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# BROTCOTNAZ

by Wyndham Lewis

**M**ADAME BROTCOTNAZ is orthodox: she is the breton woman at forty-five, from La Basse-Bretagne, the heart of Old Brittany, the region of the great Pardons. Frans Hals also would have passed from the painting of the wife of a petty burgess to Madame Brotcotnaz without any dislocation of his formulas or rupture of the time-sense. He would still have seen before him the black and white—the black broadcloth and white coiffe or caul; and for the white those virgate, slate-blue surfaces, the cold ink-black for the capital masses of the picture, would have appeared without a hitch. On coming to the face Frans Hals would have found his favourite glow of sallow-red, only deeper than he was accustomed to find in the flemish women. He would have gone to that part of the palette where the pigment lay for the men's faces at forty-five, the opposite end to the monticules of olive and sallow peach for the *juniores*, or the virgins and young wives.

The distillations of the breton orchard have almost subdued the obstinate yellow of jaundice, and Julie's face is a dull claret. In many tiny strongholds of eruptive red the more recent colour has entrenched itself. Her hair is very dark, parted in the middle, and tightly brushed down upon her head. Her eyebrows are for ever raised. She could not depress them, I suppose, any more, if she wanted to. A sort of scaly rigor fixes the wrinkles of the forehead into a seriated field of what is scarcely flesh, with the result that if she pulled her eyebrows down, they would fly up again the moment she released the muscles. The flesh of the mouth is scarcely more alive: it is parched and pinched in, so that she seems always hiding a faint snicker by driving it primly into her mouth. Her eyes are black and moist, with the furtive intensity of a rat. They move circumspectly in this bloated shell. She displaces herself also more noiselessly than the carefulest nun, and her hands are generally decussated, drooping upon the ridge of her waist-line, as though fixed there with an emblematic nail, at about the level of her navel. Her stomach is, for her, a kind of exclusive personal 'calvary.' At its crest hang her two hands, with the orthodox decussation, an elaborate ten-fingered symbol.

Revisiting the home of the Brotcotnazes this summer, I expected to find some change: but as I came down the steep and hollow ramp leading from the cliffs of the port, I was reassured at once. The door of the débit I perceived was open, with its desiccated bush over the lintel. Julie, with her head bound up in a large surgical bandage, stood there peering out, to see if there were any one in sight. No one was in sight, I had not been noticed; it was not from the direction of the cliffs that she redoubted interruption. She quickly withdrew. I approached the door of the débit in my noiseless *espadrilles* (that is, the hemp and canvas shoes of the country), and sprang quickly in after her. I snapped her with my eye while I shouted:

'Madame Brotcotnaz! Attention!'

She was behind the bar-counter, the fat medicine-glass was in the air, reversed. Her head was back, the last drops were trickling down between her gum and underlip, which stuck out like the spout of a cream-jug. The glass crashed down on the counter; Julie jumped, her hand on her heart. Beneath, among tins and flagons, on a shelf, she pushed at a bottle. She was trying to get it out of sight. I rushed up to her and seized one of her hands.

'I am glad to see you, Madame Brotcotnaz!' I exclaimed. 'Neuralgia again?' I pointed to the face.

'Oh, que vous m'avez fait peur, Monsieur Kairor!'

She placed her hand on her left breast, and came out slowly from behind the counter.

'I hope the neuralgia is not bad?'

She patted her bandage with a sniff.

'It's the erysipelas.'

'How is Monsieur Brotcotnaz?'

'Very well, thank you, Monsieur Kairor!' she said in a subdued sing-song. 'Very well,' she repeated, to fill up, with a

faint prim smile. 'He is out with the boat. And you, Monsieur Kairor? Are you quite well?'

'Quite well, I thank you, Madame Brotcotnaz,' I replied, 'except perhaps a little thirsty. I have had a long walk along the cliff. Could we have a little glass together, do you think?'

'Why, yes, Monsieur Kairor.' She was more reserved at once. With a distant sniff, she turned half in the direction of the counter, her eyes on the wall before her. 'What must I give you now?'

'Have you any *pur jus*, such as I remember drinking the last time I was here?'

'Why, yes.' She moved silently away behind the wooden counter. Without difficulty she found the bottle of brandy, and poured me out a glass.

'And you, Madame? You will take one with me, isn't that so?'

'Mais, je veux bien!' she breathed with muted dignity, and poured herself out a small glass. We touched glasses.

'A votre santé, Madame Brotcotnaz!'

