SOCIETY FOR THE LADIES OF THE HOUSE

There was a chapter in Poland before the war. Now I’m a chapter of me. I study Escoffier, the delicate art of simmering unclouded broth courtesy of a Chinoise; from Rombauer the method for rolling dough to the translucency of a silk stocking. I polish stainless steel with olive oil, scrub my fingertips with a lemon half after mincing garlic. The piano waits at attention for each evening’s attempt at Schumann. I unfurl the newspaper, place it next to the leather chair. I bring the slippers, fancy ones, rimmed with Alpine braid. Domesticity rises through me till I flush like a safe and convenient battery-powered candle. I read Ladies’ Home Journal, “Ten New Ways to Please your Man,” and memorize each in pantomime. The house approves of me. It parades the sky in its windows, admits the opera of passing sirens, the swerving, rocking ambulance with its brave young driver, determined to reach the hospital in time to save the patient, to let him heal and return home, tentative but upright, to his one true love, the Lady of the House.
I'm just learning about jazz having competing elements or instruments that speak up for themselves like strings of pearls, like a girl named Anita.

Also shooting apostrophes with my apostrophe gun dragging them home to my poetry oasis playing them my new favorite song by Arturo Sandoval, “Eso es lo que hay.”

The question we ask about others: how is (s)he taking it? For example a widow part Cherokee married again but he wanted Charleston she didn’t now she has boyfriend very tall Cubano-Spanish and daughters in twenties, jobs they don’t like but seem happy. The question about ourselves: how do we get? Uninteresting spiritless envy; also sense that thing is not thing, but black-and-white jazz funeral, we its blowsy handkerchiefs.
The man I had been dating tossed small stems of narcissus into a water glass. They looked good.

“That’s what you get for having an artist as a boyfriend,” he said.

Not all I got. Also, anger For having “ignored” the photos of his paintings posted on the frig.

I pointed out his lack of response to pictures I’d emailed of my sister. He said, “Who cares about that? An older you, riding a horse.”

Cognitive dissonance happens for a reason. Can make us break up or down.

Design a glacier bedspread, with protective scree pillows. Confiscate items that announce themselves: TEA COZY, JUDY’S NOTEBOOK, and so on; expunge monograms, especially the satin appliques on imperial bathrobes.

Be the sworn protector of the names written with little stones in the desert, of KEATS writ in water,
of his cemetery in Rome, so decrepit,
where shadowy cats
loll among the graves, brushing
the faint patronyms
with the gaud of their tails.