

“YOU ARE BORN, YOU GROW UP, YOU BECOME A WIFE.
BUT WHAT IF IT WASN'T THIS WAY?”

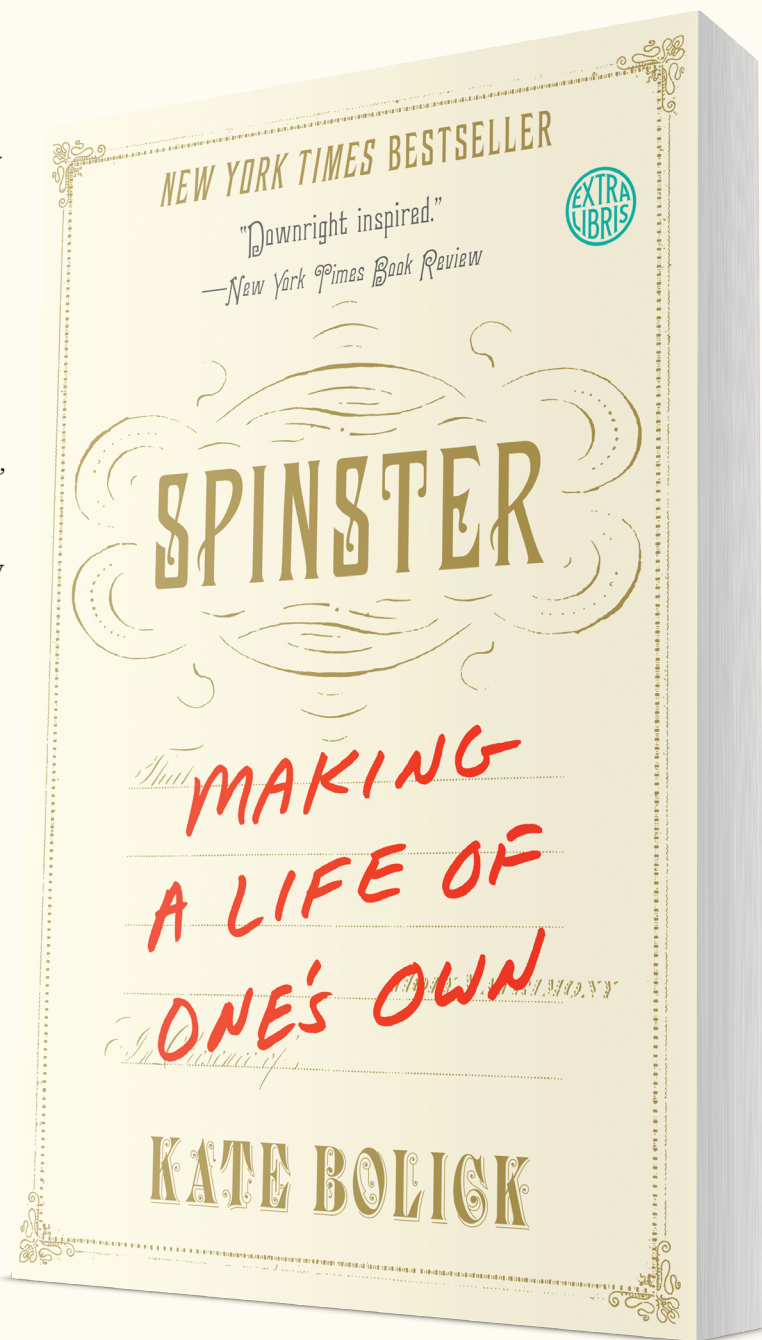
—FROM *SPINSTER*

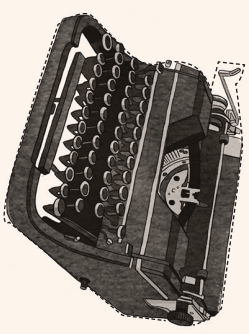
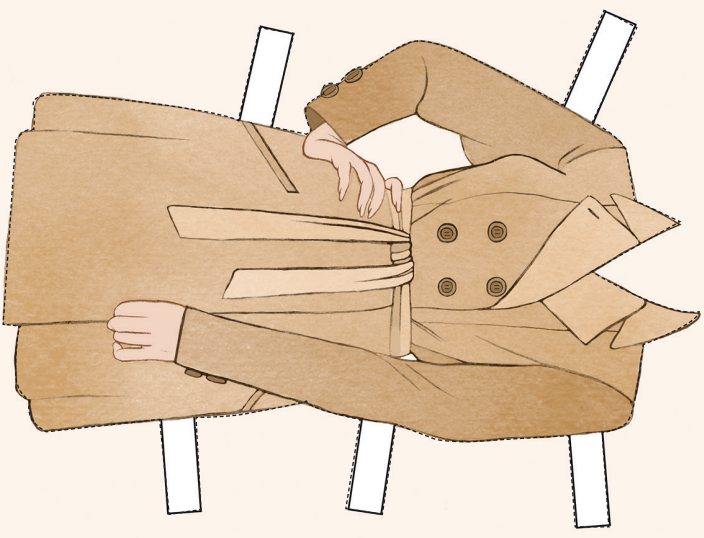
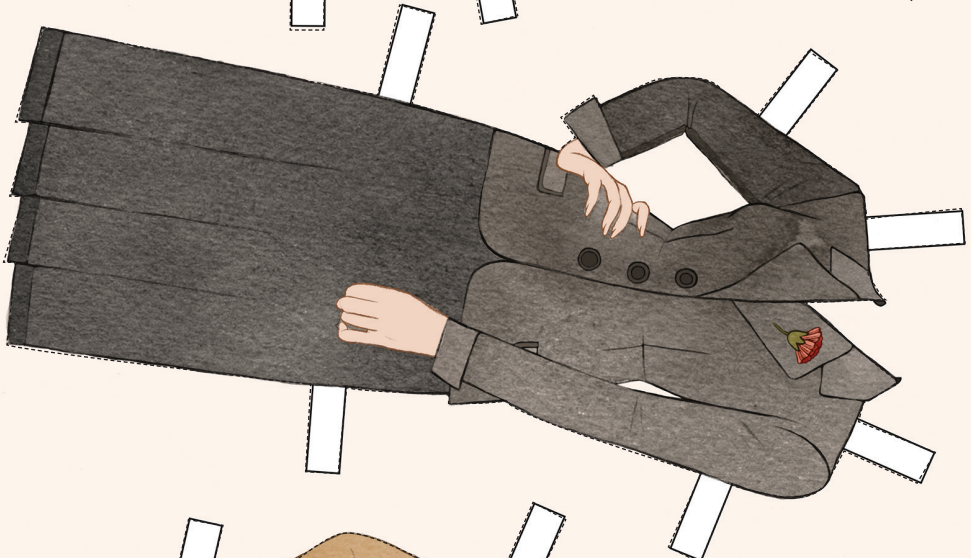
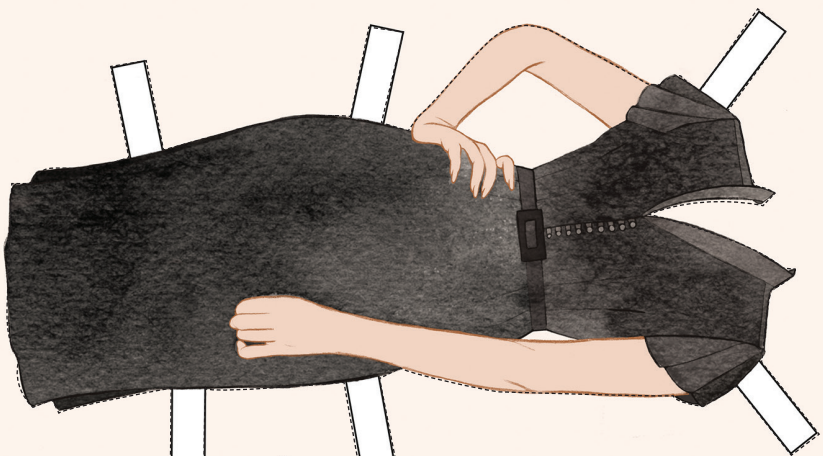
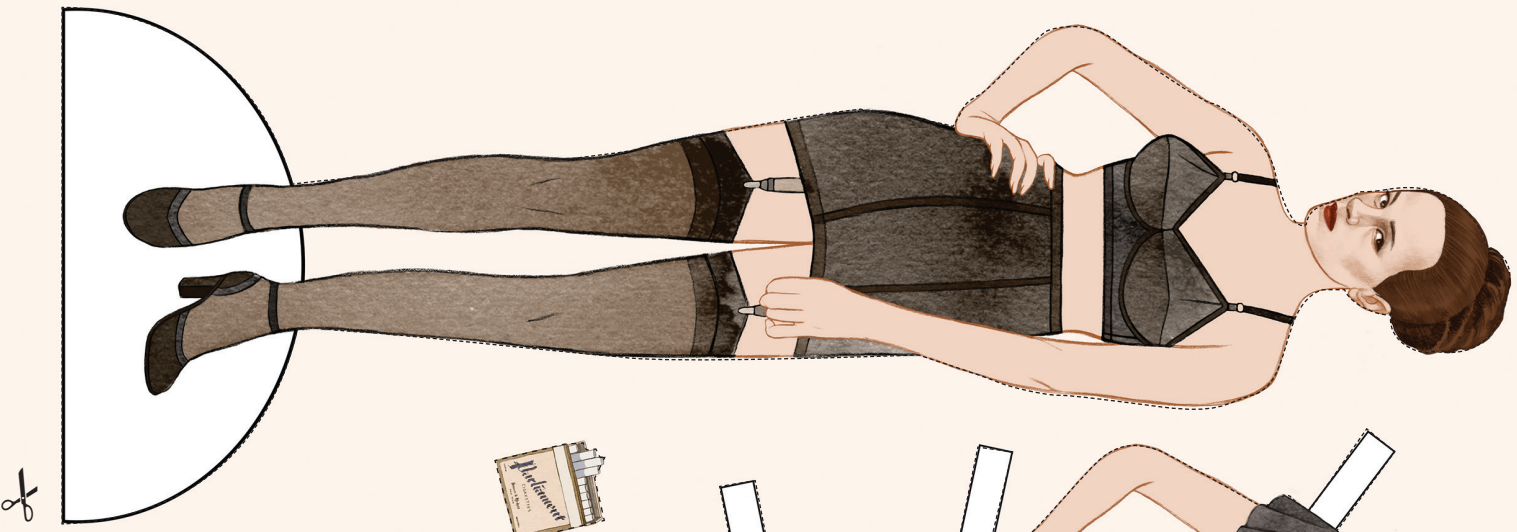
DEAR READER,

I am so pleased to introduce you to *Spinster*, my first book. It's a memoir by way of biography—the story of my own coming-to-adulthood woven through the lives of five women from the last century: columnist Neith Boyce, essayist Maeve Brennan, social visionary Charlotte Perkins Gilman, poet Edna St. Vincent Millay, and novelist Edith Wharton. I call them my “awakeners,” for how their genius, tenacity, and flair for drama emboldened me to live independently at the dawn of this century, and showed me that contemporary debates about settling down, and having it all, are timeless. Explore these awakeners with a cocktail menu, a recommended reading list, and a discussion guide. I'd love to hear about who your awakeners might be. Follow #spinster to join the conversation on Twitter.

