, and artists, must at all costs avoid.

So she instead mothered him, mentored him, made love to him and made a man and genius of him. She developed his incipient androgyny as well, and not only by having him pose for her dressed as a lady of the eighteenth century. There is one passage that cryptically refers to a certain embrace, whereby my Lord & Master learned more of 'the woman's role!'

These portraits of him as a woman are beyond breathtaking - but again, well-hidden in a closet in the Altar-Room, to which I am not supposed to have a key. Beneath the unbelievably beautiful female face smolders that full-flowering virile reality... god how I wish I might have known them then, served them in her little rooms in Saint-Michel!

She set him on his path to greatness and thus for me will ever be an ikon of holiness in this Temple of my idolatry for him.

Then she died, and quite suddenly, of a heart attack, leaving him her studio and entire life as a legacy with which he might venture forth, to be the Artist he was to be. By then he had spent a full seven years in the streets, cafes and studios of the true artist's Paris, where technique is honed, work is done, but gaudy Fame stays well away.

No-one would replace her, and well and good. He must count himself inordinately fortunate to have known such as she but once. At least the lovers avoided the banal tragedy of the 'fledgling' outgrowing the 'nest.' She died I must say in a beautiful, orderly fashion, like a true Parisienne, and left her greatest work behind in the new-fashioned person of 'Delian'.

Six

So now I will describe a typical day with my Lord and Master.

He keeps a vampire's hours, he sleeps very little - on some days no more than four hours. I am used to him falling asleep wherever he might be, as well. He naps like a true genius, twenty minutes at a time, and perks to fully aware. He is always up at twilight, having his 'breakfast' when the rest of the world is enjoying supper.

I sometimes find him, strange as it may seem, fully stretched out across a doorway. There is something about this collapse between two rooms that has a metaphysical significance... He told me once upon waking in the doorway between his bedroom and his dressing-room that the carpet suddenly looked 'so inviting'

Childish is it not, but betokens his especial inner freedom of soul...

If there is a social engagement to attend, the barber will be in to groom him. He no longer shaves, having been relieved long ago of gross masculine hair through the refinements of laser and the electric needle.

Often a masseur will be called after such an engagement, we have several on call. It never seems to matter whether it is a masseur or masseuse, for I do believe he enjoys only the most conventional aspects of such a massage ... though he prefers I do not attend him during the treatment. Usually the agency sends men of a physique I would term 'overbuilt', not the type to inspire any lust in such a refined being as he... though stranger things have happened (perhaps it is just such a contradiction... but no, I promised my Master I would not be jealous of these creatures...)

After his nerves have been thus attended to, he can settle in the best part of his 'day' - which begins around midnight, and runs through dawn and the early part of the morning. It is during these hours that the Maestro realizes the greater part of his Art.

I am meant to be asleep by then. That is our arrangement. Once the masseur has been admitted, I am meant to be in bed and asleep. For he needs nothing and no-one in those hours but the spirits that help concoct his visions.

But when was the last time I actually went to sleep? To begin with, I cannot sleep for thinking of those alien hands mauling, nudging, running all over his sublime form. This alone keeps me wide awake and itchy with irritation. Then, once the bestial personage has departed, I must sigh with relief and consider him swathed in a robe, staring out the window... and thus his genius in ferment. Only a few hundred yards from me! If only I might be allowed to sit at his feet as he works, and adore his every gesture!

How beautiful his face is in that concentration... the fervour of that creative spark in him, active and living. No I cannot sleep for thinking of him deep in that state of divinity.

I see I am wandering from my stated purpose, to describe a typical day with him. Well I must digress, for this point is too important to pass over without an elucidation I wish at this moment to grasp for -

How is it that there are some few amongst us who are able to transcend themselves? One can say that Delian is but a man like any other, - yet one would be wholly incorrect in so saying. For there is something in him - and what is it - that drives him to create.

And create he would, I believe, even if he did not make the very substantial sums his Art now renders up to him!

It is because he is possessed of a modicum of the divine, which I believe is a

physical, though subtle essence. Perhaps like a neurotransmitter, some minute excretion in, or of the brain that permits only one discrete function of thought. This Divinity he does not receive from without, but generates from within, elicited perhaps through a studied discipline. It wells up daily, in its unmistakable fashion, in such wise as I liken in my mind to a 'psychic erection.' It is indeed an Erection of the soul and the Will conjoined, an urgency to conjoin with the Truth he sees in his minds' eye.

I am completely ridiculous, what am I but a form of a flea trying to describe its massy host. I cannot grasp him, I can really know nothing of his inner life, the working of the power within him surging, that results in the most divine imagery.

Hence my own urgency to creep to his door, and spy on him... to try in this pitiful mute way to understand what a genius might be. Impossible, of course. That I am permitted to serve at his altar should be sufficient for me, I should put aside my flea's ambition to 'know' him.

So I lay awake, make a bad servant of myself, sometimes sleepy all day and forgetful. I am still expected to be up and about by seven AM, supervising the breakfast, seeing to his bath, perhaps, though if he is in a ferment he will not stop to bathe or eat what we prepare. This is the worst part of my day... not being allowed to knock, just waiting at the door for him to come to it, or call through it... and so renew my life again, in Him.

I have stood outside the door in perfect attendance sometimes until past noon. When he appears at last he is always charged up, full of promethean fire, at the greatest hyperaesthetic pitch, I am the first human he lights upon after his ascent, and often he begins straight off propounding some idea, or flourishing a drawing, though he never asks me what I think of it.

In Beauty and grandeur, he displays himself to the first audience at hand that there is Result, there is Life and Truth still emanant, that The Hand once again has made Manifest.

These strange hours of his are definitely part of the formula of his genius.

He knows by noontime, with the sun at its highest pitch (in competition with his Apollonian splendour) that he will be utterly spent. Thus he arranges to have his business appointments met and completed between 9 AM and 11. He is of course mentally at such a sharp and furious pitch that terrifies even his most adversarial business contacts. This mentality primed by the most extreme, most refined of pressures - while they are just awake, barely functioning, the caffeine still working its way towards their sluggish brains.

Some fools try, in vain, to get appointments in the afternoon when he would be in a weaker state. But his habits of sleep are common knowledge, at this point no-one would dare really insist he see them at such profane hours, anymore than he would ask them to drop by at 3 AM.

He wins his advantage in business every time because of this preternatural acuity.

By high noon he is deep in sleep, every drape drawn, the sound-machine on and lulling him away. But even if a sleeping drug is ingested to calm a particularly overactive state, he never stays under for more than six hours.

Well it is now six thirty in the morning and I must be up and about in an hour. Another day ruined by my obsession. Writing down these details is another form of slovenly servitude, a good servant would not write about his Master, I realize. But I cannot put this away, my feelings for him are becoming much clearer to me now, I cherish them, and I know there could not possibly be any other life for me, no other way but that of serving him.

Seven

“The Fashion Show”

I have not been able to write much for the last two weeks, being deep in the preparations for the Spring Collection. The House is full of others, every day and all day, even while the Master sleeps his peculiar hours. The regular back-up staff is here to see at each sitting to the care and feeding of dozens... it's a regular horde of parasites, all in the sumptuous shadow of my Maestro. I am more than ever loathe to share him with these admiring eyes, I know it's idiotic. He exists for them, for the public, for the world... not for his flea of a servant.

As always, there are the new mannequins of the season - crude, boisterous girls, full of themselves and trampling all and sundry... the mannequins of last season, those who still have hung on, are pathetically intimidated by them. I am always struck by how vulgar these gorgeous animals are. If only the general public knew how these paradigms of refined beauty act in private. The perfection of their features suggest the most angelic dispositions. Most of them drink too much... the Maestro knows about it, but I am only enjoined to maintain the liquor cabinet. His own high standards he does not inflict upon others.

