

Julian of NorWitch (aka Jessica Lowell Mason)

Ms. Placid and the Boysenberries

*A short story inspired by Gertrude Stein*

Once there were two gray maidens, one a slate always on the verge of silver and one a gray of rosedust and blue with platinum potential that had become too cool; one fair and one less so, one plain and one more so. Both maids, caught in a gray scale. Ms. Peppy, the silver-lined one, never truly got peppy for any old berry or any old boy. Ms. Placid, the one less so and more so, never truly got peppy for any old anything, least of all a boy.

On one rare occasion, however; Ms. Placid, who with a pure and noble interior could not deny her own ductility, did react with the prestige of a thumb through a gilet sack to another one of Ms. P's gray-green eyes crested in seasilver. Placid the Catalyst formed a smile of platinum nuggets at the electric sight of the much-lighter Peppy the Silverbush of Conductivity. The two became allies by alloying, fast, and were led, nugget by nugget, into hybridity's brambles.

As they dashed off into the brambles, Ms. Peppy was more than peppy for another, rather drab, Ms. Placid, who was not nearly peppy enough for her own liking, let alone for conduction.

Within those unripe brambles, a shower of forgetting fell. As it were, over the years, the metal gray maids lost their metals and themselves in the bush where so many berries were said to grow. Most ironic of all was that Ms. Peppy's peppiness did a bait-and-switch on her, and poor, disillusioned Ms. Peppy turned out to be more of a Ms. Placid than a Ms. Peppy (or even a Ms. Placid). All that was left of Ms. Peppy was in Ms. Placid, who grew a sort of hardened peppiness that would not be believed.

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Poor Ms. Peppy was more of a Ms. Pokey when she, wandering aimlessly through the wiry troubling of the boysenberry bushes, ran into Ms. Placid. For a second time, under a full bramble-speckled moon. Ms. Placid didn't seem herself when she felt Ms. Once-Peppy-Now-Pokey poke out at her from the behind of one of the berried bushes. Ms. Placid was rather alarmed and, it seemed, reliably-(n)unreadable Ms. Placid was on the verge of an emotion that only Ms. Perhaps-Peppy would recognize as being that of shocking peppiness.

Ms. Placid found her silver Peppy while separating a cluster of boysenberries, feigning hunger and satisfaction. Starling Ms. Peppy, once again peppered in and peppering her peppy at the sight of dear Ms. Placid and her dreadfully ill-fated cluster of boysenberries, did run too excitedly toward her stoic counterpart and quite carelessly knocked the boysenberries queer out of Ms. Placid's malleable clutches.

That Ms. Peppy would not be contained was abundantly clear in her incessant puckering and popping. Ms. Placid was platinumized at once and could not maintain her gray. It was only moments later that Ms. Peppy had pushed the metal on her brambles and encroached— crushing the boysenberries while embracing her dear liquefied Ms. Yes, Ms. P landed on the boysenberries with all three phalanges on each delighted foot(note) and colored the grass a brilliant shade of boysen to alloy pep and place. The grass was green no more; the nerve of metal mistress toes, ever towing the line!

The uppers of her leveling feet were huckleberry messengers lined in luster, shriveled and merloted into a most staining shade of boysen, and were rising in gleaming, quarried peppiness

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at the feel of their pressing. The thermal center and its extremities did rise, the orbital energies did overlap. The boys came off the berry bushes. Chromium and nickel berries grew immediately in their absence. Ratios shifted, bases became current, metallurgy gained a new aspect, as the loaded loganberry uppers of Ms. Peppy's did land themselves again on the beds and painted toes of Ms. Placid. How they landed! How tightly bound and shining they were in landing! It was no surprise to Ms. Place that Ms. Pep would color her toes and turn them to cosmos, yet it took her by every bit of her minor and muted surprise when she, Ms. Place, did feel *her...* toes dance unbeknownst in Ms. Pep's boysendance.

Ms. P's toes danced with Ms. P's phalanges riding on them. The two of them, peppy and placid - not knowing where to lay the boysenblame, danced onto the berried and amorphous ground with their futurist feet unbound so long and hard that the boysenberries were no more than skins for the labor and toil of the the meadow-meanderers, the ground no more than a canvas of awakening, a brambling banging of cabernet midnight carbonated with the crystals of osmium. Ms. P and Ms. P driftly dancing across their canvas, boy-free, mixed with violet platinoids and argenites, shooting thornless on their uppers and lowers, not knowing *which Ms, which P*.

The two Ms. Ps, how they danced and crashed zig-zags through the bushes until they waltzed their refined staining through the once-gray greenery, into the dirt, until they turned the boysenballs to red mists and musts, until they garnered the earth a new, flying rug of boysenlove, a preserve of aggregate, unorthodox, who-am-I, who-are-You, whoo-m-and-who-m solid girlsenberry girlsenhood. The two (n)unidentifiable ( )lasses march-ed lofty, advancing across a mess of minerals -Pacific, European, Himalayan, Common, Dewy- across the elevating fields,

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now boysen meadows without boys, in their boysen and girlsen allyship alloy, and were never known as she-and-she again. They, making mineral-grass of berry glass of the parched floor and reflectivity of the gray bush, became Shhee. And Shhe. And Shhey. And Shheye. Alloyed.

Double e'd. Berried. Buoyed. Nunloosed into the boysengirlsenberry bush, their sanctyewairy. P

x 2 = 2P. Shh-ee-d. Ms. P.