Yours truly,

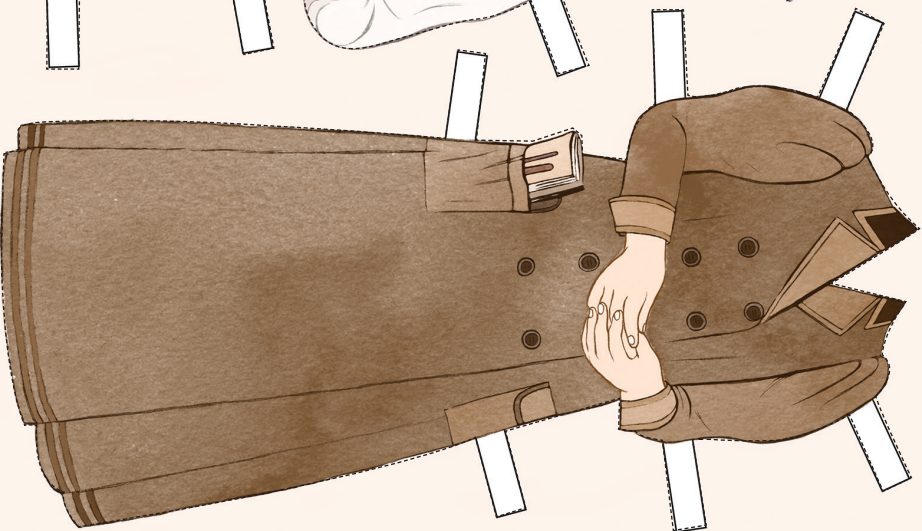
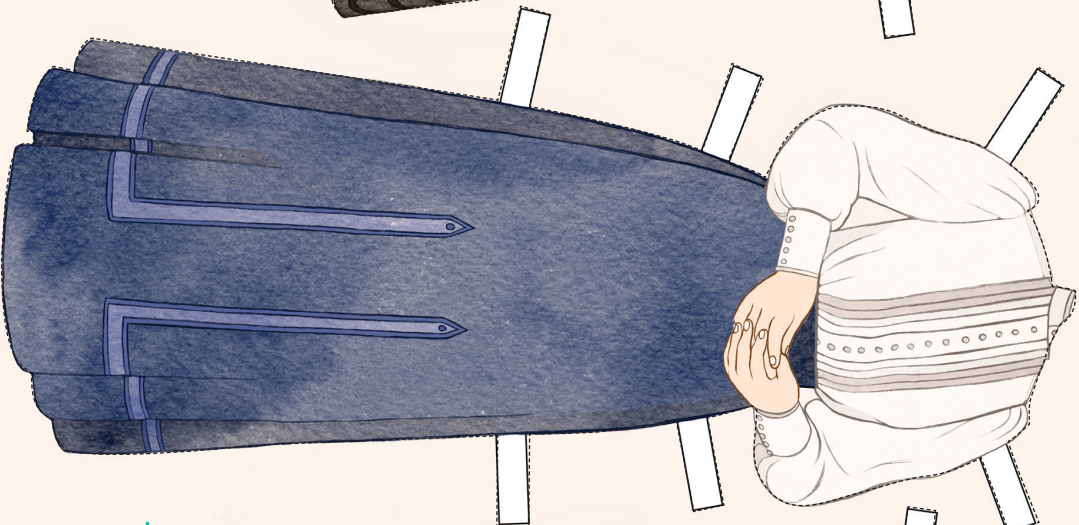
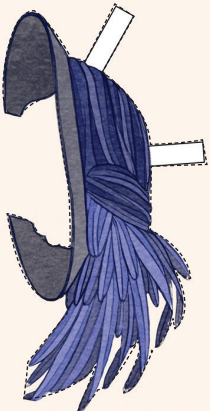
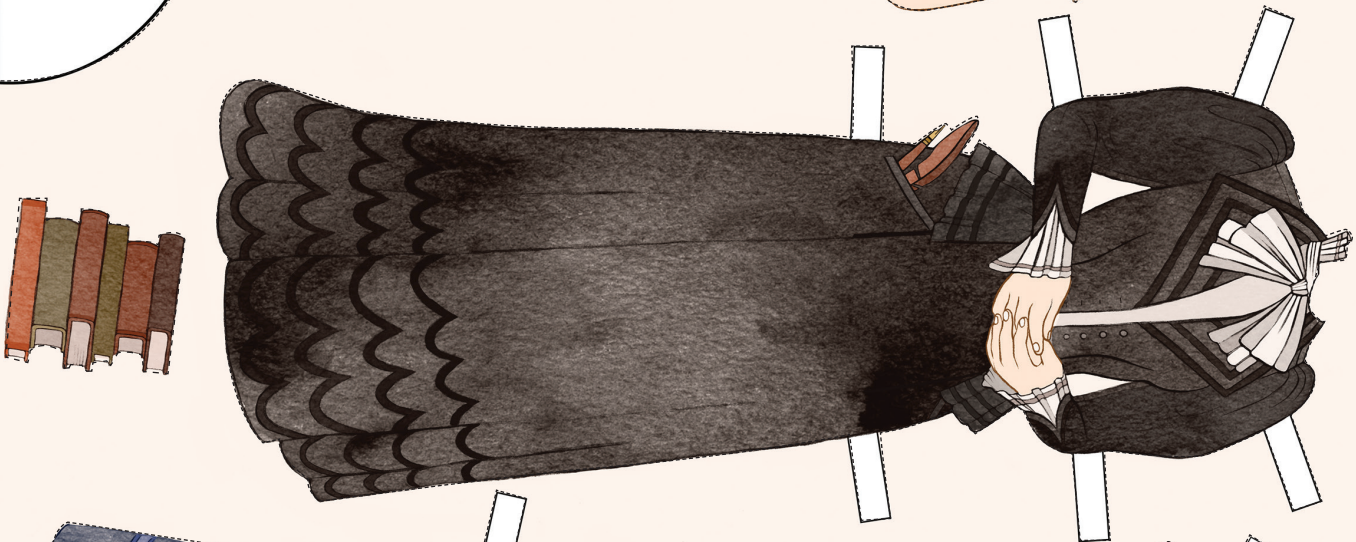
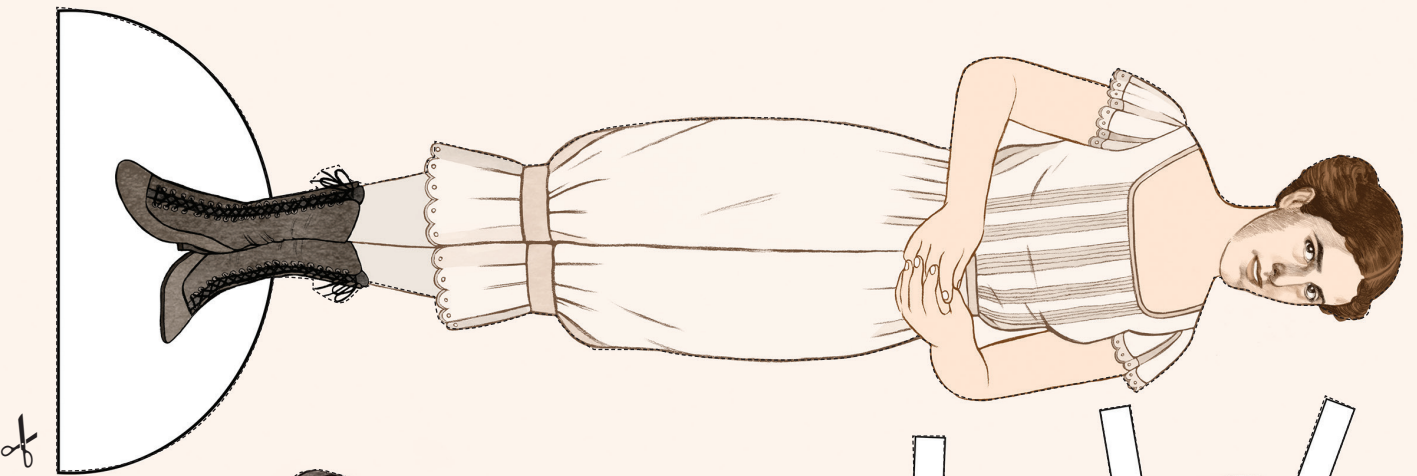
KATE BOLICK





