

tion of a few high cultures, independent, in a sense, of marriage—it is a cultural artifact . . .” Mechem’s skill is in defining and describing one aspect of the love artifact, and this he does very individually, and with a great deal of charm. For this he will be secure in history.

Sweet Witchcraft / James Mechem

The sign said TOPLESS NUN: ENTER AT YR OWN RISK. He entered and the topless nun put him to work in the kitchen making candy. He was her slave. How had this state of affairs come about? He suspected witchcraft—yes, witchcraft.

The topless nun came into the room. “Where’s that new batch of candy?”

He gave it to her and she bit into a piece. “What a sweet tooth I have for this stuff.”

“We all have our hang-ups.”

“What’s yours?”

“Nipples.”

She boxed him upside the head. For the rest of his life he would not hear so good out of that ear.

“Look at what it got you, your hang-up,” she said.

“You feed on people with my hang-up,” he said.

“I batten on them.”

“You’re wicked,” he said.

The candy store was called THE TOPLESS NUN. She paid starvation wages. If he hadn’t needed a job in the worst way he never would have taken it. She was a stupid slave driver. She was also a witch to have such a good figure.

“What does that mean—Enter at Your Own Risk?” a customer asked her.

“Let the buyer beware,” she said.

“Beware of what?” the customer asked.

“Beware of my charms.”

The customer looked quickly at them. “Of course.”

A nun of the Order of The Sisters of The Most Precious Blood demanded, “Sister, have you got our marzipan ready?”

She came back to the kitchen. “Do you have the marzipan ready?”

“Marzipan? I don’t know how to make marzipan! What is it? Almond paste? Coconut? Tell them to come back tomorrow.”

“Can you come back tomorrow, Sister?”

"Yes, Sister."

"How are things at the nunnery?"

"Mother Superior is just recovered from an attack of virulent boils."

"And my dear friends in the scullery?"

"Chapped hands and red knuckles. They miss you."

"What of the backstairs gossip?"

The sister looked at the customer. He cleared his throat and ordered a half pound of this and a half pound of that. "And some of those over there."

"Will that be all?"

He looked wistfully at her chest. He didn't know what he was doing. He was searching for a penny in his trousers pocket.

When the customer was gone Sister Cecilia got down to business, while in the kitchen the new cook read the recipe for marzipan aloud.

Two Women and One Man / Carol Bergé

The woman is sitting at the bar in a certain small city. No one in the city knows where she lives. She is wearing clothing that she has chosen for its ability to blend into whatever surroundings she might choose. Unobtrusive; simple, and in good taste. Although one could not later tell whether she wore one color or another. Her clothing was not particularly modern, and it seemed to be composed of neutral colors. There are certain colors which, having little color of their own, will adopt or reflect those colors around it. In this place, her clothing has overtones of the blue and green sign of the bar, whose light reaches even back to the golden and reddish aura of the bar. There are not many people at the bar, nor in the booths nearby. Nevertheless, her presence has been observed, and perhaps commented upon, by the few who are there. It is not that ordinary an occurrence, here, for such a woman to come in: alone. Usually, the women who come in alone are known to everyone, and their purpose is known.

The woman has been in this bar once before, briefly. Long enough to have noticed the bartender. He is as dark as she; slender as well; she stares, as she did then, at the nape of his neck. One night a while ago she had fallen in love with the nape of his neck. A heart-shaped line, italianate, graceful, rhythmic. She is a woman who is devoted to grace, to details. And sensitive to the overall picture as well. And she has returned to this bar. To this particular man. The line of his shirt over his ribs. The turn of cheekbone, angle of thigh.