The place is in short a madhouse. I am only happy I am not required to be on the actual scene of the Show, which this year rampages cross the revered Champs des Mars. These worldly forays would seem to exhaust him -

The thematic this year is again a variation on his grand obsession - the Eighteenth. He tries every few years to put the men back into the long frock coats, with the hose that show off the leg. He himself often affects this male

attire, in fact it is the only male attire he does deem proper to his aesthetic. You will never see him in one of those vile square suits, with the absurd string of a tie.

Happily one of the requirements of this job is to wear livery, which of course has not changed a whit since the Eighteenth. Though the Socialists may be appalled by the last of the aristocrats' "affectation" on this point, for me to don each day one of his designs, and always in his colors, silver and black - is worth all the wages in the world.

(In fact, I wish he would not pay me. I am paid too well, and after four years, I have saved an enormous sum, enough to retire on for life, really. it is absurd, I think, to pay a true servant. I do not need money, I eat from his table, I live in his house, I am clothed better than I ever could be from a shop. To receive the check is almost an insult at this point, like paying ones' brother. At one point I tried to not cash the checks, but he won't hear of my conceit... that I would work for him for nothing. I must find a way to rid myself of the money, I ought to find some charity, just donate the entire thing each month...)

Back to the Fashion Show ... I promised myself I would detail it, for Posterity of course. Oh boring Posterity, what a tedious imagination you have! And what fascinates me will most likely be discarded by you. But to be a footnote in his biography is all I ask.

This year Delian has gone wild on the subject of bustles. These modelling females who spend every day in the gymnasiums to reduce their posteriors to boards are to don bustles, and attract their prey with the illusion of a gigantic ass. Only heterosexuals could worship such a crazy illusion.

He enjoined me this morning with the reflection that he liked anything that held you away from a woman. Hoopskirts, enormous hairstyles, hats with big brims, long cigarette holders...

"I love the idea of being made to stand a few feet away... it so goes against this modern idea that we all must crowd together, 'live as One', appalling... The real luxury in our time is Space! My designs create a royal space around a Lady. Such a space even creates the idea of a 'Lady', as one who must not be grossly approached!"

He of course looks adorable in a bustle and hoop, how charmingly that exaggeration offsets his gentle curvatures. I love the crest of the high white wig on his high brow. Sacre Nom, I wish he would wear it around the manse, as counterpoint to my servant's livery! But such designs are only meant for evening, for a ball - not for sitting by the fire, reading a tiny book and having tea.

Sometimes I regret his field of influence. Fashion is such an idiotic pastime, not fit for anyone of a greater intelligence. To spend all one's efforts to the

end of garbing a few rich old carcasses, a gaggle of brain-dead socialites is I think a sad fate for such as he. There should be 'more' in Fate for him, I feel it, he must break out of this triviality, into another arena.

Eight

'The Appearance of the Double'

The rehearsal took place at midnight in the garden. The name of the Collection is 'Ombres'... This is carried through metaphorically as gradations of grey, beginning with a black ensemble, going through four stages of grey - charcoal, slate, Payne's, through dove - and ends in white. There was as well one pale celadon ensemble, astonishing in its radiance, very like the famed Chinese glaze, luminous from within.

(I admit to a certain lust for the pure white ensemble, a color such as I may never wear. It was a marshmallowy plush velvet coat, with the tiniest crawl of black passementerie around the shoulders.)

All wore matching patent pumps d'Orsay with diamond buckles. All the men wore diamonds... Already the stores have a trillion orders for such shoes... no doubt even our garbage-men will be sporting them on their evening brawls out.

The mannequins were beyond belief, unrecognizable as anything of this century - except for the sluttish behaviour - though that must have been a quality of past eras as well. The lady in black balanced upon a pile of chignons a top hat garnished in tulle.... her midnight gown was of stretch satin, ruched and bustled to the hilt. It took several weeks of hand-work to create this effect, after which the Vandal chose to teeter too close to a naked rose bush and tear it, just like the animal she is.

This 'Vandal' is the beast Ramona, who looks peculiarly like the Master. But she is a thousand kilometers from him in temperament. To begin with, she is the most drunken of the passel. She talks like an American, but is from one of the degenerate Slovakian states. As we know, those people have not the slightest self-control nor of self-reliance, still not over being babied by their governments. She tries to pass herself off as some kind of American, but she is probably just an Estonian peasant.

Her behaviour proves she has not the slightest concept of whom it is she is privileged to work with. Her disordered brain can't even begin to fathom such grandeur as he innately holds. The highest concept of 'excellence' she can muster is something along of the lines of a choice piece of rare steak, or maybe a very expensive car.

Things of the soul are not for such creatures' sensoria.

The lady in white was not much better, though she startled the eye as an apparition, a celestial bride fallen to earth... of course fallen is the word. And when the black and the white were placed side by side, about a thousand flashbulbs went off at once, as they drunkenly held each other up from behind by the bustles.

The metaphoric conjuncts he creates are beyond anything the vessels need do... they are only required for an utterly superficial input. Which is a good thing as their brainlessness, if apparent, would degrade everything.

One project my Master has been working on and perfecting is the Virtual Model, the perfected being. Created from enormous databases of eyes, limbs, hair, stances and expressions. Once this Being has been created, we can perhaps have done with these ghastly imperfect animals who leave lurid stains on the satin skirts... who rip the Aubussons with their stilleto heels. Who sacrilegiously paw at the Genius who grants them their only reason for living.

I regret to write I actually found that Ramona naked in the master's bed, dead drunk and passed out. It was extremely peculiar, given her resemblance to him, to see the full-blown breasts she has, on the same kind of thin frame...

I was able to move her before the Master came in. She had sneaked into the room to seduce him, apparently, imagining he slept at night as others do. But by the time she woke up he was in bed, behind a safely locked door. I easily weathered her dirty looks, secure in the knowledge that I understand well my Master's Will, and act upon it.

How could she possibly imagine he would want to engage in relations with her long, stinking form, saturated with alcohol, fed on toast, the ignorant slurring of her voice whispering in the angelic coil of his ear? Well an animal is an animal.

I must return to the Fashion Show... I should not be distracted, I must write this record for Posterity, so that those who come after know what a genius the Maestro truly was. Yes of course some fashion editor will write a 'pouff' piece, try to put his work in some ludicrous context, give the season a name, whatever. My point of view is both more objective, and more intimately subjective, I am the one who truly knows the interior operations of the genius at work.

For not only I, but the entire world adores how the Master Delian enters the show as his own Mannequin. Between the Woman in Black and the Woman in White emerges a Celestial Child, enrobed in a gossamer opalescent-grey toga.

Though his ensemble afforded to all the vision of one perfect Breast, he 'modestly' enclosed his chest in a stylized armour of acrylic. Gauntlets of the same material emerged from the draperies at his slender wrists. This gown, though classical, is utterly modern... from the silvery tissue his long, articulate arms extend,... his long black locks, dusted in metallic powder, are

flung upwards in a sudden, mad whirlwind, but held firm again as they fall by long silver pins in the shape of thunderbolts. He is son and daughter of the gods, indeed...

At his throat glimmered the great water-blue topaz, which refracted the pin-point ray of the blue laser directed upon it. This light is calculated to refract and blind, making it near impossible to see The Face.... as is proper for a God. If his makeup could be studied (hardly possible for 90% of the people) it would terrify and intimidate ... black lips, eyes painted dark red to the browbone, a long, overdone brow, and cheekbones highlighted in black...