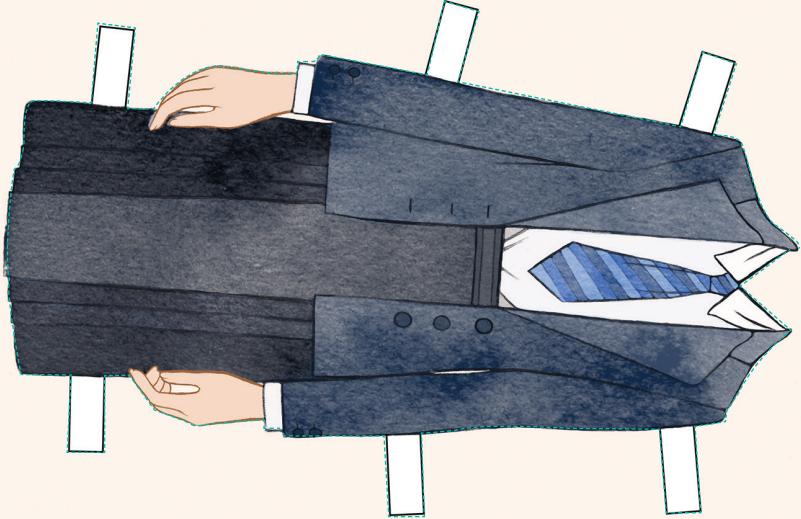
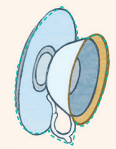
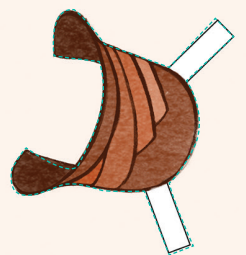
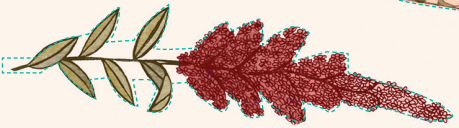
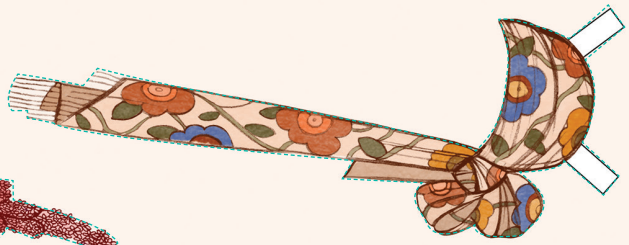
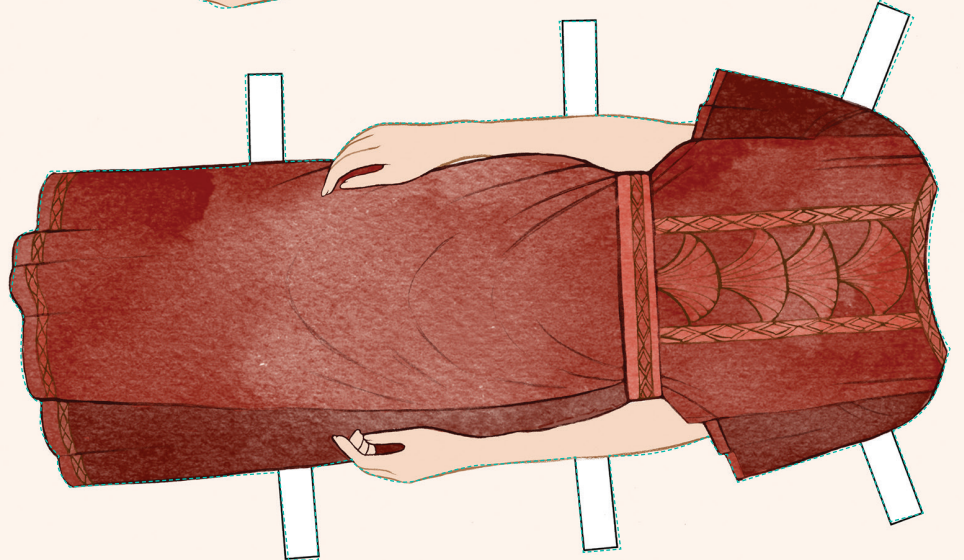
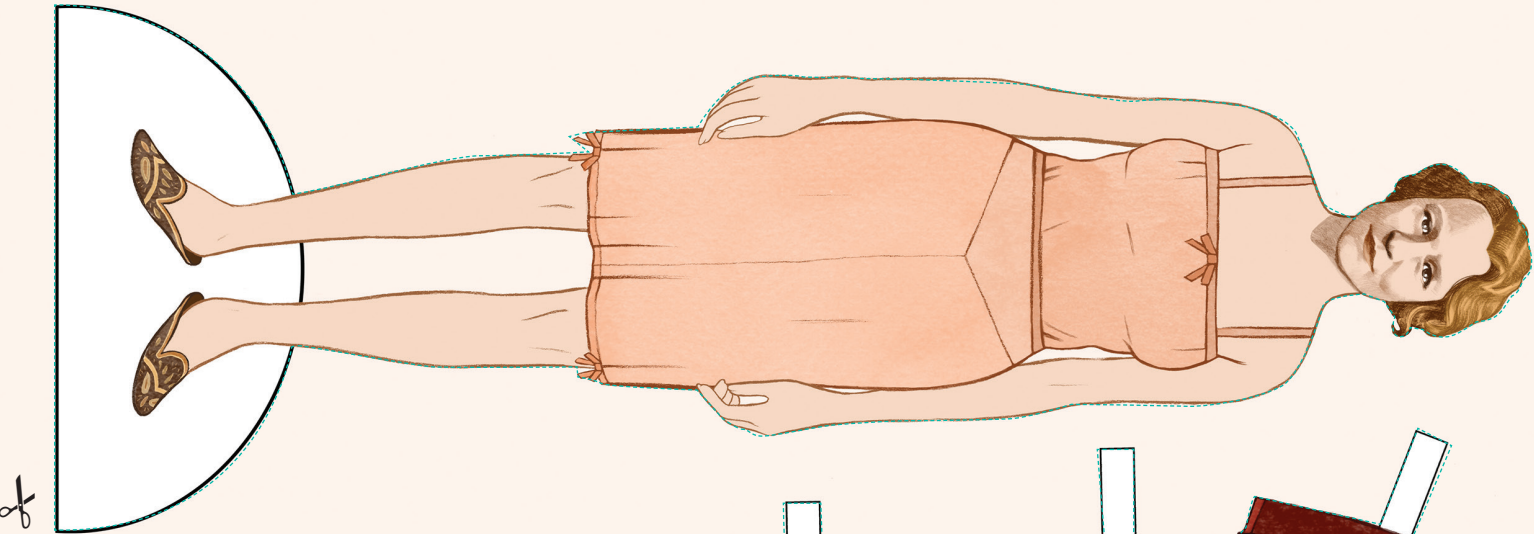
“She was the only one of the lot of them who hadn’t gone off and got married. She had never wanted to assert herself like that, never needed to.”

