

A CHAPTER
**FROM A BOOK "MY BODY
AND ME"**

THEY EAT early and fast in the little mountain inns.
I was alone at the table.
Here I am alone in my room?
Alone.

I craved this adventure so long and so much that I often doubted it could ever be. So to-night, my wish at last fulfilled, I am alone with myself. No bridge is linking me to others. I have, as the only memories from the best and most beloved, a flower a picture.

The flower—a rose fast fading in the toothbrush glass.

Yesterday at the same hour, it was flourishing on my coat. The button-hole was high enough for the rose to caress my face if I stooped in the least. But each time I was surprised at the flowery softness. My skin by late afternoon was reminiscent of carnations. A whole winter, a whole spring had I not persisted in confusing—happiness with ragged-edge petals, on the nocturnal wisdom of a silk congealed into revers?

A whole winter, a whole spring. Yesterday.

In a railroad station, with closed eyes, the flower in a button-hole condemns one still to believe in rugs, in bare shoulders, in pearls.

Then I dare not hope that solitude is possible.

Though solitude was all I desired in that theatre where for months, the red of the velvet on the seats, had become to me the very colour of boredom. Then I went again, in search of it, through the streets, at the end of day when the houses were illuminating, for new temptations, their shirts of stone, a garment as complicated as the unreal.

I entered places where they dance, drink—I entered, saturated with alcohol, with jazz, with all that drugs one, and drugged myself indifferently with what I heard, danced, drank, but happy to hear, dance and drink, so I could forget that which had limited but not helped me.

Yes, I remember. Two o'clock in the morning. The bar is a tiny one. It is quite hot. The door opens. Long live the cool. Someone says "Hello" to me. A hand pats my shoulder. I am happy. Not for the voice, not for the hand, but the air that has