He steps forward, and the skirt of the toga falls back, revealing the gazelle legs swathed in the typical male pantalon of the 18th century .. but again in the opalescent silk. His foot ends the vision in a bootlet... all of it evoking a queer and beautiful admix of the 18th and the 21st century. 'Calm, luxe and volupte' as the poet would have it, to me grandeur, strength and triumph of the will... and a definite restraint in sensuality, for the sake of Higher Mind!

This show will be talked of endlessly, until the next one. No-one tires of him, his ideas, his vision. Meanwhile the Demi Urgos himself will lie still, silent, incubating. His perfect loneliness is the quiet bed of Genius. I admire this exaltation of self-sacrifice in him, for the sake of perfected Art.

Nine

I have often observed to myself that the lot of the servant holds a secret reserve of joy - in the very pertinent knowledge we acquire, of our Lords and Ladies. Such an acquisition does in time lead us to the truth of the person - truth, one happiness the solitary has to console him.

Though my position to most may seem degraded, this pathetically modernity-obsessed era thinks only Total Individuality is the proper way to live. This is a specious concept. There is no Life without dependency, more or less pleasurable.

And how can I really be considered to be in a state of degradation, when I am in a position to hear:

"Darling, do you even like me at all?"

Even though it is the hyena Ramona who utters it, hanging over the back of his chair. Even though she has become his lover, unbelievable though that may be... at least I am in the position to know every detail.

Perhaps more than she, or even he knows!

(While My Lord is worriedly drawing his eyes closer to the glowing tablet, his hands flutters cross it, and on the greater screen over the mantle an elegant sleeve appears...)

Her paws impatiently worry the back of his chair. I remind myself to wipe it down. There is something about her so vile, I cannot help but want to clean everything she touches...

She is running her hands through his hair. Detestably familiar! He is irritated, but as ever too kind to rebuke her importunity.

And then I heard,

“Like you - Like you? I adore you, I cherish you!”

“DO you?”

But still the Maestro does not take his eyes from his Work.

A celestial compliment from the sublime man does not satisfy her. She must have more, more... now she is demanding caresses, worming her way into his lap.

You see, as a servant, I am so insignificant that this woman will make love to him in my presence. I observe the true nature of her relations with him, how loathesome she is in her squirming lust for him.

“I told you - “

“I need to hear it - again!”

“Cherish you. Adore you.” The beautiful spontaneity of the first avowal was gone.

“... do you hear me, now?”

And still his eyes never leave his Work. He has really too much to do before the next previews. She prevents him from working ... the printer was not running today. No finished designs left with the courier, who anyway arrived as of old at 18 H., faithful upon our doorstep... that doorstep I must hate as the entry point of the world and its pollutants.

The arched eyebrow of the lackey of the House of Herve said all too much.
“Nothing yet.”

As expected, soon after lackey's departure the telephone rang. Madame Pi was frantic to speak with the Master, though she did her best to suppress it. I had to tell her he was not in, again. Of course Madame did not believe me -

“Renard, where can he be?” The edge in her query was directed at me. “Renard, production MUST continue. The M’sieur MUST know that! I do not understand this strange reluctance, it is so unlike M’sieur... have you seen him at ALL?”

This last phrase was completely sarcastic. The world knew he never went anywhere.

“If he is not ill, he MUST be found - at once!”

But the bedroom door stayed locked all afternoon. The famous, near-mythic productivity of the Maestro Delian is grinding to a halt... thwarted by the caresses of that woman. How could I grossly explain it to Madame: “He is fucking it away!”

The explanation is too banal, too much of a downfall. I must and will keep the mythos intact. An exposure of all that is occurring between Himself and the hyena would disgust the world.

But from that point, I must loathe this diary, as it may stand as the only evidence ‘against’ him.

I wonder if I had not realized my Ideal in him so well, had not hallowed it in my unworthy, if sincere verbiage... (my eloquence does at time surprise me though it is no writerly skill on my part that makes this power, no it is but a reflection of his brilliance, spilling through the ink as an infusion of grace) if I had not enshrined him thus, would I have been as devastated as I am by this all-too-human ‘downfall’ into sex?

But it may be no downfall, but may be only a correction. Perhaps no human is permitted to go on being as self-sufficient as he was. It tempts the gods - and the demonesses.

This ‘correction’ of him - the addition of a female body into his environs — implies he was not perfect before. Would this infestation have come to pass, if I had not brought his intimate life TO the flesh, to paper?

I am beginning to realize there is something evil in describing perfection. Writing of it doubles it, thereby cursing it to duality. Thus began the degeneration of Godhead to multiplicity. At my hand, Delian has turned into something ‘other’ than just He whom I describe. I have made him an object for others, which, following a specific natural law, makes him more ‘owned’ by the world, and subject moreso to invasion. An invasion he held off well before, in the hermetic seal he - and I too - created.

I have betrayed him in writing of our life together. I destroyed our Solitude before ever Ramona did. I should not pick up this journal again. If I should consign it to the flames, perhaps Ramona will disappear.

PART TWO

“The Diary of the Valet Renard, Continued”

One

I burned the entire diary a week ago, but the pressure is too great. I feel I must record what is happening or I shall, along with my Master, go insane.

I am very sorry that document is destroyed! as it did relate the beginnings of his obsession. But there is nothing to be done. I attempted to exorcise the demoness in my own clumsy way, and it was a failure.

We intend to seek better-informed, outside help. We have friends well-versed in matters demonological. Highly esoteric aid for so delicate a case as my beloved represents...

So here I am again, writing on a piece of brown butcher's paper. The impulse cannot be restrained... Ramona did not disappear. The horrors must be recorded! Let me go and buy a proper diary again, this time a book with that paper that never crumbles. I must be the Recording Angel of his destruction.

Though I am presently the only one possessed of a mentality to fully understand the man, I am willing to share all information with the competent exorcist. In these days passing since I burned the document, I knew my place in his life - more clearly etched out than ever.

Two

I will try to recount some of the most salient incidents since my fit of burning...

Madame Pi accompanied by Monsieur Herve stormed the citadel here that same evening. They found their culprit at his usual 6 PM breakfast, happily without evil accomplice. Once again I was nonplussed to realize she had gotten out of the house without my noticing. She is a witch, a cat, an evil spirit...

A storm of recriminations poured upon Delian's deserving head. He was unceremoniously taken from table and herded into the salon, where he was impelled to boot up all his most current work. I trembled to see the Master

reduced to a naughty schoolboy. The persons of Madame Pi and Monsieur Herve became instantly repulsive to me...

But somehow there was a wealth of work, placidly resting upon the paten of his harddrive, for their greedy eyes to worship. What looks to us as effortless is for such as he a driving force, powerful and silent.

The working mood resumed to the usual busy hum. They analyzed his newest designs, made their choices.

It did seem uncanny that the Work they required was complete! Why had he refused the daily courier; why appeared he so indifferent to their summons? Because it WAS done. Because he worked like a maniac, apparently! so he could loll abed with his Mistress.

The group stayed in the salon until almost 4 o'clock in the morning, when I was awakened to prepare a breakfast for them.

At the moment it happened, I did not think much of it, but as I prepare to write of her appearance I feel a certain queasiness... again, I do not understand how she gets in the house without me. I do not dare ask the Master if he gave her a key, that would be presumptuous... though I suppose I must, just to show I am aware of the breach in security.

As I went up to his room during their breakfast (and my Master's dinner) to prepare his clothes for his last walk of the day, I opened the door to see Ramona sprawled across the bed, stark naked. Though I begged pardon and retreated, her lack of response was curious. She seemed to be staring into the canopy of the bed. She had not stiffened at my entrance.

The fact that she was asleep brought something out in me...