—**MAEVE BRENNAN**



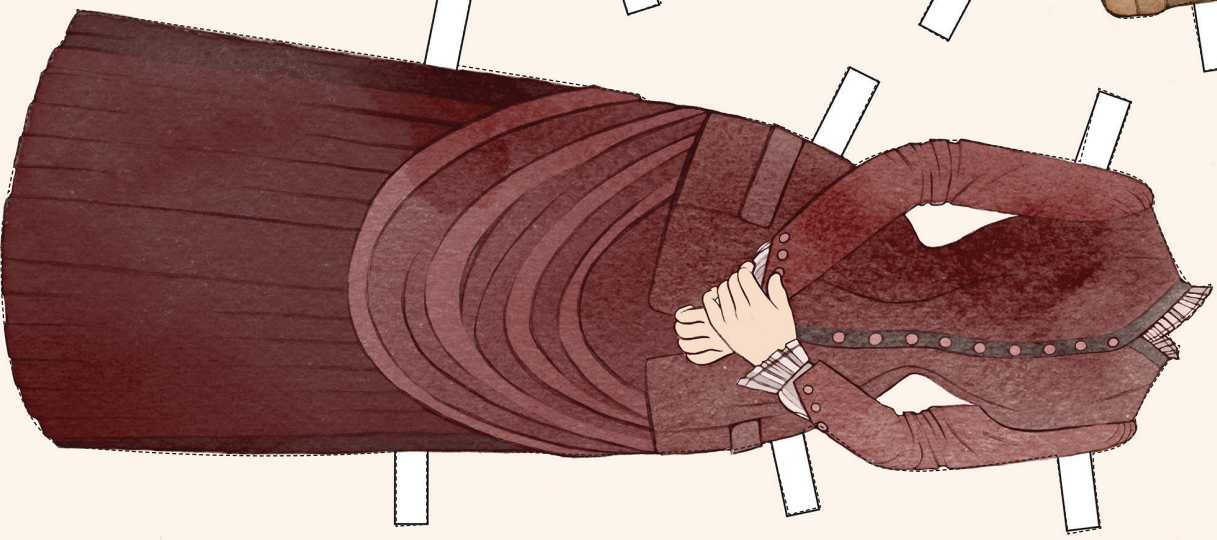
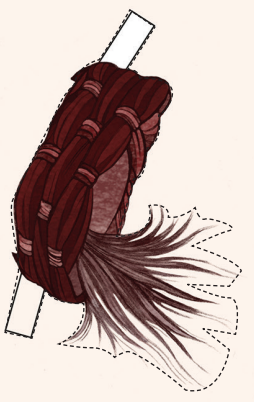
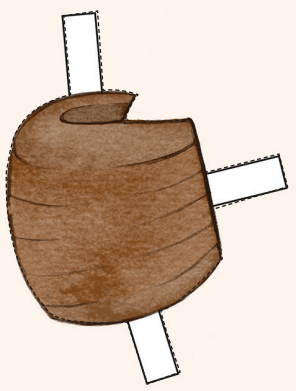
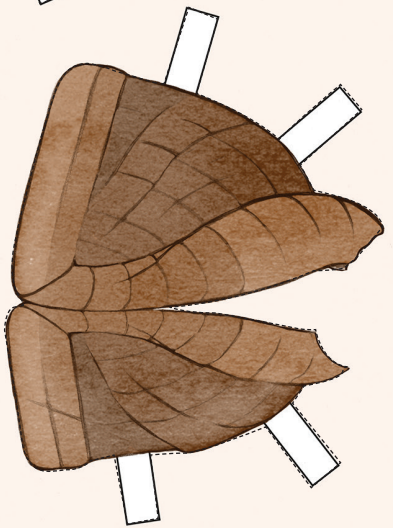
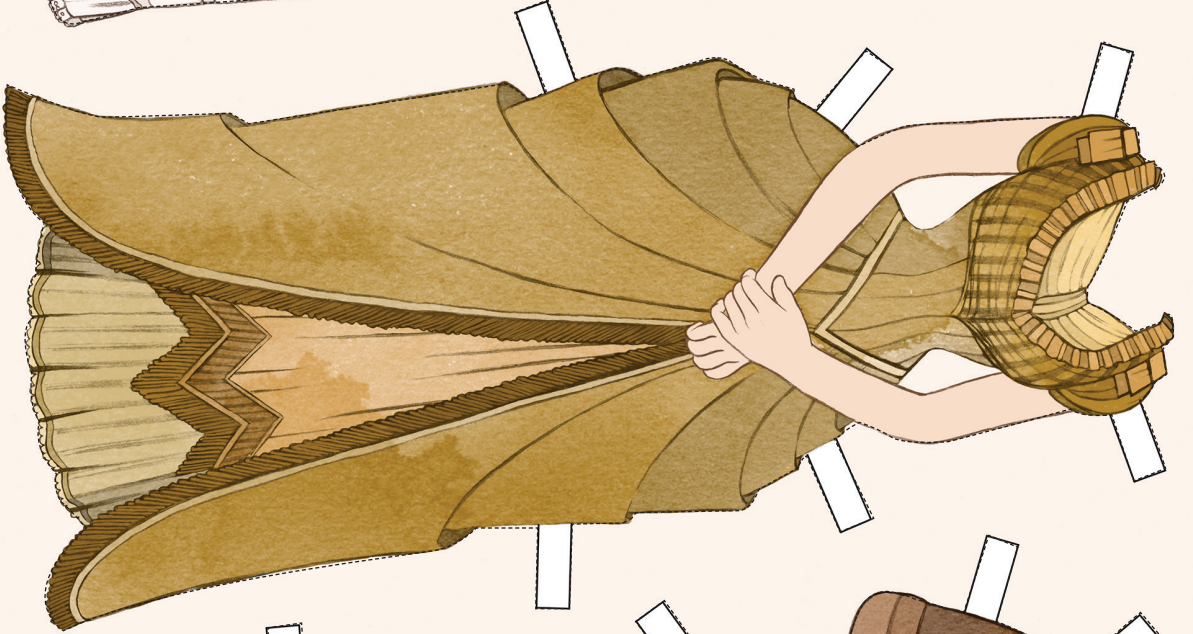
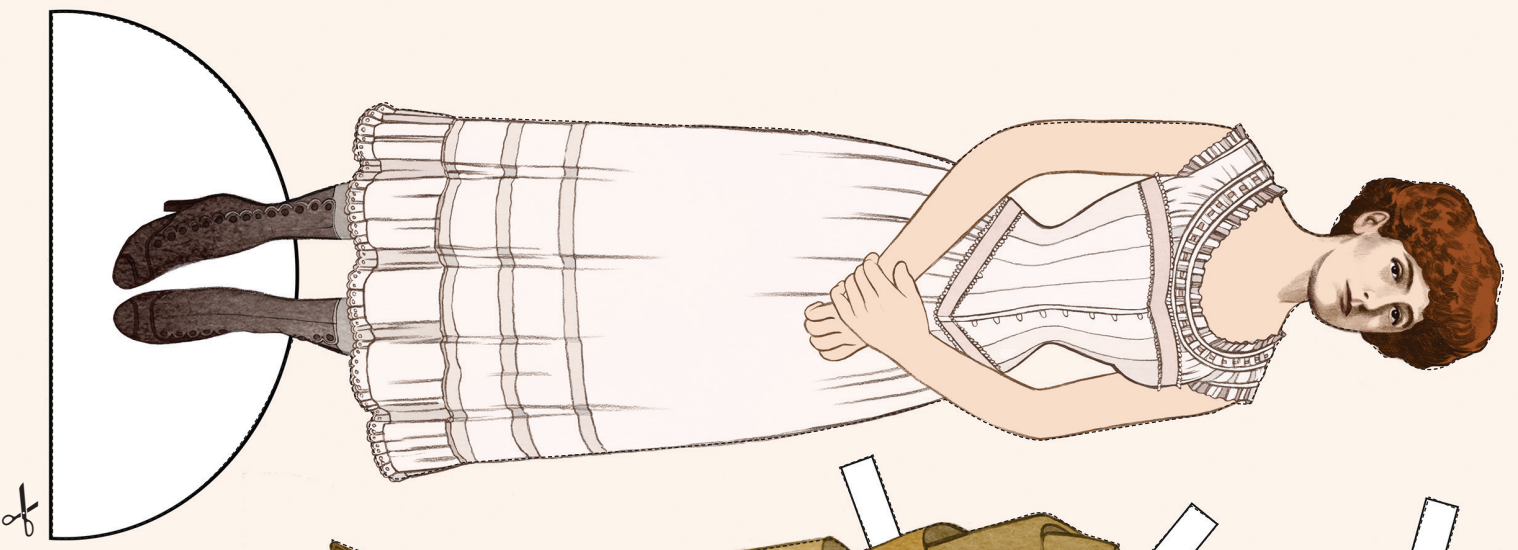
“The one predominant duty
is to find one’s work and do it.”