'A la vôtre, Monsieur Kairor!'

She put it chastely to her lip and took a decent sip, with the expression reserved otherwise for intercourse with the sacrament.

'It's good.' I smacked my lips.

'Why, yes. It is not at all bad,' she said, turning her head away with a faint sniff.

'It's good *pur jus*. If it comes to that, it is the best I have tasted since last I was here. How is it your *pur jus* is always of this high quality? You have taste where this drink is concerned, about that there can be no two opinions.'

She very softly tossed her head, wrinkled her nose on either side of the bridge, and appeared about to sneeze, which was the thing that came next before a laugh.

I leant across and lightly patted the bandage. She withdrew her head.

'It is painful?' I asked with commiseration.

My father, who, as I believe I have said, is a physician, once remarked in my hearing at the time my mother was drinking very heavily, prior to their separation, that for the management of alcoholic poisoning there is nothing better than koumiss.

'Have you ever tried a mixture of fermented mare's milk? Ordinary buttermilk will do. You add pepsin and lump sugar and let it stand for a day and a night. That is a very good remedy.'

She met this with an airy mockery. She dragged her eyes over my face afterwards with suspicion.

'It's excellent for erysipelas.'

She mocked me again. I told myself that she might at any moment find koumiss a useful drink, though I knew that she was wounded in the sex-war now only, and so required a management of another sort. I enjoyed arousing her veteran's contempt. She said nothing, but sat with resignation on the wooden bench at the table.

'I remember well these recurrent indispositions before, Madame Brotcotnaz,' I said. She looked at me in doubt for a moment, then turned her face quickly towards the door, slightly offended.

Julie was, of course, secretive, but as it had happened, she was forced to hug her secrets in public like two dolls that every one could see. I pretended to snatch first one, then the other. She looked at me and saw that I was not serious. She was silent in the way a child is: she just silently looked at me with a primitive coquetry of reproach, and turned her side to me.—Underneath the counter on the left hand of a person behind it was the bottle of eau-de-vie. When every one else

had gone to the river to wash clothes, or had collected in the neighbouring inn, she approached the bottle on tiptoe, poured herself out several glasses in succession, which she drank with little sighs. Everybody knew this. That was the first secret. I had ravished it impetuously as described. Her second secret was the periodic beatings of Brotcotnaz. They were of very great severity. When I had occupied a room there, the crashing in the next apartment at night lasted sometimes for twenty minutes. The next day Julie was bandaged and could hardly limp downstairs. That was the erysipelas. Every one knew this, as well: yet her secretiveness had to exercise itself upon these scandalously exposed objects. I just thought I would stroke the second of them when I approached my hand to her bandaged face. These intrusions of mine into a *public* secret bored her only. She knew as well as I did when a thing was secret and when it was not. *Qu'est-ce qu'il a, cet homme?* she would say to herself.

'When do you expect Nicholas?' I asked.

She looked at the large mournful clock.

'Il ne doit pas tarder.'

I lifted my glass.

'To his safe return.'

The first muscular indications of a sneeze, a prim depression of the mouth, and my remark had been acknowledged, while she lifted her glass and took a solid sip.

Outside it was a white calm: I had seen a boat round the corner, with folded sails, beneath the cliff. That was no doubt Brotcotnaz. As I passed, they had dropped their oars out.

He should be here in a moment.

'Fill up your glass, Madame Brotcotnaz,' I said.

She did not reply. Then she said in an indifferent catch of the breath.

'Here he is!' Hands folded, or decussated as I have said they always were, she left him to me. She had produced him with her exclamation, 'Le v'là!'

A footfall, so light that it seemed nothing, came from the steps outside. A shadow struck the wall opposite the door. With an easy, dainty, and rapid tread, with a coquettishly supple giving of the knees at each step, and a gentle debonair oscillation of the massive head, a tall heavily-built fisherman came in. I sprang up and exclaimed:

'Ah! Here is Nicholas! How are you, old chap?'

'Why, it is Monsieur Kairor!' came the low caressing buzz of his voice. 'How are you? Well, I hope?'

He spoke in a low indolent voice. He smiled and smiled. He was dressed in the breton fashion.

'Was that you in the boat out there under the cliff just now?' I asked.

'Why, yes, Monsieur Kairor, that must have been us. Did you see us?' he said, with smiling interest.

I noted his child's pleasure at the image of himself somewhere else, in his boat, observed by me. It was as though I had said, Peep-oh! I see you, and we were back in the positions we then had occupied. He reflected a moment.