As it came to my mind that if I was such a nonentity as to warrant no attention from her, why not act as a nonentity, and go about my business as I had meant to?

I shut the door and cleared my throat, to again alert the Lady of my presence. Not a stir from the bed.

I went to the closet and took out the Master's morning garb... he likes to go out in the morning as a Lady, and he had requested the grey ensemble. A long medium Paynes' grey skirt of velvet, matching vest that falls below the hips. A sheer blouse trimmed in the aluminum lace he invented, patterned sharply 'Art Deco'. (Everything seems to aspire to that old modernity of 'Art Deco' in his collections recently...)

I found the matching velveteen boots and laid them out with the aluminum mesh stockings. And then, before I knew what I was really about, I went up the body on the bed.

She looks exactly like my Master - except for the female genitals, which I hesitate to say... but I ought to, for the sake of the record... the genitals which he was worshipping always nightly at this point... these genitals - were those of a female in heat ... fat, very red, moist and moving about as if with a life of its own.

If I didn't hate Woman at that point, the sight of this organism would have made the hatred very firm!

Tears came to my eyes at the thought of his perfect ivory self entering that pit... similar in disgustingness to a disemboweled sea-urchin... my tears obscured the rest of her body, which seemed to almost melt into the surrounding brocade coverlet, so my horror only increased at the idea of... just the genital, alone on the bed, vile and eminently crushable...

That was all he wanted, that thing, that sucking thing around him. That is what is destroying him.

But then again - though he has changed, his creativity is unimpaired. He is as anti-social as he ever was. He does not speak to anyone lately... only to It.

Three

Now realized through another form, in the 'actual' feminine, which is the basest form of feminine, the Ideal who is Delian is gradually degrading. The master seems to be growing more masculine - he is losing his androgynous frailty. I can see from stress-lines in his trousers and shirts he is getting larger, the musculature more pronounced.

She is turning him into a Beast.

Who is this person, why is she here amongst us? Did I create her, from my own fervent infusions of semen in his honour? Or did there coagulate in the astral, from a deep desire within him, a succubus?

I have loved Lord Delian long and faithfully, but she would be his only worshipper now.

They are planning to go on a trip, she insists, though the Master loathes travelling. I heard them arguing about whether or not I should come along with them. As if she could take care of such a god as he, on her own! She is dirty and unhygienic in her own person besides. I do not know how his fastidiousness tolerates it.

If she thinks the hired help in a first-class hotel would be sufficient to his needs! This proves how crass she is, how all her culture is purchased by money. Not that she has any money of her own anymore. She has completely stopped working, and all her expenditures are coming out of our accounts.

How can she dare uproot him, make him go to such a heinous spot as New York City? What is the point, what use is it for the Master to go to such a hell? He left the United States for a reason. Can he really wish to return to the scene of his former, lesser existence?

No - he doesn't. She want to go. Paris 'bores' her. She want to go to some infernal nightclub in Manhattan. She is a pestilent idiot of the worst type!

I heard the Master say, "This trip is not going to take place." He wants me to come along - she does not.

I only desist from doing anything against her as my Master loves her ... my Master loves her... my every cell revolts against these words, my hand does not want to make the letters, but I force myself, I must look at the truth:

"My Master loves her"

Perhaps he can eventually control and refine her. But I doubt it.

Four

The Lady Ramona has finally noticed she is not liked by me. My life is to become even more of a hell than it is already.

Once again I found her in the Master's salon, dabbling in his harddrive. The bright screen above the ancient mantelpiece shone with the revelations of the Master's newest sketches. She was looking through his files without his permission! How do we know she is not some agent for another couture house?

After observing her for a minute I cleared my throat and came in to dust... she whirled on me,

"Voila il y a l'ESPION."

Her french is so dreadful I can pretend I don't understand her. Foreigners hate that , when they try so hard to speak... And yes, I am The Master's spy. That is no insult at all.

The Lady is apparently some kind of savage. A species of Slav, degenerated peasantry, corrupted to a false affluence through the products of America. I thought she was American, as she insists on Coca-Cola at every meal. She downs

it indiscriminately with our choicest wines. She drinks only to get drunk. We might as well give her the swill Algerians guzzle on weekends, she would not know the difference. Though if the Master tasted what she was drinking, he would no doubt out of a sense of honour punish us for doing so... for unbelievably my Lord is imbibing too!

I think Maestro could be considering going to New York. I found some travelogues. He is held fascinated by this siphoning of his perverted American culture through the Beauty that she is. Why I could not tell you. It must be akin to the taste some highly-developed souls develop for vulgarity - it seems fresh to them. Horrors become a novelty.

It is appalling how a sexual attachment will neuroticize a person, develop in them queer sensitivities. Perverse notion that he who was the self-created, autonomous Seer is being dragged down into the banality of the breeding frenzy. I don't know how I can bear it, but bear it I must. For I am the one to bring him back to himself.

It is not just my jealousy as a 'reject', no, though he no longer looks for my kiss, nor caresses me slightly as was his wont. I never had a right to that love anyhow. But even less so does she!

He is enamoured of his mirroring her. I see how his translation into her person is an evil fascination, a spell her flesh has cast over him.

As I tidied the room, she shut down the computer and ostentatiously rang the bell, even though I was in the room with her. I gave her my attention:

"Bring me some wine."

I left the room immediately to do her bidding. I heard her snarling something at my heels in her savage native tongue. I decided to feed her the poorest wine we had, something we cook with ... I siphoned it into one of the empty vintage bottles, of which there are so many as of late. Her drinking habits would be enough to ruin an ordinary man! I brought it in on the proper tray and poured her a glass. She took it up and drank it without any change of expression. My theory was thus proved correct... the tannin and vinegar content of the swill was enough to make anyone but such a hog as she vomit!

"Est-ce que vous avez visite New York, Renard?"

"Oui Madame, quand j'avais dix-huit ans..."

"Est-ce que vous voulez voyager, avec nous, a New York?"

I boiled to hear her invite me. It is not HER place to tell me how my person is to be disposed. Neither I did trust her at that moment. I feared answering her.

I must say however it does take all my nerve, as a well-trained servant, to go against her, not do as she asks. I am trained in obedience, and worse, my involuntary will to serve is subverted by the fact that she looks exactly like the man I love. The beloved face I so long to make happy is inhabited by another. I am hating her as she speaks. I feel I am doing something extremely perverse in giving her foul wine. Because I am giving it to him.

It would not matter what I said, I think. She would use it against me, misrepresent my answer to the Master.

Four & a half

I wish the Master did not keep such bizarre hours! I am often stuck with her throughout the afternoons while he is sleeping. Not to say we are in the same room all the time. She stays mostly in the Laboratory, while my master sleeps next door. She is given permission to go into every one of his files. This to me is a grave error. In any event, the Technologist is on staff, and oversees the workings of the machinery.

But why can't she go out, go about her business, visit friends or even, most honourably, pursue her career as a mannequin? I did broach the subject of 'other occupations.' She might have berated me, but instead she said,

"There is no occupation more essential than being with your Master."

As long as she is still pretty enough to do so?

The way she is drinking and eating she will be gaining weight before long. The master will be burdened by her gross appetites, and will be embarrassed to be seen with her. Well I can help that deterioration along.

Five

The Master was taken very ill in the evening when he awoke. He vomited copiously what looked like dead blood. The doctor was with him quite a long while. The Demoness was nowhere to be found, naturally... her playmate wasn't going to be much fun for a while.

Once again I did not see nor hear her leave the premises! Is she sneaking out a secret door? It is perfectly uncanny.

