

By Victoria Leigh Bennett

The Art of Love
5/4/2021

Childress pondered long and hard
While she raked up in her back yard,
For although Spring was in the air,
The fallen leaves were everywhere
From former lack of diligence
In Fall, and as a consequence,
The sodden mud squelched round her boots,
And sickly grass, pulled up by roots.
She wistfully turned round about,
To tempt another to the rout,
She spoke with love towards the mat
Where sat Dame Agatha, her cat,
Who did not deign to wet her paws
In sloppy nature's messy cause,
Where lingered her companion
In need of some compassion,
But tucked her neat toes far well under
And firmly kept herself asunder.
Still, she did listen to the voice
Of Childress, who also rejoiced
In first name of Elizabeth,
Not that a person gave it breath
These days when Childress was well-grown
And if a rose, was overblown.
No, "Childress" did they know her best
At tables where she did waitress,
For her employer was a man
Who adhered firmly to the plan
Of formal discipline, no friend
To names which to the casual tend.
Her brother Dan, once "Lizzy" said,
But Brother Dan was cold and dead,

By Victoria Leigh Bennett

And Lizzy let it be or not
She grieved for what she had not got.
For Childress was not gently made
To sport with men beneath the shade,
When Summer and when Fall came round,
No, she was angular, or round,
Or incomplete somehow, you know,
We've all seen Childress come and go.
Her motions were not grace itself,
And Childress was left on the shelf,
To wonder if she was so bad,
Or ugly, maladept or mad,
That she could not find love at all,
She knew not how to voice the call.
She knew that pink was not her hue,
And of bustieres she had no clue.
Though she loved blossoms, none looked well
Against her hair, or neck or swell
Of bosom, somehow not quite "it"
But looked as if they did not fit
In quite the same picture, somehow,
As if someone had dressed the cow.
And thus, at last she thought to go
More as nature had made her, so,
To dumpiness and flat retorts
She treated all the lunchtime sports,
But when at home viewed countless patterns
That went to waste on modelling slatterns.
She glanced at her computer screen,
At numerous secret magazines,
Borrowed in shame from library shelves,
Where others did express themselves.
It just seemed hopeless to believe
That she would ever there conceive
A thought, idea, spark of light

By Victoria Leigh Bennett

That might bring her forth to the light
Of being courted, wanted, loved,
But she was ready to be moved.
Then one day, hiding from a face
Who might draw forth her strange disgrace
Of wanting what the others had,
Who might see her books, “Oh, so sad!”
In standing near a shelf in back
She happened on a different tack;
Instead of blaming God above,
She took out Ovid’s “Art of Love.”
Well, much of it, it was quite shocking
To hear Ovid so blithely talking
Seductions, rapes, and other things
That give the devils mighty wings.
But by and by, she got the sense
That she had too much innocence,
And that there might be with the classic
A halfway distance from the cassock.
She read of ways to view one’s lover
So as to secret parts discover,
She blushed, but thought of Joshua’s thighs
When he raised up his arms on high
To affix wires above the town,
Oh, Joshua, come down, come down!
Remembering when the bus was packed,
And she sat with the store clerk, Zack,
Whose muscled arm against her own
Had nestled ‘til they got him home,
She then decided Ovid knew
A salutary thing or two,
Which if not absolutely clean
But in-between and in-between,
Could be forgiven for the purpose
Of matching up the human surplus.

By Victoria Leigh Bennett

The final straw was when she found
This advice from the sage renowned,
That if one's loving rhetoric
Did not at once make him heartsick,
One should pull one's short hairs to ply
The wherewithal to make one cry.
This was such an astounding thing
Such trickery, it made her sing
And act quite blissful all the day,
To know that love includes such play,
And for the final goal discovers
Such ploys to spur the loves and lovers.
Well, but, she thought, Zack, Joshua nice,
But both a bit beyond her price,
Just like the dresses in the pages
That had been far beyond her wages.
Her mouth turned down, she grumped a bit,
But when she had got done with it,
She thought strategically of men
In her own city and thought: "Ben."
Now, Benjamin was lots of fun,
He was the restaurant's favorite son,
So she in choosing him was bold,
Because of all already told.
He had always been so polite
To her, she saw that now aright,
But he was fond of jokes and quips,
And had once looked her in the hips.
It wasn't clear he meant to do,
But when he met her eyes, it's true,
The mischief in his own lit up,
As she slopped coffee in his cup.
He once had been an electrician,
And was accounted a magician
For how he could make things go round

By Victoria Leigh Bennett

And run anew with no false sound.
He was a widower, moreover,
And was accounted in the clover
As far as health and finance went,
So Lizzy thought he might be bent
Perhaps, perhaps, to fix her motor
And make it all anew turn over.
His thighs were not Joshua's, she knew,
But Lizzie liked his eyes of blue.
She suddenly discovered this
One day when taking down his list
Of eggs and bacon, and the lot,
And as they talked, she straight forgot
To quell him, quash him, set him right,
And he discovered she was bright.
Well, Ovid might not much have bet
Their slow romance would ever get
To any point he would admire,
But Ovid's dead, and we required
Him only just to make our case
For love, though his version seems base
To Lizzy, now she's 'Lizzy' true,
And has a man to boss and woo.
And now Ben rakes leaves in the yard
And usually takes it very hard
If Lizzy isn't somewhere near
To clip the bushes and bring beer.
While Agatha, the erstwhile Dame
Of august haughty feline fame
Has even done what no one guessed:
Five kittens nurse now at her breast,
Though with such litters, Ovid's done,
And Lizzy vows, "She'll just have one."

By Victoria Leigh Bennett