'I didn't see you. Were you on the cliff? I suppose you've just walked over from Loperec?'

His instinct directed him to account for my presence, here, and then up on the cliff. It was not curiosity. He wished to have cause and effect properly displayed. He racked his brains to see if he could remember having noticed a figure following the path on the cliff.

'Taking a little walk?' he added then.

He sat on the edge of a chair, with the symmetrical propriety of his healthy and powerful frame, the balance of the seated figure of the natural man, of the european type, found in the quattrocento frescoes. Julie and he did not look at each other.

'Give Monsieur Brotcotnaz a drink at once,' I said.

Brotcotnaz made a deprecatory gesture as she poured it, and continued to smile abstractedly at the table.

The dimensions of his eyes, and their oily suffusion with smiling-cream, or with some luminous jelly that seems still further to magnify them, are very remarkable. They are great tender mocking eyes that express the coquetry and contentment of animal fats. The sides of his massive forehead are often flushed, as happens with most men only in moments of embarrassment. Brotcotnaz is always embarrassed. But the flush with him, I think, is a constant affluence of blood to the neighbourhood of his eyes, and has something to do with their magnetic machinery. The tension caused in the surrounding vessels by this aesthetic concentration may account for it. What we call a sickly smile, the mouth remaining lightly drawn across the gums, with a slight painful contraction—the set suffering grin of the timid—seldom leaves his face.

The tread of this timid giant is softer than a nun's—the supple quick-giving at the knees at each step that I have described is the result no doubt of his fondness for the dance, in which he was so rapid, expert, and resourceful in his youth. When I first stayed with them, the year before, a man one day was playing a pipe on the cliff into the hollow of which the house is built. Brotcotnaz heard the music and drummed upon the table. Then, lightly springing up he danced in his tight-fitting black clothes a finicky hornpipe, in the middle of the débit. His red head was balanced in the air, face downwards, his arms went up alternately over his head, while he watched his feet like a dainty cat, placing them lightly and quickly here and there, with a ceremonial tenderness, and then snatching them away.

'You are fond of dancing,' I said.

His large tender steady blue eyes, suffused with the witchery of his secret juices, smiled and smiled: he informed me softly:

'J'suis maître danseur. C'est mon plaisir!'

The buzzing breton drawl, with as deep a 'z' as the dialect of Somerset, gave a peculiar emphasis to the *C'est mon plaisir!* He tapped the table, and gazed with the full benignity of his grin into my face.

'I am master of all the breton dances,' he said.

'The aubade, the gavotte——?'

'Why, yes, the breton gavotte.' He smiled serenely into my face. It was a blast of innocent happiness.

I saw as I looked at him the noble agility of his black faun-like figure as it must have rushed into the dancing crowd at the Pardon, leaping up into the air and capering to the *biniou* with grotesque elegance, while a crowd would gather to watch him. Then taking hands, while still holding their black umbrellas, they would spread out in chains, jolting in a dance confined to their rapidly moving feet. And still like a black fountain of movement, its vertex the flat, black, breton hat, strapped under the chin, he would continue his isolated performance.—His calm assurance of mastery in these dances implied such a position in the past in the festal life of the pagan countryside.

'Is Madame fond of dancing?' I asked.

'Why, yes. Julie can dance.'

He rose, and extending his hand to his wife with an indulgent gallantry, he exclaimed:

'Viens donc, Julie! Come then. Let us dance.'

Julie sat and sneered through her vinous mask at her fascinating husband. He insisted, standing over her with one toe pointed outward in the first movement of the dance, his hand held for her to take in a courtly attitude.

'Viens donc, Julie! Dansons un peu!'

Shedding shamefaced, pinched, and snuffling grins to right and left as she allowed herself to be drawn into this event, she rose. They danced a sort of minuet for me, advancing and retreating, curtsying and posturing, shuffling rapidly their feet. Julie did her part, it seemed, with understanding. With the same smile, at the same pitch, he resumed his seat in front of me.

'He composes verses also, to sing,' Julie then remarked.

'Songs for gavotte-airs, to be sung——?'

'Why, yes. Ask him!'

I asked him.

'Why, yes,' he said. 'In the past I have written many verses.'

Then, with his settled grin, he intoned and buzzed them through his scarcely parted teeth, whose tawny rows, he manipulating their stops with his tongue, resembled some exotic musical instrument.