I tended to him as of old, keeping a cool cloth on his forehead, massaging his hands. We discussed what he would eat, and I promised his favourites would be prepared. He did not ask after the bitch, but I did mention I saw her reviewing his visuals files. He replied, "She may - it is of no consequence."

He is too trusting and kind. I just hope her spying adventures will not result in the downfall of the House of Herve. I will apprise M. Herve and Madame Pi personally.

Five & a half

It appears she has the most appalling appetite. The Master is being drained to the limit, and beyond. She has barely left the premises when there's a flurry of telephoning, and another assignation is made before 24 hours has passed. He's not given enough time to recover.

He must have passed out at dawn. All morning appointments had to be cancelled; the Baroness Congreve was not amused. Her fitting for the Author's Ball is already overdue. All Paris is gossiping to be sure.

I have no choice but to do his will. I tell M. Herve the lies that are required. I am the witness to an impetuous dissolution..Why is he trying to destroy himself? Don't they say that when you meet your Double - that death is imminent? *Die Doppelganger*.

Six

Luckily I had a visit from Monsieur this morning. The Master was still ill and vomiting. It seems to be a sort of food poisoning.

"Renard - it is actually YOU to whom I wish to speak! Let us go into the Salon." Spoken in an undertone, though no-one was about. I understood. I have hated repeating to his associates the lies he requires. Though I have no choice but to do his Will, impaired by passion is he now.

His radical dissolution is seen by all. I must work seemingly *against* my Master for his resurrection.

Monsieur Herve came directly to the point - "Delian is going too far with this woman - we have to put an end to it." When I agreed with him, he looked at me narrowly.

"I certainly hope you are with us on this - for if you are not, then -" and with a meager wave of his fingers he demonstrated how my person would be brushed away like a fly.

I assured him I was most distressed by the recent turn of events, and he could count on me to do whatever I could. I was dying to know what his plans might be, but he seemed to think that enough had been said for the moment.

"Come to me each evening with your report."

"But sir, the Master will want to know where I am going..."

"We don't care what he wants or thinks at the moment. Make up something - pretend you are having an affair. I want you on my doorstep at midnight tonight with your first report. How long she spends with him - their habits, if any - when if ever she leaves him."

"She is not in the house now, sir."

I don't know why I blurted that out, but he gave me such a look and replied -

"I don't know if I can trust a man who doesn't even know who is in the house -"

The tiny hairs stood up on the back of my neck as Ramona, in a pink silk suit for day, strolled out of the library with a teacup in hand. She had gotten in again without my noticing! She has to have been given keys. She looked at us with a certain blithe, childish air, so I felt almost ashamed of our plotting. She was terrifically charming. Who could deny the rarity of their similar faces?

Perhaps they were meant to be together?

But when a smile crossed her lips, that sly, evil look engulfed us, and I hated her again.

"Mademoiselle!" Monsieur Herve greeted her with a slight bow, muttering to me under his breath, "She was in the hall when I came in..."

The woman turned like a trained mannequin she is, heading back to the kitchen. Did she not feel our eyes boring into her back - with our evil intent?

"Watch your Master," Herve concluded our interview, "He may attempt some harm upon himself when some fine morning the cat doesn't saunter back in here."

He stopped on the doorstep and looked back again - "I am glad I saw her." He bent an intense gaze upon me, "It makes it easier -"

This female Satan in his bed and at his table is, I am convinced, just such a Visitation. But we cannot know if we will save his life, or kill it entirely -- once we have rid him of that woman in His Image.

SEVEN

I must reiterate : This female Satan in his bed and at his table...

I believe is his blood relative, a sister!

I will ask my Lord if this be the case, I cannot countenance such an affair under my watch. Yet the scandal that could ensue, the filth flung upon my Master... I now must protect him.

My master appears to be failing... physically he is lax, his tone is bad. Any sharp shock might break him. If she should consider acting sadistically upon him - it is in her nature - whether a psychological attack, or some hybridization of the sexual act - it would surely kill him.

I will do as Monsieur Herve asks, though I had to call him at 23 h. to let him know that midnight, as he stipulated the time I was to make my "report", was a most impossible time to leave the manse. I have the feeling that we are to pay a visit to Madame Laure's this evening, as well, he has not been there in quite a while, and he asked me to lay out evening dress. Of course it is too late for any opera, or normal evening affair...

EIGHT

We set out across Pont Dauphine and made our way over to the Marais. As we passed along Rue de Rivoli near Ste. Paul's, I thought I caught sight of that transitory 'protege' of the Master's - Lampo, I think, the little beast's name was? The one he initiated into a life of crime, so to speak.

I would not have really noticed him at all, had not I discerned - as I always do, it being part of my function on these night walks - that my Master had attracted an excessive bit of attention. His face turned towards us like a sickly moon, approached - and then followed.

As we came to the turn into L'Egalite, I did apprise the Master I thought a young ruffian was on our track. He did not turn around, but laughed once, "Not to worry, mon cher - " His affectionate nature was aroused, and so a certain recklessness. Rarely did he call me cher - and even less so, as of late.

We walked on - the boy following was muting his footsteps. I thought I heard a bit of panting, but restrained myself from turning around. The lights from Madame Laure's glimmered just ahead. Of course our pursuer knew where we were headed, was considering as well our full purse.

We were a few steps away - Madame Laure's door opened - the shock of who greeted us still reverberates through me as I write this -

Ramona stood in the doorway! Beckoning us in, dressed in a gown of dark red.

Delian turned once to absorb my reaction, seemed well-pleased at my astonishment, and placed a finger to his lips. Then he turned at the top of the steps and called out into the night -

"Boy - would you have at it, again?"

Disgusting turn of phrase. Strangely, I was not certain if it came from his lips, or hers!

We came into the entry - the parlour - I was settled in my corner - as Madame Laure greeted Delian as warmly as usual. The front door was slammed to and bolted. Our pursuer had not taken us up on the offer - but I hardly thought of him, my eyes were fixed on the apparition of Ramona. Transformed into a whore, a red swirl of a dress around Delian's feet, a fragrant fan of her long hair clinging to his shoulder, she was more devil incarnate than was bearable!

As per his usual, he went into one of the rooms, taking half the prettiest women with him. I wondered at the depravity of this woman who claimed him, could not imagine she loved him very much if she allowed him to continue his "practices..." Then I wondered if he had met her here, and if this was just a continuation of a ritual which, most depressingly, had spilled out into our home?

An hour passed... two. More clients arrived, and made their choices. The room was empty, but for one fat old whore dozing. I rose from my chair as the clock struck three, and pulled aside the curtain to see if the street urchin might be lingering about.

Of course he was -- across the street, his avid face raised towards the upper windows. I wondered if they were teasing him from behind the curtains. A wave of pity choked me, as I recognized my own solitude reflected in that face: staring up at a pane of glass high above me - waiting for a flicker of light, second-hand, to warm me - faint acknowledgement of a beloved profile - soft laughter behind a door closed to us always.

The boy did not even notice me watching him.

Another hour passed. I was permitted to avail myself of wine, and I had done so after my melancholy reflection on the 'brotherhood' of the solitary. From above I heard light footsteps, then descent. My Master swept into the room, refreshed from his debauch.

I am horrified to admit - in that state of mind I suffered from - he disgusted me. His beauty was only a torture, his bloomingness a slap in the face to

my quietude, my hermetic devotions... His laughing eye was that of a pig, happy to be gluttoned. Worse, it was too gay - that is, indifferent, and unkindly.

His handsome joy was selfish, something that radiated not out, to cheer others, but that held itself in, in self-loving caress. What did he care of me? Did he notice my evil state of mind? Did he stop his jollity, ask me with any concern if I was ill? Or even if anything was wrong?

