

*Cheeks on Fire*

Raymond Radiguet

Translated from the French by Alan Stone



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*Cheeks on Fire*

### *Le Langage des fleurs ou des étoiles*

J'ai demeuré pendant quelque temps dans une maison où les douze jeunes filles ressemblaient aux mois de l'année. Je pouvais danser avec elles, mais je n'avais que ce droit ; il m'était même défendu de parler. Un jour de pluie, pour me venger, j'offris à chacune des fleurs rapportées de voyage. Il y en eut qui comprirent. Après leur mort, je me déguisai en bandit pour faire peur aux autres. Elles faisaient exprès de ne pas s'en apercevoir. En été tout le monde allait prendre l'air. Nous comptions les étoiles, chacun de notre côté. Lorsque j'en trouvai une en trop, je n'ai rien dit.

Les jours de pluie seraient-ils passés ? Le ciel se referme. Vous n'avez pas l'oreille assez fine.

### *The Language of the Flowers or the Stars*

I stayed for a while in a house together with twelve young girls, each of whom resembled a month of the year. I could dance with them, but that was my only privilege; even the right to talk was refused me. One rainy day, to take my revenge, I presented each of them with flowers brought back from far-off lands. To a few of them, my motive was plain. After they died, I dressed up as a bandit to intimidate the others. They deliberately ignored my costume. When summer came, we all went for walks outdoors. We'd count the stars, each of us using his own method. When I counted one too many, I kept silent.

Should the rainy season have ended by now? The sky draws shut once more. Your ears aren't so finely attuned.

*Incognito*

Soi-disant diseuse de bonne aventure  
On est presque nu  
Des portraits de famille  
Il y en a qui seraient honteux  
Une rue déserte  
Plus tard elle portera votre nom  
Les nuages descendent à terre  
Ils gênent nos pas  
Les hommes qu'on a mis en prison  
ne se doutent de rien  
Des bêtes féroces gardent la capitale  
Pourtant nous ne sommes pas bien méchants  
La clef des champs  
Je vous en prie

*Incognito*

Would-be fortune-teller  
We're almost nude  
Family pictures  
Some might blush  
A deserted alley  
Later she'll take your name  
Clouds touch the ground  
They get in your way  
Men locked behind bars  
hardly suspect  
Wild beasts patrol the capital  
Yet we're not so wicked  
The key to the fields  
I beg of you

*Un soir d'août*

L'avenir,  
Ici  
La dame le prévoit,  
Exception faite  
Des jours de fête,  
Quand on traverse le viaduc.

Les demoiselles d'honneur,  
Cela va sans dire,  
Se laissent conduire.

De quoi vous plaignez-vous ?  
Est-ce ma faute  
Si ces rameurs  
N'y vont pas de main morte.

Dans les verres  
Tiédir l'orangeade.

Un soir d'août,  
N'importe lequel.

*An Evening in August*

The future,  
Now  
The lady's made provisions  
Except for  
Feast days,  
When they cross the viaduct.

The maids of honour,  
Without a doubt,  
Are glad to be taken out.

Why all the grumbling?  
I'm not to blame  
If the oarsmen  
Row with lame hands.

In the glasses  
The orangeade begins to fade.

An evening in August,  
No matter which.

## *Tombola*

On dirait la Grande Roue.

Une broche à l'heureux gagnant ; le pauvre marin, ne sachant qu'en faire, de rage pique au vif l'azur de son béret, et, à défaut d'un prénom de femme, y fait inscrire celui de son bateau.

« Où puis-je avoir laissé mon éventail ? »

« Vous ne voyez pas d'ici ? Il fait la roue, sur la pelouse, où des trèfles à quatre feuilles poussent en cachette. »

Les jeunes filles qui montent en balançoire rougissent chacune à leur tour : leurs robes blanches s'accrochent aux bras de l'épouvantail.

« Elles aussi sont toutes rouges, les cerises. »

Sans faire de jalouses, le galant épouvantail offre des boucles d'oreilles.

Le pauvre marin ne possède d'autre bijou qu'un broche, gagnée à la tombola.

## *Tombola*

So it's the wheel of fortune.

A brooch to the lucky winner; the wretched sailor, having no use for it, wounds the heart of his blue cap, and since no girl-friend comes to mind, he pricks in the name of his ship instead.

“Now where could I have left my fan?”

“Don't you see it? It's strutting about on the lawn, where four-leaf clover secretly flourish.”

The girls climbing on the swings turn crimson as, one by one, their white frocks get caught on the scarecrow's arms.

“Cherries are also red from head to toe.”

Without playing favourites, the gallant scarecrow hands out a pair of earrings.

The only piece of jewellery that the poor sailor owns is the brooch he won in the lottery game.



*Déjeuner de soleil*

Ah ! les cornes : c'est un colimaçon.  
Paresseuse, si vous voulez nous plaire,  
Désormais sachez mieux votre leçon.

Nous ne sommes plus ces mauvais garçons  
Ivres à jamais de boissons polaires,  
Depuis que les flots vivent sans glaçons.

Seize ans : les glaces sont à la framboise.  
Je ne viderai pas votre panier  
Avant la mort de cette aube narquoise.

À mon âge les pleurs manquent de charme ;  
J'irai près du soleil, dans le grenier,  
Afin que sèchent plus vite mes larmes.

*Time Will Fade It*

Oh, the horns – so it's a snail.  
Sluggard, if you wish to please us  
Study harder, and you won't fail!

We aren't those same rowdy drunks  
Swilling polar concoctions  
Since the ice floes have lately shrunk.

Aged sixteen: the ice is raspberry;  
I won't ransack your basket  
Till the jeering dawn is fit to bury.

At my age, it looks dumb to cry;  
I'll climb near the sun, up in the attic,  
So that my tears will quickly dry.

*Une carte postale : les quais de Paris*

On a remplacé les coquillages  
Par des boîtes à livres. J'appris  
Qu'il est de bien plus jolis rivages,  
En feuilletant les livres de prix.

Cher ami, sans retard levons l'ancre ;  
Encrier triste comme la mer.  
De grâce, n'écrivez plus à l'encre :  
Les mots qu'on y pêche sont amers.

*A Postcard: on the Banks of the Seine*

Stalls of dusty books now take  
The place of pretty shells, and thanks  
To skimming spicy paperbacks  
I know that there are fairer banks.

Dear, let's weigh anchor now;  
Inkwell cloudy as the ocean.  
Next time you write, use no ink:  
Your fishing-reel pen hooks sad emotion.

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