

Longing for White Feathers

< I AM WEARING A DRESS WITH BRIGHT GREEN TOP, WASHING UP GLOVES, NET STOCKINGS. I CARRY A STRING BAG WHILE PLAYING WITH A PIECE OF GREEN NETTING >

Netting.... A hair net...Fishing net..... Scouring pad... A bag....What did I get in my shopping bag today? Went fishing again, in the super market, hunted down the cheap deal, sank the tin of beans. Then dragged it all along the aisle in my net, caught in this stream of housewives like silvery eel thrown onto dry land where we flap and writhe under the glaring strip light sun. The dollar blinking hard.

My goodness, how I hate it!

Have stored it all away now, back to the dirty pans. This pad in my hand, so full of grime, glistening, left-over bits.....like little jewels of a rag-doll me.

Oh, I scrub harder, scour my way through this pan, right down to the pure silver where I can see my face lit up. Scratch away all the soot and dirt and grease, erase it all, then flow away, sucked through the sink. Fllluppp! All gone. And all that's left in the sink: my bright green scouring pad.

Must take a shower, but Oh!, it's so tight in this cubicle, with lime scale scabs all over it. The shower cap, plastic wrinkles, all wilted, sucked dry. I steam it all up so not to see, anything, nothing at all. And a world of dreams comes wafting up. Ahh, this feels good.

The fairy tale frog prince will come plodding in any time, green like my scouring pad – but soft, slimy...no, no, no: spongy... ..Soak it all up, sponge it all away. Oh, please, just get me out of here!

The bathroom now, little drops of water everywhere, fine misty spray. The rainbow once glowed in here. But now it's just another mirror to wipe.

I know what I should do: put the plug in, let the water rise beyond the shower screen to flood the whole damned place. Hmmmm, I can feel it, up to my ankles now. Oh look! I can skate over the tiles and splash in my little pool!

Ah, rock pools...where I used to play: so much land and sea, all around me! And the edgy surface under my feet, my fingers plugged into angel hair anemone. Where I used to swim now slime prevails. The slick of oil fields far ashore. I drift.... I drift.... into deepwater, like a bird all lost in the dirty black-brown goo.

I am rocked forth and back by the waves, engulfed by the arms of a world mostly unseen. From here, I look back onto my home land's coast, where the broad shouldered Mississippi had once innocently kissed the fated Gulf of Mexico.

His gold is buried beneath me, I feel it now. It's calling, irresistible, 5000 feet down. Buried beneath deep canyons and ocean ridges. Mud volcanoes with liquid gold under unbearable pressure. Burning to erupt.

"Just wait! Just wait!" they say. "Wait until I come down and drill a hole into your soil" they say. "Let me relieve you, let you shoot up into my greedy hands" they say. Undersea earthquakes give them the extra kick. A quiver that should be theirs.....

"I am safe up here", so at least they think. They can't see, can't hear, it's all blue sky...

Until the bubble bursts!

Can't keep the lid on any longer. It's coming, coming at me at full force. It blows me away, I almost black out. Can hardly see with all this stuff all over me.

Yuck! This is not the gold I wanted! I am covered, pitch-black instead. It sticks, the slick and sheen on the water, tar balls like chewy grit between my teeth. Droplets of oil make a chain around my neck: a choker to match my grim slimy cloak.

Wearing me down. Can't swim, can't fly anymore. Makes me go cold.

All washing up liquid in the world won't do to get rid of this grime. No skimming the surface, no burning at water level's height. It's deep down that the wounds need to heal, the gaping holes need to close, the shrapnel of charred metal removed.

No more drilling, the drill of my life: clearing up after, after all that has passed. With my sponge and my gloves and my scouring pad. Too much grease, too much dirt – I give it all up.

What's the weight of a bonkers old bird? After you have plucked all the sodden feathers, down to its goose pimply skin? Its net weight, I mean: that what you carry in your shopping bag at the end of the day.

Ah, give me back those feathers, not the dirty ones. It's pure white feathers, that I am longing for.

<I REACH INTO MY STRING BAG AND THROW OUT HANDFULS OF WHITE DOWN FEATHERS>

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