



LINNAEUS

The 26 Sexual Practices of Plants

Emily Skillings

for Marcella Durand

I

Linnaeus is given a flower to hold, memorizes pictures by their sounds, and is refused access to a vital world of touch. Lines (of many sizes) begin to separate the wild objects waiting to be known.

II

The bristly ox-tongue is blooming. It must be 5am. The ox-beard is followed by the goat's beard at 6. He must wait patiently for the spotted cat's ear to open itself at 9 before the new maid comes.

III

Once distilled water is poured into 6 empty jars the bulbs can go in. The leaves of sugar cane plants will grow to long whips. The saccharine spontaneity of waving—*Hello, I'm here, Linnaeus.*

IV

Linnaeus finds an unopened bottle of lemon tea on the sidewalk in front of a manicured tree/bench partnership.

V

The greatest pleasures in detail. A tiny hand around a stem, the mouth on 6 bitter petals, some soil to run around in.

VI

Linnaeus touches his ear and hears his jars of water singing to each other. Linnaeus touches his other ear and hears "You are making sense."

VII

Diandria-Monogynia: two stamens and one carpel remind Linnaeus of two men and one woman in bed together. Linnaeus celebrates in private.

VIII

Linnaeus takes out his notebook at social gatherings to draw the bouquets. There's a long wavy line, and then things move away from the line. Suits lean in.

IX

There are too many chemical substances, too many cellular systems, too many ways of calling a thing, too many species of lotus, too many ways to fragment the whole.

X

The elevator noise from the dormitory (adjacent to the lab) bothers Linnaeus every 3 minutes. The internal workings of another building—esophagus, gut, colon—make little deposits. Little human turds tumble out. Up down up. Girls emerge dressed like perfect names.

XI

Linnaeus coins *Cryptogamia*: plants that conceal their reproductive parts. These are the softest, moistest classes: mosses, algae, fungi, ferns. They are the ones he most likes to touch. Wet blankets & deeply known surfaces.

XII

Linnaeus thinks he will draw a goat in pencil. He draws the nose first, then one horn, the foot, rump. It looks nice taped to the window with its organs not showing, not shining through.

XIII

Linnaeus counts quivering bundles with beige coverings. Some are gold. The tiniest of hairs. Things open. Colors fold into fibrous prongs, sticky ends, hidden centers of pleasure. His hand becomes part of his desk.

XIV

One day, something was missing. Linnaeus looked for it in all the usual places. Under things. In things. Around things. Nothing had moved since the last time he saw it. He moved a poppy head to find it writhing underneath.

XV

Linnaeus opened his mouth and a new word flew out. This word was lost months ago in the recesses of his soft, spacious gut, but came out only to be unclassifiable. It taunted Linnaeus, even danced on his forehead some nights.

XVI

On paper the pods line up like little clear dolls and all have their own ages. Like *Fig. 8*, who is, incidentally, 8 and *Fig. 2*, who wears an intricate headdress.

XVII

At night Linnaeus is distracted
by the flicker of someone
at the window
which is just his mind—
or maybe a cat. He watches the
night through his jars.

XVIII

When there are questions
about naming it is best to
consult the soil. First bury
your feet under three thick
inches. Next open and close
your mouth with purpose.

XIX

Linnaeus begins to want everything with his eyes. The light shining through glass makes everything in his lab a kind-of shelved cake, dusted with omniscient sugar.

XX

Linnaeus is feeling old. Periodically, little pieces of skin fall from his face and land in his lap, which reminds him of other great transitions in nature, namely the snake's.

XXI

Handwriting becomes smaller as the purpose of work becomes less clear. Linnaeus signals that which he doesn't know with a "... " and wishes that his ... wasn't so bountiful.

XXII

A woman tells Linnaeus that he smells like moss. What can he do to rid himself of this moss smell? He spends the rest of the day smelling himself, but only smells fabric, paper, maybe wet chicory.

XXIII

Linnaeus meets his wife in a field between the campus and the out-of-campus. She is good at leaning on things, he notices: banisters, car frames, the occasional tail-end of a sentence.

XXIV

Two stamens cross each other at a point which is called
. . . is drastically different from the vanilla bean shell, particularly in areas where:
a. faint line **b.** small joints
c. is called open capsule

XXV

Linnaeus catches a colleague eating a "plumcot" in the cafeteria. The splicing of plum with apricot makes swollen, juicy sense. She is noticeably embarrassed but continues to eat.

XXVI

In a portrait of Linnaeus he holds a sprig, which migrates up his red coat and is absorbed by his buttons. The leaves become the buttons, become hard shapes on his torso, become something not leaves and not buttons but an idea of both that is replicated.

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