Not at all. He held out his coat for me to hold, so he might be garbed to go out, to go back to his beautiful home, to sleep with his exquisite lover in a downy bed -

But Ramona was not with him. I had almost forgotten about her.

I did not ask for her, however - that was not my place. After all she hadn't come with us, had she. For all I know, she is not only his lover, but a denizen of that House! I did not warn the Master, either, of the boy Lampoio lurking. Perhaps in some evil fashion I hoped he might strike us down on the sidewalk. I had a sudden thirst for violence, a life or death struggle. I imagined with pleasure the Master and I dying together on the cobblestoned streets.

As I followed him out into the coming dawn, I saw the newspaper headlines trumpeting his death, with his faithful servant by his side, who bore the marks of a terrific struggle against the rabble... rabble, that was able to kill him, in truth, because of his sublime indifference.

Later

I know M. Herve sees the larger picture. Again I assume my role of the perfect servant. I will leave no trace behind, in what I am destined to do. Hence this diary must end, for I would not be able to help but confess to these pages what is to ensue.

Fin Part Two

DELIAN

PART THREE

ONE

Monsieur Herve and Madame Pi, after conferring on all details, applied to the Comte St.-Germain, the illustrious alchemist. St.-Germain was yes, that famous occultist so renowned in the Eighteenth, whom had not yet died, nor would ever... Even then he was never seen to eat, though now and then you observed him drinking. Still he remains a masterful painter, though in the 21st century, he has turned to computers as well (a discipline to be mastered like any other.)

From the notebook of Le Comte St.-Germain:

This Ramona thing appears to be his very Double. Something created to pleasure himself, a baser form of himself, which, through his adamantine sorcery, has manifested in the Physical for not only his Eye, but every eye around.

Ramona might be his finest creation. She is a perfect replica. Apparently twenty years his junior, "she" spends nearly every night with him. The bedroom door is shut, locked and unopened for at least twenty-four hours. The power of his concentration is inordinate!

He is totally indulging himself with this angel spawned from his deepest desire. Or is she an angel from hell? That's the problem with angels. They're beautiful, and you can't tell - at first.

I am wondering for how much longer can he maintain that program (and it has to be a program) that activates the succubus' perfection? How long before the harddrive required outmasters its maintenance by human hand? Before the driver fizzles, and so the instrument?

We are trying to save the instrument that is Delian. This being he has created to complete himself is of a base nature. We cannot have him live in diminishment.

Could we let him live with another - as an actual human? Neither that. The investment in The Persona by the House of Herve is enormous. The public at large must not see Delian resolve into banality. Taking that into consideration, we must resolve Delian back into him/herself. The distractions that this 'Ramona extrusion' present are too great.

My first instruction to Renard: All alcoholic beverages must be banned from the house. When she "returns from outside" apparently drunk, she drunks Delian, which is unconscionable. Delian allows himself to drink, through her. This in itself is a most damaging aspect of the Double.

The creative engine as well is being wrecked by the excessive sex... which is draining the instrument of vital fluids.

All "locks" will be changed.

There is a diary, the valet Renard's. (I smile to consider that madly-in-love man's secret feelings! Herve and I are agog at the spying we will share in.) I have read some of it, and the valet reviles his own diary for having changed everything, For having 'caused' the being Ramona to manifest. Curious obsession.

For example: "I have written in too detailed a manner of his estrangement - there must have been in my phrasings some alchemy of conjoinment. I distilled the details of his solitude to too potent a coagulate - kept it too well-secreted, under the pressure of my eye, glorying in his solitary perfection.

"He has turned away from Divine Solitude now - to the World. He is leaving this House, I can feel it. He wishes to go out into the world. It is my fault he is gazing outside himself, I pushed him out of here, by my maintenance of a too perfectly accoutred cucurbite."

Curious how much of alchemy this silent little man seems to know. Indeed the formula for the 'Spectre of the Rose' would have been nigh on complete, but for Ramona, who appears to be the rot that sometimes sets in during Distillation.

M. Le Comte, balancing a teacup on his knee, extrapolated that the valet saw Ramona much more intently than any of them. "In his diaries, his expressiveness is more than hyperbole. Renard witnesses the fullest manifestation. Recall that Delian often showed the valet his Work when it was done... He most likely appreciates the man's hyper-receptivity, and uses him as a testing ground for the substantiality of the succubus."

Madame Pi sneezed abruptly, "So, what is 'Ramona'? Is it a possession, a succubus? Or are we wrong, and she's just some a terrific slut?"

"She is an extrusion. A perfected astral Double. She appears so like him as to be considered a sister. No-one sees her come in, nor leave. This fog about the issue of keys...? But what key is needed for a thing coming through no door, but through its host - Delian?"

"I am very anxious to view the creature with my own eyes." By this they discovered that Madame Pi had not observed 'Ramona.' She could not remember a mannequin in black at the last show!

"Think hard, Madame, perhaps you are only being absent-minded."

"I doubt I would forget one of the mannequins, or an ensemble!"

"If Ramona is a program, or the product of a program, perhaps you could copy it on another harddrive and store it. Or immediately intervene..."

"Oh, you mean link into his box? For certain, but I don't need to go there yet. Though it should be copied, for whatever purpose."

"Quite ephemeral... Should she subsume him, and he be turned into dust, her form may change to something unrecognizable. We should grab hold of the elements as they stand now."

"My idea, Pi, is to cleanse the image of her, remove the base material. Part of Delian wanted this being, we must admit. To feel strong sensation, to grovel in sex, to live a fleshy life. Perhaps he needed that, to be grounded in earth so to speak. To even try to procreate, perhaps, and slough off the pressure of being so unique.

"Perfection can be a tedium, you know."

TWO

"The valet Renard speaks again"...

St.-Germaine has come, and he has gone. I thought exorcisms were a noisy affair... I deem it was not a success. Nothing but dead silence issuing from the Master's chambers. I was not privy to the Operation, so I could be wrong. No-one spoke to me.

My diaries have not yet been returned.

My Master remains in his room, and therefrom not a chirp. Was he apprised of the necessity of the Excision? If the Working was a failure, and the parasite remains firmly affixed to him, I suppose he and Ramona are exulting together, to have foiled so potent a Doctor as Le Comte.

Later

The Master came suddenly through the front door. I think I am losing my mind - I never heard or saw him leave! I would have sworn on ten thousand Bibles he was still asleep in his Chamber.

A peculiar sense of intense disorientation comes over me as I recall something that happened, when St.-Germaine left, something I brushed off, as my exhausted senses could absorb little more.

After M. Herve, Mme. Pi, and Le Comte had gone out, I had for a few minutes stood in the foyer, albeit rather stupidly, staring at the closed front door as if it were an insult. As I said, no-one said a word to me concerning the Operation of the Exorcism. My ego is wounded by their silence. I had wanted very much to query them. But the function of the servant interceded to save me from vulgar curiosity. It is 'not my place' to question my Superiors.

As I stood before the door, a cold gust of air shot past my right ear, sending a chill down my neck. I glanced up to see the front door OPENING - I 'realized' I hadn't shut it, then wondered that I had not.

I had shut it! It is impossible that I would not have shut the door I have shut thousands of times before. I believe SOMETHING WENT OUT past me. Ramona is an evil spirit, but what went out was not evil. Indeed, I don't know what it was, but what came back looked just like my Master — whom I KNOW never left this house in his bodily form.

After I slammed the door to and secured its locks, I had stood by the casement and stared out the side window. The hedges were furrowed by the wind, those same gusts that had chilled my neck. But today is, and was, an eminently still day.

Now he's ringing for me... I must go.

