F. J. Bergmann - Synecdoche

She had been enchanted by Prince Zartigluk’s delightful betrothal gifts: a suspended bower where a mossy couch nestled within the arc of a hemispherical cage filled with tiny, sweet-voiced finches, all in shades of leaf-green; an enormous albino lizard whose jewel-like magenta eyes opened and closed slowly, giving it an expression of somnolent benevolence; and a portrait that, for once, did not attempt to flatter her by attenuating her limbs, but instead, seemed to actually emphasize her muscular shoulders and large, capable hands. She’d been told that her imposing physique made her a poor prospect for matrimonial bliss, but he had taken one look at her at Perfetta de Sordre’s coming-out ball and proposed on the spot, which was one in the eye for little Perfetta, with her 13-inch waist and fragile, die-away airs.

And the wedding presents had been so numerous and munificent that she had failed to notice among them exactly what his relatives had given her: the alabaster washboard, the rosewood clothespins, the jeweled ladles, skewers, and whisks, the vermeil laundry tubs and tureens, and the scrub-brush with bristles of golden wire.

They took on a new and ominous significance as she looked around the vast cavern. Beneath the glittering turrets of the castle she had seen as the bridal procession rode up the mountain pass lay a putrescent, steaming realm of vats and ovens.

“All this is yours, my dear,” the Prince murmured in her ear as he gestured toward the turning spits and boiling cauldrons. “What will you be serving us for dinner tonight? No more than eight courses and two removes are necessary; we don’t stand on ceremony here. And I should mention that the bed-linens throughout the castle are overdue for laundering, which we would prefer to have done daily.”

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