Brotcotnaz is at once a fisherman, débitant or saloon-keeper, and 'cultivator.' In spite of this trinity of activities, he is poor. To build their present home he dissipated what was then left of Julie's fortune, so I was told by the postman one evening on the cliff. When at length it stood complete, beneath the little red bluff hewn out for its reception, brightly whitewashed, with a bald slate roof, and steps leading up to the door, from the steep and rugged space in front of it, he celebrated its completion with an expressive housewarming. Now he has the third share in a fishing boat, and what trade comes his way as a saloon-keeper, but it is very little.

His comrades will tell you that he is a 'charmant garçon, mais jaloux.' They call him 'traître.' He has been married twice. Referring to this, gossip tells you he gave his first wife a hard life. If this is true, and by analogy, he may have killed her. In spite of this record, poor Julie 'would have him.' Three times he has inherited money which was quickly spent. Such is his bare history and the character people give him.

The morning after a beating—Julie lying seriously battered upon their bed, or sitting rocking herself quietly in the débit, her head a turban of bandages, he noiselessly attends to her wants, enquires how she feels, and applies remedies. It is like a surgeon and a patient, an operation having just been successfully performed. He will walk fifteen miles to the nearest large town and back to get the necessary medicines. He is grave, and receives pleasantly your commiserations on her behalf, if you offer them. He has a delicate wife, that is the idea: she suffers from a chronic complaint. He addresses her on all occasions with a compassionate gentleness. There is, however, something in the bearing of both that suggests restraint. They are resigned, but none the less they remember the cross they have to bear. Julie will refer to his intemperance, casually, sometimes. She told me on one occasion, that, when first married, they had had a jay. This bird knew when Brotcotnaz was drunk. When he came in from a wake or 'Pardon,' and sat down at the débit table, the jay would hop out of its box, cross the table, and peck at his hands and fly in his face.

The secret of this smiling giant, a year or two younger, I daresay, than his wife, was probably that he intended to kill her. She had no more money. With his reputation as a wife-beater, he could do this without being molested. When he went to a 'Pardon,' she on her side knew he would try to kill her when he came back. That seemed to be the situation. If one night he did succeed in killing her, he would sincerely mourn her. At the fiançailles with his new bride he would see this one on the chair before him, his Julie, and, still radiating tolerance and health, would shed a melancholy smiling tear.

'You remember, Nicholas, those people that called on Thursday?' she now said.

He frowned gently to recall them.

'Ah, yes, I know—the Parisians that wanted the room.'

'They have been here again this afternoon.'

'Indeed.'

'I have agreed to take them. They want a little cooking. I've consented to do that. I said I had to speak to my husband

about it.—They are coming back.'

He frowned more heavily, still smiling. He put his foot down with extreme softness:

'Julie, I have told you that I won't have that! It is useless for you to agree to do cooking. It is above your strength, my poor dear. You must tell them you can't do it.'

'But—they are returning. They may be here at any moment, now. I can do what they wish quite easily.'

With inexorable tenderness he continued to forbid it. Perhaps he did not want people in the house.

'Your health will not permit of your doing that, Julie.'

He never ceased to smile, but his brows remained knit. This was almost a dispute. They began talking in breton.

'Nicholas, I must go,' I said, getting up. He rose with me, following me up with the redoubled suavity of his swimming eyes.

'You must have a drink with me, Monsieur Kairor. Truly you must! Julie! Another glass for Monsieur Kairor.'

I drank it and left, promising to return. He came down the steps with me, his knee flexing with exaggerated suppleness at each step, placing his feet daintily and noiselessly on the driest spaces on the wet stones. I watched him over my shoulder returning delicately up the steps, his massive back rigid, inclined forward, as though he were being steadily hauled up with a cord, only his feet working.

It was nearly three weeks later when I returned to Kermanec. It was in the morning. This time I came over in a tradesman's cart. It took me to the foot of the rough ascent, at the top of which were Brotcotnaz's steps. There seemed to be a certain animation. Two people were talking at the door, and a neighbour, the proprietress of the successful débit, was ascending the steps. The worst had happened. Ça y est. He had killed her! Taking this for granted, I entered the débit, framing my *condoléances*. She would be upstairs on the bed. Should I go up? There were several people in the room. As I entered behind them, with a start of surprise I recognized Julie. Her arm was in a large sling. From beneath stained cloths, four enormously bloated and discoloured fingers protruded. These the neighbours inspected. Also one of her feet had a large bandage. She looked like a beggar at a church door: I could almost hear the familiar cry of the 'droit des pauvres!' She was speaking in breton, in her usual tone of 'miséricorde,' with her ghostly sanctimonious snigger. In spite of this, even if the circumstances had not made this obvious, the atmosphere was very different from that to which I had been accustomed.

