Captivating Rogue

Helen Ward Gall

1969

All innocence, you lounge upon your limb:
A paragon of virtue, soft, benign,
Viewing with complacence all you see;
Delightful rascal, what goes through your mind?
  Are you, perhaps, remembering
    with glee
  A crayfish that you've fondled
    lovingly
  Between those black kid gloves
    that are your paws
  Before you pulled the shell off
    with your claws?
Or does it give you pleasure to recall
A mussel that you found the night before
And dribbled in the brook until you broke
Its shell upon the rocks along the shore —
  A hapless frog that hopped
    across your path
  To whom you gave one final,
    gentle bath
  Before inviting him to
    dine with you
  Though he, alas, had gone
    when you were through?
More likely, these already are forgot.
Behind that mask of sleepiness, no doubt.
Your mind, as agile as your dextrous hands,
Has menus for tonight to figure out.
  That utterly beguiling
    look could mean
  My garbage may be next
    to make the scene;
  Or maybe Towser's dish;
    and, then again,
  You may be thinking of
    my laying hen!

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