

PHRYNETTE MARRIED

spring. Then, no doubt, I was wrong. If I am guilty it is not of having run away with Blaise but of those nights on the balcony when I was alone. I see now with a wonderment at my own blindness that it was not of Blaise I loved to think but of—love, and not I alone but every woman who is derelict at twenty.

It is not so much the man the woman loves but—love. Not that big, maladroit, stupid, stubborn creature, who thinks he is strong because he has biceps—but a small, round, pink, elf-like creature, crowned with roses and armed with a quiver. She loves him for his smile, sweet and sly, so like hers ; she loves him for the blue ribbon on his nudity, so like her own modesty. She loves him for the gold of his curls and the iron of his arrows, but principally for his wings, swift and cruel, that fan ardour. And when the woman has children they are made after his image.

Every day I ask Médor to take me back to Algiers with my children and Gracieuse. He says only “patience,” and chews the air melancholically. Patience ! That is just what I have not. Besides, I know it is all so useless and so humiliating, this waiting on a man’s forgiveness. It is he who ought to ask me for forgiveness ; indeed, it is. I have entrusted myself to his guidance. What do I know of life, after all, except what I have read and what Vi told me ? My husband’s folly seems far less excusable than my own folly. When I am his age I shall be as quick to suspect as to forgive—in a word, I shall know the weakness of my fellow-humans.

I suffer. I know that all happiness is over. I love my