

CRANDOLIN

CRANDOLIN

Anna Tambour

蝶
夢

Chômu
Press

CRANDOLIN

Published by Chômu Press, MMXII

Crandolin text and illustrations copyright © Anna Tambour 2012

Published in November 2012 by Chômu Press.

by arrangement with the author.

All rights reserved by the author.

ISBN: 978-1-907681-19-6

First Edition

This is a work of fiction for readers who can also enjoy surreality. Names, characters, places and incidents are either products of the author's imagination, or not.

Design and layout by:

Bigeyebrow, Chômu Press, Carr Graphics and Anna Tambour

Cover artwork: Christopher Conn Askew

Cartoon "Borscht!" © Kathleen Jennings 2012

Set in Literaturnaya

E-mail: info@chomupress.com

Internet: chomupress.com

to Alistair Rennie

Chapters

The crandolin wakes	1
A honey-lake in suspension	3
Moans of the bladder-pipe	5
The stream above the rails	7
A psychic tempts the omniscient	9
The beloved at home	11
The cinnamologus' treasure.	13
Kirand-luhun	15
Before the nightingale awoke.	19
Virgin in the restaurant carriage	21
Two thousand a session	25
The virgin crop	27
Tantrumatic wrecks	32
Poached capercaillie	37
Late for an appointment.	40
The third daughter	41
He wandered lonely, as a cloud	43
The relativity of pillows.	49
The librarian wore gloves	54
A bladder-pipe in arms.	58
The mirror that didn't change its mind	61
The physics of a <i>poof!</i>	64
A meeting of minds.	68
Look a mirror in the face	73
Two steps back	74
Three steps forward, to the master of the lips of love	78
No love match.	80
A syrupy story.	81
Shivering whispers	83
Faldarolo's nose	84
Quaintnesses	90

The pain of baubles	94
Party of three	95
Lost for good	98
Unbound	100
The mysteries in 3C	101
Why backless slippers are called mules	106
You are not alone	108
Revelation	110
Biliousness will out	114
Faldarolo and the shepherd	117
Sacre something-or-other	121
Failure is not an option	125
Burden borne by a spy	130
Blue velvet	134
Cover story	137
Questions to a man of experience	141
Love pops out like pomegranate seeds	145
Heart to heartbroken	147
Çimçim	151
The pot boils	158
Ekmel twists his ankle	162
Compliments	167
The immaculated maculation	169
Under the bees	177
A reason to dance	179
Suspension	183
Arresting sights	185
The unbearable perpetuity of remembrance	187
A centre of gravity, unbalanced	189
Spies	190
The lurch of the Amfesh-bena	194
A watched cook can definitely boil	197
Two hearts	202
Party of four	205
Trouble brews in Carriage 1	208
The jail is filled	215

Spirit of adventure	218
The scent of onions.	219
The terrible bush.	222
A lesson.	226
Old puns don't die	229
Natural conclusions	232
Close call.	234
Flags of inconvenience	239
Snow and tears	241
Git 'im up	245
Roundup	249
Brothers in love.	252
Munifer's bequest.	258
Beyond rubies.	263
Approach of the tongue	267
The time on the hill.	275
Siren in the wilderness	279
A plethora of almostnesses.	283
Dear friends	288
Light pink as the dawn	293
Journey of self-discovery	295
Donor	301
Cookies and dog tails	309
Cracking	312
C!	314
The maiden tour	319
Best wishes.	324
The white breast	327
Flush.	330
First impressions	335
Hark	339
Three men and an ass.	342
A rise and fall	350
Fortune's smile.	359
Particular tastes	361



The crandolin wakes



THE LUMINOUS STAIN ON PAGE 67 contained traces of quince, rose, grains of paradise, ambergris, pearl, cinnamon, and what could only be surmised. Kippax surmised, all right. Blood. The colour of the stain (livid pink) confirmed what he had read, though no test could. This cookbook was indeed, as the frontispiece said, *For the Adwentoursomme*.

It had once been common knowledge that drinking crandolin blood cursed the drinker to a long life of madness, and the recipes on the two pages driving Kippax mad were for *Crammed Amphisbaena*, and *A Pudding Mayde of Crandolin*. The recipe for amphisbaena added only butter, no spyce, and said *serve with no sauce but onely salte*.

This morning Kippax fed a miserly scrape of the stain, smuggled out under his fingernail, to his portable electronic tongue. The gas chromatograph, as sensitive and stupid as a bloodhound, tasted spyce compounds aplenty but no butter, and then ran just to look like it was doing something. It was clueless.

