

Madeleine Preston
Tanagras Archive

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The Comforts Fund Makers.

“Isn’t this civilized? Theodora exclaimed as the last of the group entered her small, cosy kitchen.

“All us ladies being able to congregate after hours like this and call it work!” She took everyone’s jackets and hung them on a coat stand by the door.

The table was set with a simple wooden platter arranged with home grown figs, blue cheese and hazelnut crackers next to a large greenish-blue glazed earthenware ashtray with a mottled miniature ceramic koala perched on it’s edge. A carafe of red wine and a stack of hand painted plates stood at the other end of the table next to two small-ish ceramic vases, one pink and one yellow.

“Work?! That’s a laugh! I’m not sure it’s even legal to call what I do WORK!!” retorted Sybil as she slumped down comically.

The others laughed and took their places around the table.

“Whose are these Dora?” Anne asked as she picked up one of the plates from the stack and inspected the underside.

“Oh they’re made by Una. She didn’t sign them, she rarely does. Cute aren’t they?”

Theodora surveyed the room, counting by nodding her head “How many glasses do we need? 6, is that right?” The others nodded in agreement.

“I’m not sure I’m going to be very productive tonight I’m afraid ladies. I’m utterly exhausted.” Nornie announced as she sliced open a fig.

“Babies sound like such hard work,” Offered Olive “have you thought about getting a Nanny?”

Nornie shrugged and nodded as she slowly masticated her fig.

“I am quite afraid of what might happen to my marriage if I took on hired help...”

“What on earth do you mean by that?” replied Olive “Surely it would improve!”

The others all laughed.

“I wouldn’t be so sure” said Nornie earnestly, “ I heard this crazy story the other day about a woman, an artist like us, whose life changed completely after hiring a Nanny.

“How so?” Olive leant forward.

“Well, she was married to a wealthy investment banker and together they had two young kids” continued Nornie with an air of drama.

“They hired a young nanny when the second child was born so that the woman could spend more time in her studio, you know, so she could work. The husband was never really home, too busy with making money I guess. So the woman spent almost every day co-ordinating the family with the Nanny; sharing meals, swimming lessons, school fundraisers, playing with the children together and eventually they fell in love. They kept it from the husband of course.”

She paused, took a sip of red wine and continued “This went on for quite a few years without a hitch, all of them perfectly happy. A problem arose when the youngest child was set to start school and there was no longer a need for a full time Nanny. So the woman set about seducing her husband to give her another baby, purely so she could keep the Nanny!”

There was a round of different reactions from the group, most notably a shriek of delight from Ola.

“A social entrepreneur!” She exclaimed in her typical jovial, sar-

castic manner.

“I went to high school with a woman like that,” added Sybil.

“Brave and totally unorthodox about getting her way. She once wrote the word ‘SHIT’ on the headmistress’ door and was never found out by the powers that be,’ Sybil paused ‘However by doing so she elevated herself to the level of some kind of God amongst the students, troubled as she was.’

All of the women in the room shared a love of this kind of direct communication, sometimes to their detriment. Some of them even worked hard to keep this trait at bay, so as to not upset their chances of sustaining any kind of career.

“Sometimes, if you are lucky, even droll imitations of radical acts can work wonders,” concluded Anne as she lit her cigarette.

They all nodded in agreement as she inhaled.

Tai Snaith, 2016.

Still Life (Painting) with Still Lives (Ceramic Installation), Oil on board with ceramic sculptures. Installation view, dimensions variable, 2016. Image credit: Docqment.





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