THREE

"The Valet Observes"

Ramona and Delian carry on their affair. Horrors upon horrors, I saw her abed with him! He stays undressed all day in bed with her. The detritus of sex is everywhere in the room, where once more delicate leavings were evident. She does not come to live with him - however she is here every day.

I must remind myself, over and again, that according to M. Le Comte, this is the logical extension of what she truly is: a succubus. After wearing myself out trying to catch her coming in or going out, thinking there was another entry, or exit from his laboratory I didn't know of! Now I must reconcile myself to this idea: that she merely vaporizes in and out of existence, at his Will.

I will have to leave this House. Whatever 'Operation' Le Comte has endeavoured to effect, it was obviously not a success. If anything they look to be more

firmly melded than ever. They look more exactly alike than is 'humanly' possible. And all at once they both look hideous to me.

I am losing my Will to serve him, indeed there is such a cavity in my breast at the sight of their bedding, I believe I do not even love him any longer.

One may wonder, how can I be jealous, and hate a thing that is made from himself? Why do I hate a ghost? It is illogical, but the fact remains: The matrix of an actual male with a female thoroughly disgusts me! I loved only the androgyne, the dual-natured perfected being.

But what damage has he really done to me, in truth? I loved him, yes, but I was only a person-for-hire anyhow.

All I have to do is quit, and he will replace me. My agony will be over shortly after that, as I will have to be distracted by another Master.

FOUR

The point now is I have gone mad. I have accepted the charge given to me by M. Herve. It was that, or the choice of departure, handsomely paid. I chose to stay. I have accepted my Fate, and the instrument that goes with it.

Delian's Ideal, realized in a 'real' female, is degrading him personally. He appears more 'masculine', the face seems larger and more angular. He is losing his androgyny, and thus losing his powers. M. Herve and I concur on this.

He is losing weight, he is sick, but he will not admit doctors. He says he is not ill - he is working, he says. Yes - he is Working.

"She" would be his only worshipper now. She is thus my sworn enemy. I have desisted from doing anything about it, but I should follow my heart. The parasitism must end.

I only desisted, as my Master loves her... loves her. My hand revolts against these words, but I force myself to write them anyhow: "HE LOVES HER"

The way he says 'her' sends me into a nauseous panic. I felt like shrieking today, as he spoke softly to me of their plans, that I noted this hideous frisson on the word any feminine particle: HER, SHE, HERS! All of them purr at me insinuatingly, send shudders up my arms.

You would think as faithful servant I would be happy for him. But I cannot be, because she is not 'the One'. She has made him dual, and evil is abroad.

FIVE

Terrible afternoon. Burdened with this dire duty, I would like to say it would be easy for me to discharge it. Indeed M. Herve and le Comte consider that my passion for my Master elects me as the best person for the task. A heinous task, on the surface, this murder... the task of Excision.

A specially prepared blade has been placed in my hands. It is my understanding now that le Comte St. Germain's diagnosis is that of a succubus infestation. But of a very rare form. The desire of the Master for his female self has manifested a being with an apparent physical body, and will of its own. The reason I never see her come, or go, is that she never comes nor goes from anywhere but the solar plexus of my Master Delian.

She is a manifest extrusion of ectoplasm, a thing he has created in order to enjoy the fleshly pleasures. This accounts for her bestial look, her greediness, and why he becomes ill when SHE partakes!

But this little exercise in self-indulgence known as 'Ramona' is over. I must stab her through, as one classically does the vampire, through the heart. I am assured by M. Herve and Le Comte that she will thereafter dissipate, and my Master will be restored.

It is just that she is so utterly solid and real. At luncheon today, which my Lord and she took for once in a vertical position, I did examine her closely. She seems a perfect specimen of a woman. I see nothing at all insubstantial about her! If my Master is such a sorcerer as this, I feel awe for his powers.

Could le Comte be wrong in the diagnosis - that only by the death of Ramona, will the genius that is Delian be saved?

How can I murder the thing he loves? Is this change in him all for the worse, in the larger scheme of things?

I have such a desire to run away, to escape my Fate. I would have done anything to serve my Master, and Ramona's murder is presented to me as the greater part of that. But today, I am not certain

SIX

Will it not be damaging to my Lord & Master to have the ectoplasmic filth of Ramona sucked back into his body? She should stay separate from him for a while longer, the entity should be better purified, before the Re-Absorption is to take place. I would think 'it' could be starved of liquor and drugs, and

Delian's emissions of semen, before my Working - so he re-ingests a purer form of this admittedly beautiful creation of his.

The Comte will not let me hesitate, tells me the re-absorption is not so "literal" as I imagine it. I don't know what to believe, nor can I any longer trust my own instincts. What if I took my skilled Aunts into my confidence? What would they say if I asked them, "Should I murder my master's concubine?" They would probably just refer me to the Head Butler, which role at the moment M. Le Comte has assumed.

I do not want this task. I want the 'status quo' to be maintained. I want to stay here, in this beautiful House, to be his Servant, for it to continue as it always was. Why must anything change?

Perhaps the bitch will fade away into the nothingness from which she emerged. Perhaps he will tire of his games with it. After all she is just phantasm, born of his body, is she not? Perhaps before long he will suck her back in, of his own Will! Who are we to interfere with his powerful and Divine purpose?

But in truth nothing would be easier for me than to murder that thing outright. I am eminently suited to the task, unfortunately.

The suppression of my hatred has been very terrible for me, it is wearing on me, and I have moments, only moments to be sure of some impatience to feel the slick thrust of the knife into her heart. Le Comte assures me there will be no blood, only a little scrap of ectoplasm fleeing this atmosphere.

But in my fantasies, something craves to see blood.

Even though she is not a human being, I still react against her, as if she is one, as if she is something that can injure me, and not just the Master/Magician's tool.

SEVEN

Under the first thrust, the torso of the succubus writhed but once in a paroxysmic coil, then shivered and fell into a whorl of thick black flakes. There was no blood, as Le Comte had promised, and the valet's lust to see blood led him to stab, and stab again in the fleeing dark scabbings, weeping in rage and anguish.

He wanted a physical cut. Blood! What good did it do his heart to kill this thing, when he could not exult over it, in conquerance?

From the next room, where St.-Germain attended him, Delian choked and cried out as the repercussion hit - "What have you done?" and he clawed at his throat, "Bloodie fools!"

St. Germaine was alarmed - his throat...? It should have snapped back to his chest.

Delian fell back shuddering.

EIGHT

The transmogrification was premature. The Comte has failed in his Operation. Myself, faithful valet, can only go down in history as the vile murderer of his most beloved Master, a blot on the escutcheon of our generations of servitors.

The gendarmes were called, and the crime scene secured. I am surprised how coldly I went. They did not use handcuffs. I was allowed to take some personal belongings to jail, where I now sit. Handcuffs, bars, I care not what they do to me nor where I am, nothing makes any difference to me anymore.

After the Ramona-thing was 'dead', I had called M. Herve, and within ten minutes that gang was on premises, cool as bloodie cucumbers.

Le Comte collected as much of the black dust as he could in a glass jar. He then instructed me to help him remove Delian from his studio, and we placed him on the bed of his chambers. Le Comte then himself undressed his still-warm body - I allowed that, I still do not know why - but what we then saw, no-one will believe... a miracle, a horror -

My Master Delian was possessed of the full, sumptuous body of a woman. Ramona's!

So that was the meaning of his manifesting 'her' - as the woman he wished to be. He had been working on her image, as his own, refining her from out of all the materia he was in possession of.

Our forcible re-absorption worked as a destructive repercussion. The Master became overwhelmed by that incomplete woman. Like any embryo, it could not live long outside her mother's womb.