At first I thought: She has killed Brotcotnaz, it must be that. But that hypothesis was contradicted by every other fact that I knew about them. It was possible that he had killed himself by accident. But, unnoticed, in the dark extremity of the débit, there he was! On catching sight of his dejected figure, thrust into the darkest shadow of his saloon, I received my second shock of surprise. I hesitated in perplexity. Would it be better to withdraw? I went up to Julie, but made no reference to her condition, beyond saying that I hoped she was well.

'As well as can be expected, my poor Monsieur Kairor!' she said in a sharp whine, her brown eyes bright, clinging and sad.

Recalling the events of my last visit and our conversation, in which I had tapped her bandages, I felt these staring fingers, thrust out for inspection, were a leaf taken out of my book. What new policy was this? I left her and went over to Brotcotnaz. He did not spring up: all he did was to smile weakly, saying:

'Tiens! Monsieur Kairor, vous voilà.—Sit down, Monsieur Kairor!'

I sat down. With his elbows on the table he continued to stare into space. Julie and her women visitors stood in the middle of the débit; in subdued voices they continued their discussion. It was in breton, I could not follow it easily.

This situation was not normal: yet the condition of Julie was the regular one. The intervention of the neighbours and the present dejection of Brotcotnaz was what was unaccountable. Otherwise, for the cause of the mischief there was no occasion to look further; a solution, sound, traditional, and in every way satisfying, was there before me in the person of

Nicholas. But he whom I was always accustomed to see master of the situation was stunned and changed, like a man not yet recovered from some horrid experience. He, the recognized agent of Fate, was usually so above the *mêlée*. Now he looked another man, like somebody deprived of a coveted office, or from whom some privilege had been withheld. Had Fate acted without him? Such necessarily was the question that at this point took shape.

Meanwhile I no doubt encountered in turn a few of the perplexities, framing the same dark questions, that Brotcotnaz himself had done. He pulled himself together now and rose slowly.

'You will take something, Monsieur Kairor!' he said, habit operating, with a thin unction.

'Why, yes, I will have a glass of cider,' I said. 'What will you have, Nicholas?'

'Why, I will take the same, Monsieur Kairor,' he said. The break or give at the knee as he walked was there as usual, but mechanical, I felt. Brotcotnaz would revive, I hoped, after his drink. Julie was describing something: she kept bending down to the floor, and making a sweeping gesture with her free hand. Her guests made a chuckling sound in their throats like 'hoity-toity.'

Brotcotnaz returned with the drinks.

'A la vôtre, Monsieur Kairor!' He drank half his glass. Then he said:

'You have seen my wife's fingers?'

I admitted guardedly that I had noticed them.

'Higher up it is worse. The bone is broken. The doctor says that it is possible she will lose her arm. Her leg is also in a bad state.' He rolled his head sadly.

At last I looked at him with relief. He was regaining his old composure. I saw at once that a very significant thing had happened for him, if she lost her arm, and possibly her leg. He could scarcely proceed to the destruction of the trunk only. It was not difficult at least to appreciate the sort of problem that might present itself.

'Her erysipelas is bad this time, there is no use denying it,' I said.

A look of confusion came into his face. He hesitated a moment. His ill-working brain had to be adjusted to a past time, when what now possessed him was not known. He disposed himself in silence, then started in an astonished voice, leaning over the table:

'It isn't the erysipelas, Monsieur Kairor! Haven't you heard?'

'No, I have heard nothing. In fact, I have only just arrived.'

Now I was going to hear some great news from this natural casuist: or was I not? It was *not* erysipelas.

Julie had caught the word 'erysipelas' whispered by her husband. She leered round at me, standing on one leg, and tossed me a desperate snigger of secretive triumph, very well under control and as hard as nails.

Brotcotnaz exclaimed.

The baker had asked her, on driving up the day before, to put a stone under the wheel of his cart, to prevent it from moving. She had bent down to do so, pushing the stone into position, but suddenly the horse backed: the wheel went over her hand. That was not all. At this she slipped on the stony path, blood pouring from her fingers, and went partly under the cart. Bystanders shouted, the horse started forward, and the cart went over her arm and foot in the reverse direction.

