

BUT NOT A COUCH, DEAR CHILD

An old couch is turning into a woman. See how its breasts and thighs form their shapes. A pillow smiles, and she has a face.

He announces imminent wedding plans to his mother . . .

But you're not going to marry a couch—None of our people have ever married couches. We have always married beneath ourselves, true, but never have we gone so far as to take furniture into our connubial trust. At least with servants there's the risk of discovery, which assuages the guilt in such sowings, meaning the seeds, the spermatozoa, spread copiously among serving girls in an upstairs hall—As did your father, in the last hour of my refusing, lead me to that contagious, reciprocating motion of his pelvic insistence.

I said, No, someone will come. He said, No, I will come. I said, But you're already here. He said, Not yet, my love. And such and such and such—But not a couch, dear child . . .

CAPTAIN COW

A cow wearing four boots and a slicker moos at a man.

Why are you mooing at me?

I'm Captain Cow, and I've lost my ship.

I haven't seen your ship.

I thought it might have drifted this way, moos Captain Cow.

I haven't seen your ship.

I need milking, otherwise I could go dry, moos Captain Cow, It's getting past my milking time.

I haven't seen your ship.

It's time I was herded into the captain's quarters to study charts and make entries in my log book, and of course get milked. I get so stuffy in the milk bag, and could go dry. Then a bull would have to freshen me, moos Captain Cow.

Freshen you?!

Get me with calf. Of course at sea artificial insemination, moos Captain Cow.

Artificial insemination?

We don't have the facilities for keeping farm animals at sea; too bad about the landlubberly bull with a broken heart. Still, that I might go dry at sea, the need for artificial insemination.

I haven't seen your ship.

Just in case, because I really need milking, so stuffy in the milk bag. Oh, so stuffy, moosed Captain Cow . . .

THE CONVERSATION

There was a woman whose face was a cow's milk bag, a pink pouch with four dugs pointing out of it . . .

A man with a little three-legged milking stool comes. She stoops and he begins to milk her face . . .

THE COUNTRY LIFE

There was a man who would live the country life, which he thought was entered by wearing a riding habit while a horse kicked the hell out of you in some secluded barn set aside for the purpose, even as he would hear the hoofbeats of his neighbors riding to the hounds.

But you don't think that that's the all of it? he says, asking himself, Is there more?

There's the stepping in fresh cow manure and ruining one's chances of ever having a social life. That too? he murmurs to himself, There's more to living the country life than one might imagine.

Not to forget the unhappy love affair with a sheep of the female persuasion. Oh, dear, that sounds really hellish. That'd really make me feel like a country squire . . .

DEAR SELF

A man writes a letter to himself: Dear Self, I would like to know your plans that I might make mine accordingly.

He writes back: Dear Self, that's an interesting question. I suppose just hang around until death. Then, nothing . . .

He writes back: Dear Self, there must be something more than just the waiting?

He writes back: Dear Self, I cannot think what; just the waiting. Would you consider suicide?

He writes back: Dear Self, that's something I'd have to think about.

He writes back: Dear Self, please write soon, don't keep me waiting, thinking is all I seem to do these days . . .