—**CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN**



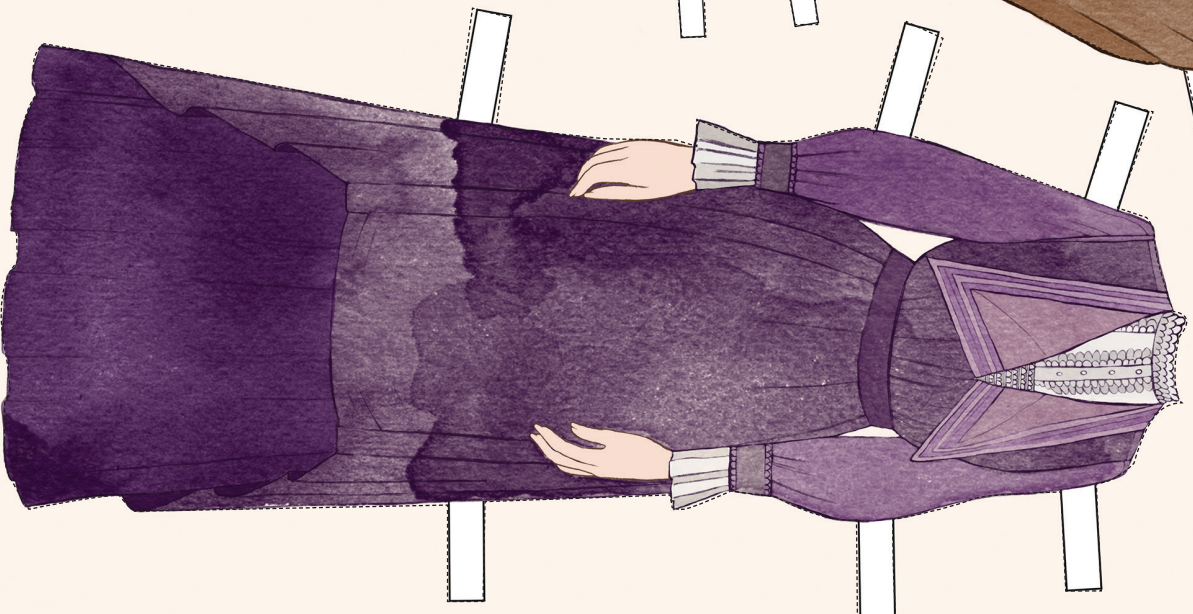
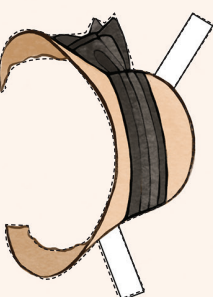
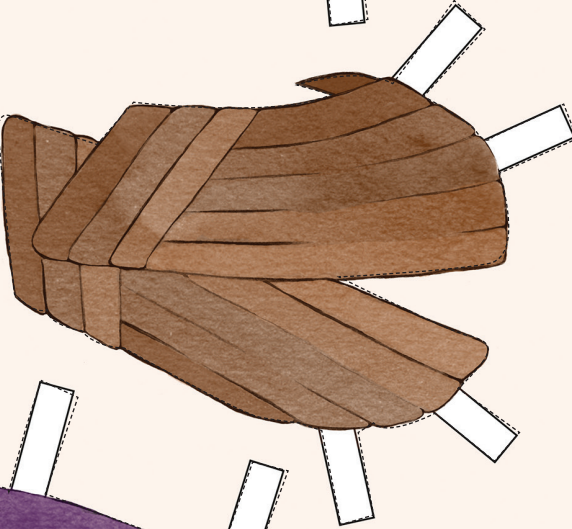
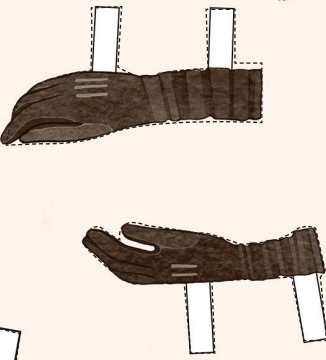
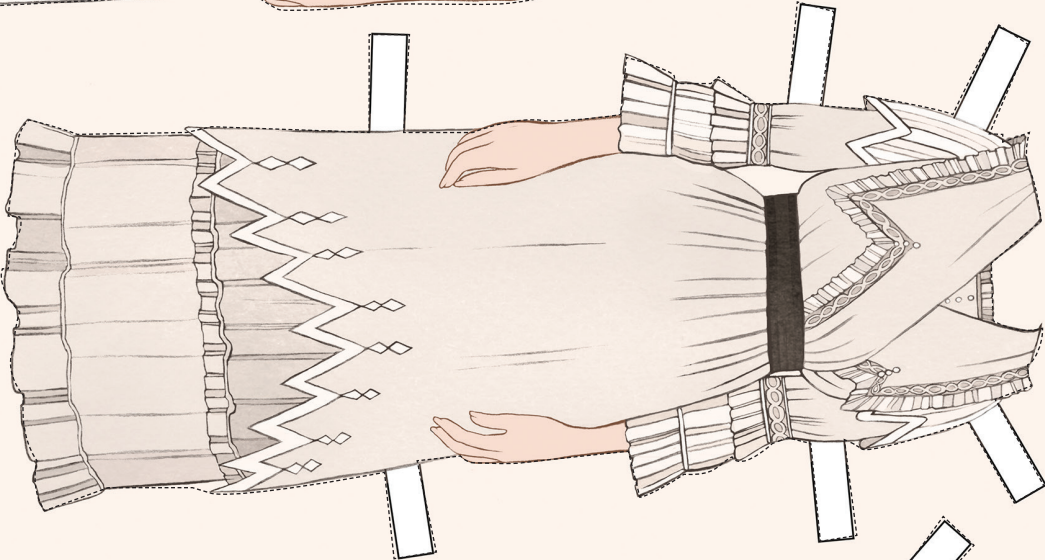
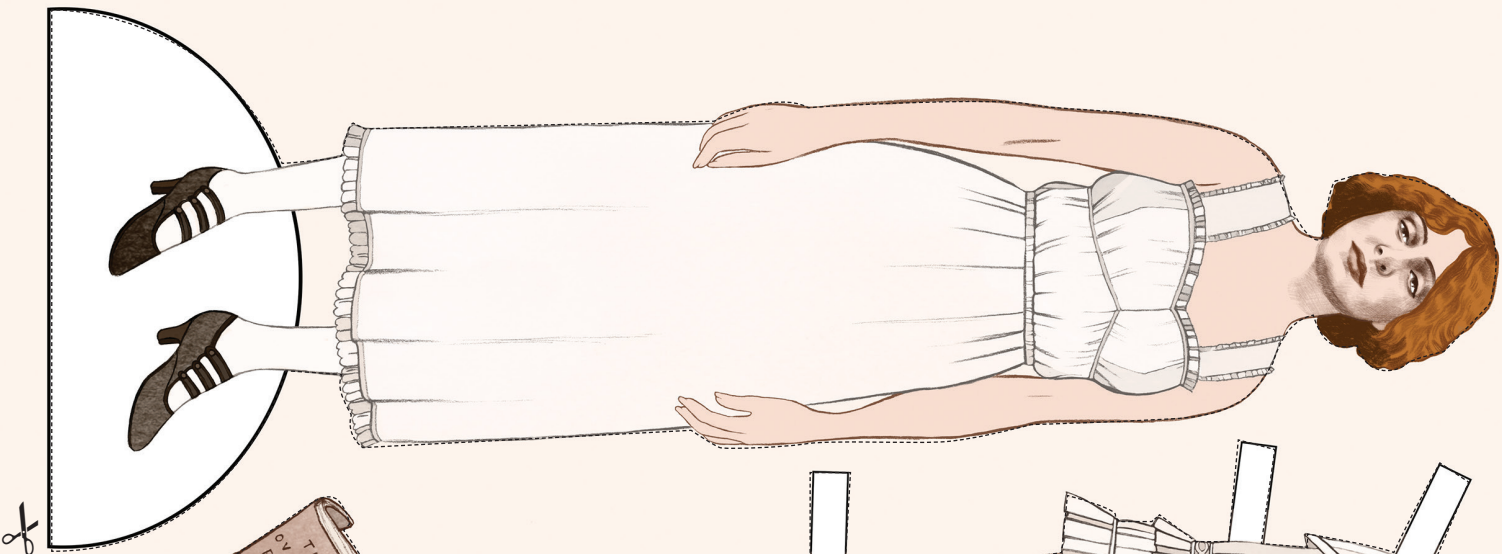
“Please give me some good advice in your next letter. I promise not to follow it.”

—EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY



“I believe I know the only cure,
which is to make one’s center of
life inside of one’s self.”

—EDITH WHARTON



"I never shall be an old maid,
because I have elected
to be a Girl Bachelor."
—NEPTUN BOYCE

READING GROUP GUIDE

If you would like to share your responses with the author, you can post your answers to these questions on social media using the hashtag #spinster.

1. *Spinster* opens with the following statement: “Whom to marry, and when will it happen—these two questions define every woman’s existence.” Do you find this to be true in your own life? If so, how have you navigated these expectations?
2. On the pressure to marry, Bolick believes, “Men have their own problems; this isn’t one of them.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. Edith Wharton coined the term *awakeners* “to describe the books and thinkers who’d guided her intellectual studies.” One of Bolick’s goals is to inspire women and men to find their own awakeners. In your own life, who would your awakeners be?
4. What makes a woman single? Is it a matter of marital status? Of habits, or state of mind?
5. The term spinster has a divisive history. What does the word mean to you? Has this changed since reading the book? When you imagine a spinster, what does she look like, and would you ever describe yourself as one?
6. How does spinsterhood compare to bachelordom? Does society celebrate the single man?
7. In her relationship with W, Kate senses the “friction between the intimacy we shared and the autonomy required to become the people we wanted to be.” Do you think individuals can grow to reach their full potential while in a relationship? Is romantic solitude necessary for personal growth?
8. After her mother’s death, Bolick takes inspiration from her mother’s late-in-life desire to forge an independent path for herself. How do you think our parents’ aspirations and choices define the decisions we make? Does this change as we age?
9. Bolick describes the “spinster wish” as “the extravagant pleasures of simply being by myself.” Are there solitary activities that you love? Are they necessary to your happiness?
10. Of all of Bolick’s awakeners, Maeve Brennan’s story ends perhaps the most tragically. Yet, Maeve’s ability to express herself endures in spite of her circumstances. What did you learn from her? Do you consider her story a warning, or rather an example of a unique and full life?

RECOMMENDED READING

For further reading on the pioneering "awakeners" in *Spinster*, please refer to the books and collections listed below.

CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN

- *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: A Biography*, by Cynthia J. Davis

Gilman was once known as the intellectual force behind the women's movement, and her work paved the way for economic progress across the country. Davis's book is an authoritative look at Gilman's controversial life as a writer, activist, lecturer, divorcée, and mother.

- *Herland*, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Herland is a fantasy novella about a feminist utopia in South America. Told with humor and wit, the story follows three male explorers who stumble onto an all-women civilization and must confront their assumptions about women in society.