He told me these facts with astonishment—the sensation felt by him when he had heard them for the first time. He was glad to tell me. There was a misunderstanding, or half misunderstanding, on the part of his wife and all the others in this matter. He next told me how he had first heard the news.

At the time this accident had occurred he had been at sea. On landing he was met by several neighbours.

'Your wife is injured! She has been seriously injured!'

'What's that? My wife injured? My wife seriously injured!'—Indeed I understood him! I began to feel as he did. 'Seriously' was the word stressed naïvely by him. He repeated these words, and imitated his expression. He reproduced for me the dismay and astonishment, and the shade of overpowering suspicion, that his voice must originally have registered.

It was now that I saw him encountering all the notions that had come into my own mind a few minutes before, on first perceiving the injured woman, the visiting neighbours and his dejected form thrown into the shade by something.

'Your wife is seriously injured!' I stood there altogether upset—tout à fait bouleversé.

The familiar image of her battered form as seen on a *lendemain de Pardon* must have arisen in his mind. He is assailed with a sudden incapacity to think of injuries in his wife's case except as caused by a human hand. He is solicited by the reflection that he himself had not been there. There was, in short, the effect, but not the cause. Whatever his ultimate intention as regards Julie, he is a 'jaloux.' All his wild jealousy surges up. A cause, a rival cause, is incarnated in his excited brain, and goes in an overbearing manner to claim its effect. In a second a man is born. He does not credit him, but he gets a foothold just outside of reason. He is a rival!—another Brotcotnaz; all his imagination is sickened by this super-Brotcotnaz, as a woman who had been delivered of some hero, already of heroic dimensions, might naturally find herself. A moment of great weakness and lassitude seizes him. He remains powerless at the thought of the aggressive actions of this hero. His mind succumbs to torpor, it refuses to contemplate this figure.

It was at this moment that some one must have told him the actual cause of the injuries. The vacuum of his mind, out of which all the machinery of habit had been momentarily emptied, filled up again with its accustomed furniture. But after this moment of intense void the furniture did not quite resume its old positions, some of the pieces never returned, there remained a blankness and desolate novelty in the destiny of Brotcotnaz. That was still his state at present.

I then congratulated Julie upon her escape. Her eyes peered into mine with derision. What part did I play in this? She appeared to think that I too had been outwitted. I sauntered over to the counter and withdrew the bottle of eau-de-vie from its hiding-place.

'Shall I bring it over to you?' I called to Brotcotnaz. I took it over. Julie followed me for a moment with her mocking gaze.

'I will be the débitant!' I said to Brotcotnaz.

I poured him out a stiff glass.

'You live too near the sea,' I told him.

'Needs must,' he said, 'when one is a fisherman.'

'Ahès!' I sighed, trying to recall the famous line of the armorican song, that I was always meeting in the books that I had been reading. It began with this whistling sigh of the renegade king, whose daughter Ahès was.

'Why, yes,' Brotcotnaz sighed politely, supposing I had complimented the lot of the fisherman in my exclamation, doing the devil's tattoo on the table, as he crouched in front of me.

'Ahès, *brêman* Mary Morgan.' I had got it.

'I ask your pardon, Monsieur Kairor?'

'It is the lament of your legendary king for having been instrumental in poisoning the sea. You have never studied the lore of your country?'

'A little,' he smiled.

The neighbours were leaving. We three would now be alone. I looked at my watch. It was time to rejoin the cart that had brought me.

'A last drink, Madame Brotcotnaz!' I called.

She returned to the table and sat down, lowering herself to the chair, and sticking out her bandaged foot. She took the drink I gave her, and raised it almost with fire to her lips. After the removal of her arm, and possibly a foot, I realized that she would be more difficult to get on with than formerly. The bottle of eau-de-vie would remain no doubt in full view, to hand, on the counter, and Brotcotnaz would be unable to lay a finger on her: in all likelihood she meant that arm to come off.

I was not sorry for Nicholas; I regarded him as a changed man. Whatever the upshot of the accident as regards the threatened amputations, the disorder and emptiness that had declared itself in this mind would remain.

'To your speedy recovery, Madame Brotcotnaz,' I said.

We drank to that, and Brotcotnaz came to the door. Julie remained alone in the débit.

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## TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE

Other than the addition of a missing single quote mark, minor variations in spelling and punctuation have been preserved.

[End of *Brotcotnaz*, by Wyndham Lewis]