

for it is owing to the absence of cause for jealousy and suspicion, which are not otherwise determined than by this absence, that the guest is going to emerge from his stranger's accidental relationship to enjoy an essential relationship with the hostess whose essence he shares with the host.

The host's essence—hospitality—rather than being confined to impulses of jealousy or suspicion, aspires to convert into a presence the absence of cause of these impulses, and to actualize itself in that cause. Let the guest understand his role well: let him then fearlessly excite the host's curiosity by that jealousy and that suspicion, worthy in the master of the house but unworthy of a host; the latter enjoins the guest loyally to do his utmost; in this competition let them surpass each other in subtlety: let the host put the guest's discretion to the test, the guest make proof of the host's curiosity: the term generosity has no place here, it is without meaning in the discussion, since everything is generosity, and everything is also greed, but let the guest take all due care lest this jealousy or this suspicion grow to such proportions in the host that no room is left for his curiosity; for it is upon this curiosity the guest will depend in order to display his abilities.

If the host's curiosity aspires to actualize itself in the absent cause, how does he hope to convert this absence into presence unless it be that he awaits the visitation of an angel? Solicited by the host's piety, the angel is capable of concealing himself in the guise of a guest—is it you?—whom the host believes fortuitous. To what extent will the angel actualize in the mistress of the house the essence of the hostess such as the host is prone to visualize it, when this essence is known to none but him who beyond all being knows? By inclining the host farther and farther, for the guest, be he angel or no, is only inclination in the host: learn, dear guest, that neither the host, nor yourself, nor again the hostess herself knows the essence of the hostess; surprised by you she will attempt to find herself in the host who then will no longer hold her back: but who, knowing her in your arms, will hold himself richer in his treasure than ever.

In order that the host's curiosity not degenerate into jealousy or suspicion, it is for you, the guest, to discern the hostess' essence in the mistress of the house, for you to cast her forth from potentiality into existence: either the hostess remains sheer phantasm and you a stranger in this house if you leave to the host the in actualized essence of the hostess; or else you are indeed that angel, and by your presence you give an actuality to the hostess: you shall have full power over her as well as over the host. And so, cherished guest, you can't help but see that it is in your best interest to fan the host's curiosity to the point where the mistress of the house, driven out of herself, will be completely actualized in an existence which shall be determined by you alone, by you, the guest, and not by the host's curiosity. Where upon the host shall be master in his house no more: he shall have carried out his mission. In his turn he shall have become the guest.

THE TWO PEASANTS

(13th century)

Guatier le Leu

Trans. Nathaniel Dubin

They both had risen with the sun and traveled far ere day was done, so, when they found a place to stay, so tired and tuckered out were they, the older of them was so bushed, he was at once both pale and flushed and couldn't eat at all that night, nor could they whet his appetite by any means. The tender heart (he scraped away the outer part) of two cabbage stems and one roast turnip was all he ate, at most.

The other man ate his fair share—he, unlike his friend, was not so weary—and then they lay down side by side in bed, sleepy and satisfied, where they slept on soundly and tight till past the middle of the night, when the older peasant awoke, who'd felt so tired, he thought he'd croak.

He nudged his partner there in bed. "Psst, are you listening?" he said. "I am so famished, I don't doubt that I am ready to pass out or maybe go stark raving mad. Is there anything to be had that you know of, vittles or bread?"

The younger peasant racks his head and tells him, "Friend, I don't see how at any price I'd find bread now unless I go and wake my host and strain myself to the utmost, which surely wouldn't be polite, but half a pot remained last night of a thick milk and batter gruel.

Just lie here patiently. If you'll behave yourself and keep your calm, I'll hurry up and get you some, and you can have your fill of what —'s left over if I find the pot."

Then he rose, naked as a jay-bird, and to the stores made his way and searched till he found the pot and reached out, lifting up his right hand, and grabbed the ladle by the stem and picked it up, filled to the brim (they'd left it standing in the gruel), and, with the ladle overfull, he then proceeded to return, but doing so took a wrong turn, for unfamiliar with the lay-out there, in the end he went way off left and came to his host's bed. "Can you hear me?" he softly said. "See here: I've brought it as agreed."

Off the edge of the bed, where she'd moved it, the wife's ass hung undraped. Between her cheeks her asshole gaped, but since her sleep was so profound, the woman didn't hear a sound

the lad made, lost in an entrancing dream in which she had gone out dancing.

What's more, she'd turned away her face.

Hear what's in store now from the Fates!

The boy who for the gruel had gone was Roger de la Porte's own son and thus related to his host.

When he made out the woman's posterior dimly in the gloom, he naturally did assume that this must be his hungry friend.

He placed his hand on her rear end and, feeling the hair there on her, he, since his friend's bearded, too, and furry, has come to the right place, he knows.

Close to her hole he moved his nose, and softly, hearing that it uttered not a sound, to himself he muttered, "I knew it; he is in a faint.

It's clear to me his hunger's gained the upper hand. I'll pull him through't without recourse to herb or root."

He then proceeded to bestow on it three kisses in a row.

He did this to revive the man, as one often sees happen when his or her friends standing about will kiss a person who's passed out.

No sooner did he start to kiss her than wind broke forth out of the fissure, gusty and loud, as if to cool (he thought) the ladleful of gruel.

"No need to blow on it, you old scoundrel," he tells him, "since it's cold. You're not so hungry, then, I see. You think it's Mr. Lanfroy's tree? What oughtn't to be done, you do. Last night I clearly saw you chew those turnips and the cabbage stalks. As for your breath, it really irks me, for it's more malodorous and fetid than a parsnip is. Your wife can't help but love another. If Robert Lopart is her lover, he's quite the handsome man, he is, so why should I be secretive?

Men who stink should be cuckolded. Then blow again, her bowel did, right in the fellow's nose, and he wrenched his head back spasmodically.

"You lousy cuckold," says the lad, "an asshole doesn't smell as bad as you. By Saint Germain, I swear if you don't get your ass in gear, I'll punch you squarely in the nose."

At that instant her ass explodes and thunders forth a hearty one. The lad says, "He's leading me on, making me listen to his bleating!"

He swings the ladle at her, beating and striking her across her bottom, so even her private parts got some, because the gruel spreads out and leaks across and down her nether cheeks.

The woman then woke with a start because her dreams pressed on her hard.

Her fundament, completely soiled, dripping with porridge and befouled, she shoved against her husband's lap, who took offense at all that crap when he awoke and felt it there.

He says, "We are disgraced, I swear! Madam Mainsent, what's on your ass? I wish I were off in Alsace or far off in the Alps. Oh, this is a dirty trick, a loathsome business. If ever your relations knew about this, and the neighbors, too, you'd be degraded shamefully, both you and all your family."

When the young man heard what he said, he made his way back to his bed, feeling and groping with his right arm in the darkness of the night. He told his friend the accident. Their worthy host meanwhile went and drew a bath, and they scrubbed down.

The men, when morning came around, got up and took leave of their host,

who, being courteous and most well brought up, wished them both Godspeed and handed them two loaves that he'd for them as a gift of farewell.

Humbled before her man as well as shamed, the woman's ill at ease, for, thinking she had lain so, she's of the opinion that she had really done something foul and bad, since in her sleep she'd dreamt she did.

After the two peasants had bid their host farewell, they turned and went back where they'd come from: Ostrevant.