EDITH WHARTON

- *Edith Wharton*, by Hermione Lee

A veteran literary biographer, Lee uncovers the complexity of Wharton's life to illustrate a surprisingly modern woman whose work continues to impact us nearly a century later.

- *A Backward Glance: An Autobiography*, by Edith Wharton

A charismatic examination of her own life, Wharton's memoir, published three years before her death, looks at her childhood and culminates with her experiences after World War One.

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

- *Savage Beauty: The Life of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, by Nancy Milford

Unprecedented access to Millay's papers gives Milford's biography a searing authority, revealing the ways in which the celebrated poet captivated her audiences (and lovers) while navigating a deep yet tormented closeness with her sisters and mother.

- *The Selected Poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, by Edna St. Vincent Millay, Edited by Nancy Milford

In the words of Milford, "These are the poems that made Edna St. Vincent Millay's reputation when she was young. Saucy, insolent, flip, and defiant, her little verses sting the page." Millay's work was revolutionary for her generation, yet her lyrical voice is timeless.

MAEVE BRENNAN

- *Maeve Brennan: Homesick at the New Yorker*, by Angela Bourke

The only biography of The New Yorker columnist and short-story writer, whose life began in Dublin and ended in obscurity. Bourke chronicles Brennan's triumphs and charts her later years when she lived as a nomad on the streets of New York City.

- *The Springs of Affection: Stories of Dublin*, by Maeve Brennan

In these stories, Brennan returns to her Dublin roots and explores the many ways in which love impacts our lives: through a marital love that fades, a sibling love that becomes domineering, and through maternal love.

RECOMMENDED READING

NEITH BOYCE

- *The Modern World of Neith Boyce: Autobiography and Diaries*, edited by Carol DeBoer-Langworthy

Boyce's autobiography illuminates her open marriage, and her place in the revolutionary literary and cultural movements of the twentieth century. Untethered to time and factual details, her memoir led the way in popularizing creative nonfiction.

- *The Bond*, by Neith Boyce

The Bond examines the married life and “bond” between free-spirited and independent Teresa and her husband, Basil. Teresa is not dissimilar to Boyce herself, and the story argues both the benefits and the limitations of the institution of marriage.



EDITH WHARTON (JANUARY 24, 1862-AUGUST 11, 1937)

Like the urban elite she chronicled in *The Age of Innocence* and *The House of Mirth*, this masterful social satirist spent summers at her country manse, where she'd greet her guests upon arrival with a glass of champagne. The French 75's fizzy elegance nods to Wharton's privilege, but uses a garnish that hints at her rustic side. Try a few sage leaves, or a sprig of laurel.

FRENCH 75, SCHILLER'S LIQUOR BAR CLASSIC COCKTAILS

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 oz. dry gin | 1 Pour the gin, Simple Syrup, and lemon juice into a cocktail shaker with ice. |
| ½ oz. Simple Syrup | |
| ¼ oz. freshly squeezed lemon juice | 2 Shake well for 15 to 20 seconds, and strain into a chilled champagne flute. |
| 3 oz. champagne | |
| 1 lemon twist, for garnish
(you can also use sage leaves or a sprig of laurel) | 3 Top with champagne and garnish with a lemon twist. |



MAEVE BRENNAN (JANUARY 6, 1917-NOVEMBER 1, 1993)

A glamorous Irish ex-Pat and longtime staff writer for the *New Yorker*, Maeve Brennan's first-person column about life in Manhattan inspired Kate Bolick and countless other women to live alone in the city (or at least dream of it). With its Irish whiskey and Baileys Irish Cream, this cocktail from Keith McNally's Schiller's Liquor Bar tips to her heritage and would warm the most cynical of New York hearts.

NUTTY IRISHMAN, SCHILLER'S LIQUOR BAR SEASONAL DRINKS

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 5 oz. freshly brewed hot coffee | 1 Pour the hot coffee into a heated mug. |
| 1 oz. Baileys Irish Cream | 2 Add the Baileys, Frangelico, and Jameson. |
| ½ oz. Frangelico hazelnut liqueur | 3 Top with whipped cream and enjoy. |
| ½ oz. Jameson Irish whiskey | |
| Dollop of fresh whipped cream | |



EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY (FEBRUARY 22, 1892-OCTOBER 19, 1950)

America's first rock-star poetess, Edna St. Vincent Millay toured the country after winning the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1923, bringing her revolutionary lyrics and bohemian lifestyle to the masses. Her polyamorous love affairs (with both genders) burnished her public image—as did her red tresses, which the Opera captures with its generous pour of Dubonnet Rouge.

OPERA, SCHILLER'S LIQUOR BAR CLASSIC COCKTAILS

1 ½ oz. dry gin
 ½ oz. maraschino liqueur
 ½ oz. Dubonnet Rouge

- 1** Pour the gin, maraschino liqueur, and Dubonnet Rouge into a mixing glass with ice.
- 2** Stir well with a bar spoon for approximately 40 to 45 revolutions, and strain into a chilled martini glass.



CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN (JULY 3, 1860-AUGUST 17, 1935)

Prominent feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman took down the popular (and ill-conceived) “rest cure” with her haunting short story “The Yellow Wallpaper,” which made her instantly famous. Devoted to self-reliance and clean living, she would appreciate the health benefits of The Particulars, a nonalcoholic green juice drink.

THE PARTICULARS, ADAPTED FROM SHAKE: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON COCKTAILS

4 shots apple cider
 1/2 handful of kale
 1 shot fresh lemon juice
 ½ cube cane sugar
 3 slices of fresh ginger

- 1** Add the kale, lemon juice, cane sugar cube, and ginger to the shaker.
- 2** Muddle the ingredients in the bottom of the shaker until thoroughly crushed and the sugar has mostly dissolved.
- 3** Add the apple cider and ice to above the level of the liquid and shake vigorously for 15 seconds.
- 4** Strain the mixture into Collins glasses containing large cubes of ice.



NEITH BOYCE (MARCH 21, 1872-DECEMBER 2, 1951)

“Talk, like wine, was served in little shallow glasses and you had to be careful of them; you mustn’t be excited by an idea or an emotion, or you might spill your wine,” wrote novelist and playwright Neith Boyce about the Manhattan literary scene. In 1898 she penned a column for *Vogue* called “The Bachelor Girl” about her life as a happily unmarried woman. She’d likely have a laugh over the Trophy Wife.

TROPHY WIFE, SCHILLER'S LIQUOR BAR ARTISANAL UPDATES

1¼ oz. dry red wine
 1¼ oz. Chambord black
 raspberry liqueur
 ½ oz. cranberry juice

- 1 Pour the wine, Chambord, and cranberry juice into a cocktail shaker with ice.
- 2 Shake well for 15 to 20 seconds, and strain into a chilled martini glass.