The sauce had to be crandolin.

Amphisbaena was a daring catch, this serpent with a head at each end. But crandolin cost at least one life. It was once-upon-common-knowledge that crandolins were light pink as the dawn they imitated as they probed cracks in the shutters protecting pink virgins in their beds. They could only be caught when *Crikey! This blood is also ancient virgin blood*.

He felt an attack of dizziness coming on, but a quick double punch made his ears ring—that problem solved, the better to tackle the big one.

The temptation to taste the crandolin had been terrible before (he was confident that his palate could sieve the spices from the meat). But the temptation was too much now, for any mortal. And in some moods, Nick Kippax did tell himself that he was indeed, a mortal.

He wet his finger and touched the stain—almost.

At the last millimillimetre, he drew his finger back into his meaty palm.

He felt his blood rushing around his body. It moved with as much purpose as a crowd of people released by a crosswalk light. Fascinating? No.

He picked up the open book and sucked the parchment.

A honey-lake in suspension



WHITE HONEY was the only honey that would do. The honey delivered was brown as wet leather, and smelled like a stables. Burhanettin the confectioner showed the merchant the whites of his eyes. “Drown him,” Burhanettin implored. “In a honey lake.”

The donkey snorted, eager for its load to be removed, yet the sweetmaker hadn’t finished his wish. “Drown him in a lake of honey from the flowers that grow around the cesspit!”

The fat little honey merchant squirmed like a newborn maggot. “The season for white honey has end—”

“As your life will, if you say another word.”

The merchant showed the confectioner an obsequious mouthful of rotten teeth. “I’ll try—”

“By my Will, you’ll do more than try!”

No mortal soul in the town had the confidence of Burhanettin. The sheer blasphemy would have stolen most men’s breaths.

Not Ekmel the honey merchant. “This afternoon,” he smiled. “Go feed your nightingale and settle your nerves with its song, dear friend.”

Burhanettin leaned over and shook his fist in the man’s face. His forearm was thick and gnarled as the trunk of an old carob tree. “Move,” he said.

The honey merchant stepped to the side, and the confectioner

reached into a bag suspended from his belt.

Out came a long stick of nougat.

The donkey's lips opened like a flower at sunrise.

Moans of the bladder-pipe



THE BLADDER-PIPE PLAYER'S eyelids flutter like a virgin's heart upon awakening. The sheep's bladder crackles faintly, but the voice of the pipe is all that the guests will hear, if they listen over the din of their own lips. Faldarolo doesn't care if they listen or no; only that they will pay him enough to eat, or toss him a scrap of something before they are too drunk to know he exists—a few piastres would be nice. A small gold necklace shouldn't be too much to expect—but a gnawed bone would be luckier than some nights.

In the meantime, the music keeps him fed. The bladder-pipe has a will of her own. Sometimes she sounds like a great swarm of bees, sometimes a goose, a magnificent goose; and sometimes she's a woman with a voice that could skin a man with one long sigh.

She has ruled the poor musician from the first moment that he, having grasped her sides, put his mouth to the pipe that leads at right angles but as straight as beauty to grief—to the bladder, and then down, following the line of his torso to his lap where her moans emerge, mingled with his hot, wet breath.

His eyelids are the colour of bruised violets. Above them, great black eyebrows dance, left, right ... left, left, left, right. He had never trained them to do this, but over the years they developed an incapacity to sit still. Smitten with song, they leap to its command, arching, flattening and stretching, sinuating. Now, when the bladder-pipe sings with the speed of a flow of honey, the

eyebrow dance is strange but dignified, with the hauteur of a great moustache soaking up fat.

But wait.

The poor musician's eyelids now dance as if they walk on fire. And his eyebrows! The muscles around his eyes are slaves to their command, but his eyebrows are slaves to the bladder-pipe.

How ridiculous Faldarolo looks. But even the deaf man doesn't notice, his feet soaking up the sound of spoons, hands, wooden bowls hitting the table; wooden clogs pounding the dirt.

The evening progresses...

And now is the time for the songs to those guests who aren't dead to the world from drink. They waited for this—the time of magnificent torture. They sit, the old men, lips slack as a donkey's whose ears are being stroked. The music grips their memories, and shakes.

The young hunger for something not on the table, but under it. By ones and twos, they follow the suggestions of the wordless song, and slip away. O heartless bladder-pipe! Even as Faldarolo fills her to repletion, she cares nothing for his insides.