

A Woman's Pleasure · *Isabel Clara Simó*

REBECA STRETCHED VOLUPTUOUSLY. Seeing the shadow under her arm comforted her. She liked to watch her naked body in the mirror. Rebeca was slender and pale. She thought her nakedness stimulating. Is there anything more exciting than one's own stimulation? She noticed her dark nipples, almost purple, her slim, long arms which arched above her head, her supple neck and her thighs, strong and shiny as brass. But most of all she liked the smoothness of her skin, tense and flexible, young and healthy, mellow and satisfied.

She stretched in bed, using her arms as a pillow and lifted her knees, half spreading her legs. She breathed deeply and closed her eyes to concentrate on her picture of herself.

"I feel satisfied, as if my will has been freshly watered." That was her first thought. She smiled, pleased, because that was a good beginning.

Sensations are greater—broader, more evident—than thoughts because they precede and determine thinking. Rebeca's hope was to think sensations and she was sure to succeed this time.

The room was warm and smelled of sleep. Her nostrils widened in appreciation.

"I can smell male sweat, but it is fine and subtle, like fennel mixed with lemon."

The sheets themselves were fresh, changed that very morning. They kept the softness of the iron and the aroma of scented soap. Her skin was fine and slightly damp. The inner part of her thighs—the most delicate part of her body—slid under her fingers as if it were water.

Darkness was filling the window at the inbetween time of dusk. Rebeca was still lying in bed with a smile on her lips feeling lazy and relaxed.

Can it be described, Rebeca? Can it be said with words? Can it be expressed? Are there any words for it? And if there are, are they new and unspoken, the first ones in the world because no one has pronounced them before?

She opened her eyes and laughed because she could picture those words drawn in her mind, one after the other, orderly, complete, pregnant with meaning. There was no need to toss your hands saying "it's something

like. . . .” Exact words that meant exactly what they were intended to mean.

The first three words were sweet toothed in themselves and as certain as a dart hitting the target. A good beginning has to be carefully tended so that its aroma will not vanish: “a woman’s pleasure.”

She said it again, and again, and again.

Pleasure is a nice word because it is innocent and does not imply lust. That was where all other words she had tried had failed. And saying “a woman’s” . . . is it not powerful? It is like talking of worthy matters, clean matters, good matters. Take “a man’s pleasure.” That is different. There is banality in it and a tiny bit of slyness that turns it to ignomy. “A woman’s pleasure,” instead, sounds like the title of a song not to be whispered in somebody’s ear, but to be spoken aloud, chin up, with a clear voice and a bright expression. Then she added, “and for women only.” “A woman’s pleasure and for women only.” That is it exactly. A woman’s pleasure cannot be equalled or shared.

How do you know, Rebeca? Who told you it was for women only? Did the men tell you?

But she did not need to be told for she had experienced it many, many times. She had seen the men—those with broad backs and those with sunken chests, those with hairy chests and those smooth as a baby’s cheek. She had seen them all, the melancholic and the impatient ones, the clumsy ones with strong arms, and the frail men with a deep look, a man-of-the-world look, which means a woman’s man. She had seen them all and flattered them. She had listened to them and spied on them out of the corner of her eye. Always they performed a similar ritual: a negligence, an apathy, a certain degree of wariness that a less observing eye would have mistaken for voluptuousness.

“Men lack any sense of sensuality.”

But then she did not like what followed. It was not a description but a sentence. She closed her eyes again and let her mind rest for a moment. Then she concentrated: things can also be explained by their differences, which can often be the only way of describing them. We identify with things by what they are not. Rebeca felt scholastic and laughed as she said, “the specific difference” aloud. She laughed because in this case the difference would not be considered exactly “specific.” She concentrated harder; if she started trifling she would end up joking and everything would

turn dark and shadowy, as it is often intended, instead of clear, shiny and certain, like a sea exploding in blueness and light.

She tried again: “a woman’s pleasure for women only that begins in sensuality, is sustained in sensuality, and the end of which is a jet of sensuality.”

That would be all right but for the “jet.” No, it is not an abrupt, abundant jet. It does not gush, it flows; inwards, not outwards. It is sensuality at first, and it holds fast, it grows, it remains, and it settles. It is nothing like satisfaction, for that is a momentary relief that follows from a particular urge. No, it does not satisfy, it completes. It does not become flat; it inhales the essence of love, absorbs it from the pores of the skin, and there it remains adhering. It is nothing like eating, but something like breathing. It is not foreshadowed by pain or lack, and it is not sought by a hungry body. It is like smelling an aroma and letting it penetrate you; feeling the warmth and absorbing it; feeling the smoothness and seizing it; feeling the touch of the ripe, full fruit in your mouth and biting it; making it merge with your skin, your stomach, your thumbs, your eyes and your throat. It is the exact opposite of expelling; it is absorption. A man may feel frantic, pursued by desire. Like a mourning soul whose body has been stolen, he may feel the itch of a blind bull, stung by yearning. This is madness, an uncontrolled excitement. When it is satisfied everything returns to normal. That has absolutely nothing to do with a woman’s pleasure. She feels urgent, but never desperate. She feels pushed, but not forced. She feels relieved, but not like the one who has been healed of a painful wound.