So he did become a woman; yet most unfortunately a dead one.

They are taking this diary away

NINE

"The Reassembly of Delian"

"Be quick about it!" hissed Le Comte to Herve and Pi, behind the bowed back of the disgraced valet, being led away.- "We have but an hour before all brain activity has ceased for good!"

The soul's ascension was still in progress. The ceiling of the bedchamber had been prepared to 'batch' it, as well as was 'currently' possible.

They inserted a small platelet in each of Delian's eyes, and from those orbs drew plumb lines to a sort of 'microphone' in the ceiling. Le Comte helped Pi to view the amassing of the radiant ectoplasm through a cunning device of the 19th century, originally constructed to read the aura...

The computer was on, and a fresh disk inserted. The Program was booted and a hum. Video catch was activated. The hologrammic version of Photoshop was netted round.

But the technology to copy such an 'archive' was not yet perfected. Within six months, half the contents of the CD (they knew) would disappear. Thus were other Workings planned in the next few weeks. As Delian by degrees died... they copied his brain onto the disk.

It did not take long, though that was a function of the efficient cut and paste, not of a paucity of content.

Le Comte St.-Germain extracted the small golden disk, held it up to the light. He granted the disk - whereupon resided the entire life's work of a genius, and well as the contents of his final consciousness - an ironical look -

"How tiny we are...how meagre. We worship one another like gods. We die over one another - we kill ourselves for love. And in the end, there's no-one there at all. No-one to love. No-one loving. And, perhaps, no-one to care..."

Madame Pi made a sudden movement towards the disk which Le Comte pocketed. "Ah, ha ha!" he laughed. "My fee, of course - and then!" He gathered his coat and chapeau, and bid the two conspirators adieu.

TEN

M. Herve let himself into the manse. He did not quite shut the door behind him, and stepped through the cold, empty vestibule. Melancholy it was, even for him, to see the place without its sumptuous fleurs and candle-light. He was the only one presently possessed of a key. He passed along the corridor and entered the Grand Salon.

The computer was still there, and the desk appeared untouched since last he'd been there with the police and all. But though going into Delian's files was his putative reason for being there, it was presently not foremost in his mind.

He went to the window, and slightly drew aside the drapery to look out at the street. Directly across from the main gate and fence that enclosed the courtyard stood the figure of a young man, dressed in the wretched modern style, with the face of a cherub... A swift intake of breath as he saw the beautiful creature step off the kerb, and walk over towards the gate. Smoking a stumpy butt of caporal, he stared up at the manse.

M. Herve was excited. He had checked out the trade on the street, and realized the boy had to have seen him enter... his erection was painful... should he go to the front door again, beckon him in? He got out his handkerchief and daubed his moist brow.

Quickly Herve brought himself to task, turned from the window to attend to what he had come to do. He was making his own private copy of Delian's harddrive - after all, the creative designs belonged properly to the House of Herve. The tech would be in the next day to make the official copy.

Something had to be salvaged from this fiasco. Just because the man had led a dissolute life - (that was the gossip, as to his mode of death) - didn't mean that he, Herve, should not extract something of use from the rubble.

And because he himself was 'just an employee' now of the House - since he had sold it to the Jetsam Corporation - he had to make sure he had his own files.

Besides, Delian's will had been outrageously outdated. He'd left everything to some woman no-one could locate, possibly dead - a Mlle. Malacroix or something. Someone no-one had even heard of. Jetsam was going to own everything unless he took his own copy.

Delian's expiration had suited M. Herve very well. He imagined more control, assumed a greater percentage of profits. The artist's eccentricities had been too much to tolerate at times...

The computer booted up - then stalled. He cursed the machine, closed down and rebooted. Delian had always refused to upgrade, for years stayed with an

outdated operating system. For his work on the 'Virtual Model' you would think he would want the best? Even so he had created with this junk that thing Ramona...

The computer was up again. Transferring all the drawing and photography files was going to take a while. M. Herve inserted his disk, and hit a key. The disk popped out again, and the computer stalled. Sacre Nom!

M. Herve shut down completely. Give it a rest... went back to the window. Now the boy was standing in the middle of the courtyard, one hand on hip, smoking that stub of a cigarette. What was the little blackguard up to? Perhaps he saw the door was open... perhaps he planned to come in, rob him, overpower him. Herve squirmed a bit, in anticipation...

He returned to the computer, tried to start it up again. As he waited, an infernal grinding sound came from the body of the machine. He realized his hands were dripping, he was mortally afraid, of what, the boy waiting for him, of the computer's malfunction, the loss of all the files, of the fact he was stealing, of the fact that he'd wanted Delian dead...?

He was guilty, through and through.

He got up and went to the window again. The boy wasn't there. Had he gone? Was he in the house? Sickly lust emerged through his panicked nausea. A good orgasm would clean up his mind in an instant, he thought.

He went to the door of the salon and listened... Nothing.

But now - what was that? The computer booting up on its own?

He turned, and saw a woman sitting before the computer.

Now despite the recent happenings with the exorcism, succubus, et al - M. Herve had not believed in any of it. He had left visitations and ghosts and such to the weak susceptible minds of Madame Pi and the valet...

The woman turned around and looked at him.

Ramona? No -

Every hair on his spine was standing straight up. His starched shirt's resistance to their prickles terrified him - his body was reacting, as his mind said NO...

It was not Ramona, but it was a spirit, of someone he'd never seen. Long, golden hair streamed down her back and onto the floor. Crazy he considered how hair and fingernails went on growing in a coffin... or not so crazily.

He was looking at a ghost - but that was impossible.

And she was looking at him.

The great hologrammic desktop above the ancient fireplace flamed to life. A file he had never heard of opened... and a welter of images flashed around the grey salon. Paintings, they appeared to be, paintings of Delian he'd never seen before, then cafe scenes, the banks of the Seine, a cloud-burst, a fairy of the 18th century...

M. Herve did not realize he had fallen to his knees, nor that tears were streaming down his face. He deserved to die. He was not an artist, he was a parasite. He had helped to destroy a genius.

All he knew was that enormous blue eyes were staring into him, from out of the ethereal desktop. The eyes were those of the beautiful blonde fairy, sitting at Delian's computer...

With a couple of strokes she transferred all Delian's files from the corporeal, into the ethereal. Where a kind of desk waited, and a sort of a harddrive, and where Delian was already receiving the voluminous upload.

Therese giggled. These new machines were sooo much fun!

M. Herve heard that laugh, and a crushing pain rammed through his chest... he toppled to the floor.

Therese erased the harddrive.

ELEVEN

In a year, what would be left for the House of Herve to archive? Those few rags of couture - a hank of the Master's long, glistening black mane - a few living strokes of virtual ink onto virtual paper, from the depths of the harddrive? The ephemeral power of Delian would evanesce, with the death of that strangest presence.

But until extinction, all the large fashion magazines ran their worshipful tributes. The magazines were stored away, or cut up by little girls for paper dolls.

Those who remember the man Delian recall the eccentrically pretty face, the gay air, a virile strength of presence overlaying ladylike, graceful gestures.

Perhaps only one retains the full force of the vision - the valet Renard, withering in his cell.

"Fresh pork of my thoughts... seventeenth planet of space... murmurs of
fragrant dust... door left ajar... shoulder of pearl... scrap of lace...
augmentation of the hyacinthe... blase moon... angelic disorder... Ramona..."

The Doctors keep him on the latest sedatives, and the House of Herve keeps
him in choucroute and tartes tatins.

*Commence December 1998,
Chelsea Hotel, New York City
Fini January 2003,
San Francisco & New York City*



*The Authoress & her Inspiration,
FALON 1998-2003*



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