

seeing the horrible switch, their love would be extinguished by the disturbing knowledge that it had been consummated with objects absolutely indifferent to them.

The friend began to think of various means of repairing the breach: he immediately rejected the idea of carrying the women to a common room, then restoring them (now properly switched) to their respective lovers. That was a partial solution; for example, either of the women might suspect that something was amiss in the passage from a dark room to a lighted one. Suddenly, the friend smiled. He clapped his hands and two servants appeared instantly. He whispered a few words into their ears and they disappeared, returning shortly armed with small golden needles and enormous silver scissors. The friend examined the instruments and immediately directed the servants to the nuptial doors. They entered and, groping in the darkness, took hold of the women and quickly cut off their tongues and poked out their eyes, then did the same to the men. Relieved of their tongues and eyes, they were brought before the friend, who was waiting for them in his well-lighted room.

There he let them know that, desiring to prolong that memorable, carnal night, he had ordered two of his servants, armed with needles and scissors, to take out their eyes and cut off their tongues. Hearing this statement, the lovers immediately recovered their expressions of ineffable happiness and through their gestures let the friend know the profound gratitude that possessed them.

For years they lived in uninterrupted joy. Finally, the hour of their death arrived and, perfect lovers that they were, they were stricken by the same fatal ailment and died in the same moment. Learning of this, their friend smiled slightly and decided to bury them, restoring to each lover his beloved and thereby to each beloved her lover. This he did, but in their ignorance, the lovers joyfully continued their unforgettable, carnal night.

Aase Berg

Translated by Johannes Göransson

Nanoblack horses, vantablack net-fishing for the Polaris pearl. A hard, dull synthetic pearl. Or *Pinctada margaritifera-cumingi*, grown in mussels in Tahiti. Local pollution gives the pearl its colour. The core of the true pearl from Bahrain is not a grain of sand. Small holes in the oyster shell indicates a parasite. In the soft parts of the slow-slacking intestinal flora of the hover-horse. Along the silk roads of the ocean, the blank pearl of the motor men's helmets whil in the same moonlight, the same foam.