It is not the timing nor the pace, nor what has been ridiculously called “passivity.” It is something else that no one has described yet and that has nothing to do with all that.

Only women can feel the pleasure. Only women capable of sipping it slowly after making love. After making love. After. It is the way blood circulates, as if renewed; the pleasure of feeling spongy in a warmth that becomes beauty and gives life. Very few men know that pleasure starts once they have stood up, once they flash that guilty, thankful smile, like someone caught at a petty crime. Then, alone finally, the woman meets her own pleasure.

In a remote age, so long ago and so far away in time that even the obtuse sages have forgotten its memory, terror must have stamped the face of the man who first guessed the vast pleasure of his companion. And he must

have communicated his terror to his comrades and transmitted it to the ones to come. Men, en bloc, feared woman's pleasure; they felt terrorized by a mystery that awed them like a river suddenly flooding from its narrow, confining bed. They cried out, as loudly as they could, saying that pleasure belonged to them. Then women knit an impervious secret, shared by all women and never spoken in words to avoid awakening the pride and greed of those poor ones who despise whatever they cannot understand.

Making love is a long process; it may take a century. It may begin little by little, when your skin is being caressed and your senses open. Women loathe haste. Men name it virility and it is as ephemeral as a water drop in a pond. Only words can please them. Without them they would realize their pleasure is as fragile as cracked glass.

They put their hand on a woman's breast and they feel pleased to see her trembling. And yet, they do not know what she feels under those hands. She may recall it for days and days, maybe for a year. She becomes sunny and generous. She could give anything she has: her house and her belongings, her money, her blushing cheeks. She could even give the gallantry of a woman in love who knows that no kiss, no caress, no abandonment in the presence of the man she loves is sordid. An excited man is unable to communicate excitement. An excited woman lights the earth; she overcomes the flustered man who is looking at her and thinks—awkwardly—that all this is for him and feels the stroke of arrogance.

A feeling woman is generous. Modesty vanishes. Her skin demands to be touched. Men hurry, they let themselves go. It takes time and knowledge to slow them down, to calm them, to restrain them. Sometimes they do, but it is like a concession, an acquired politeness. And they are completely wrong. Rebeca noticed that the room was dark and lit a lamp which cast a circle against the wall. Then she spread her fingers and projected their clean, enlarged shadow on the wall. She projected different shapes. One of them was a horn, and she licked her fingers because she remembered how men who fear to be betrayed are more vulnerable than a street covered with snow. They are doomed. They have not understood a thing. If they could hear the gay murmur of a woman's thinking they would drop, wounded in their souls.

As caresses are prolonged, you feel a total well-being. Women have no "erogenous zones": every single bit of their bodies is fit for love. If he is a man's woman, with that deep look, he may know how to prolong the

caress up to the exact point which is broad and endless, that makes your body tremble, your nerves vibrate, that smells and tastes and touches, that lights a light in your eyelids. At that moment they have already been quiet for a while, and they collect their wallets, stuffed with papers, or their hammer and basket and they leave happily because they think they have behaved well. They only keep a blurred shadow of a memory in their mouths, a weakness in their bodies that reinforces their virility. Everything has vanished out of their body, as if it were not material. It is then when the woman rejects laziness. She runs her fingertips through her hair, she smells her armpits, she examines the moistness with which her skin is impregnated; she feels sponged and she knows that this sensation is only hers, that no man will ever be able to share it. After love, alone, in bed. Full of life and steeped in an ancient knowledge. No haste at all.

A woman's pleasure. It begins in sensuality, opening like a dark pomegranate, and settles inside, rounding off ideas, giving words their sense, proclaiming existence. Feel conscious about it and absorb it slowly. Forget the man; he does not count at all, he is useless now. Go inside your own body, come through birth again, become a woman; learn again of taste to the tongue, of sound to the ears, of light to the eyes, of aroma to your nostrils, of touch to the palm of your hand.

"We women are . . ." Rebeca frowned now. It is difficult to put it into words. It is an ancient secret. If they would know, hatred would not be the danger but envy, which is worse than a scorpion.

Gravely, she gave up formulating the thought she had initiated, expressing, in an orderly way, this sensation. First the subject, then you put a verb, and then you finish with a predicate, and then you have to place the adjectives accurately. Therefore, she thought, it is not worth it. Things are as they "are": Let men keep the words for themselves. Let them compensate for their lack with the pride of saying "manly" as if it were a positive word. We have the facts. Let them keep the words.

Rebecca smiled again and rolled on her side. She joined her palms together and placed her hands between her knees. She closed her eyes. A trace of her smile still remained. She thought how nice it is to be a woman. She fell asleep. Her breath was like a breeze. Her skin was still a bit wet. The light was on and cast a circle on the wall. Outside the night was deep and free. Tiny lives swarmed about the grass, near the pond bank, among the leaves of the trees and under the windowsills.

Rebeca dreamed that she was travelling on a boat, and that slowly, her body having no weight, she dived into the blue water, so fresh and subtle, that she could breath even as she was sinking.

Enchantresses, with their long hair, took her hands, made a circle and danced, smiling.