

Extract from *BNW*, chapter 9: The first thing he saw was a green suit-case, with the initials L.C. painted on the lid. Joy flared up like fire within him. He picked up a stone. The smashed glass tinkled on the floor. A moment later he was inside the room. He opened the green suit-case; and all at once he was breathing Lenina's perfume, filling his lungs with her essential being. His heart beat wildly; for a moment he was almost faint. Then, bending over the precious box, he touched, he lifted into the light, he examined.

5 The zippers on Lenina's spare pair of viscose velveteen shorts were at first a puzzle, then solved, a delight. Zip, and then zip; zip, and then zip; he was enchanted. Her green slippers were the most beautiful things he had ever seen. He unfolded a pair of zippicamiknicks, blushed, put them hastily away again; but kissed a perfumed acetate handkerchief and wound a scarf round his neck. Opening a box, he spilt a cloud of scented powder. His hands were floury with the stuff. He wiped them on his chest, on his shoulders, on his bare arms. Delicious perfume! He shut his eyes; he rubbed his cheek against his own powdered arm. Touch of
10 smooth skin against his face, scent in his nostrils of musky dust—her real presence.

"Lenina," he whispered. "Lenina!"

A noise made him start, made him guiltily turn. He crammed up his thieveries into the suit-case and shut the lid; then listened again, looked. Not a sign of life, not a sound. And yet he had certainly heard something—something like a sigh, something like the creak of a board. He tiptoed to the door and, cautiously opening it, found himself looking on to a broad landing. On the opposite side of the
15 landing was another door, ajar. He stepped out, pushed, peeped.

There, on a low bed, the sheet flung back, dressed in a pair of pink one-piece zippyjamas, lay Lenina, fast asleep and so beautiful in the midst of her curls, so touchingly childish with her pink toes and her grave sleeping face, so trustful in the helplessness of her limp hands and melted limbs, that the tears came to his eyes.

With an infinity of quite unnecessary precautions—for nothing short of a pistol shot could have called Lenina back from her soma-
20 holiday before the appointed time—he entered the room, he knelt on the floor beside the bed. He gazed, he clasped his hands, his lips moved. "Her eyes," he murmured,

"Her eyes, her hair, her cheek, her gait, her voice; / Handlest in thy discourse O! that her hand, / In whose comparison all whites are ink / Writing their own reproach; to whose soft seizure / The cygnet's down is harsh ..."

A fly buzzed round her; he waved it away. "Flies," he remembered,

25 "On the white wonder of dear Juliet's hand, may seize / And steal immortal blessing from her lips, / Who, even in pure and vestal modesty, / Still blush, as thinking their own kisses sin."

Very slowly, with the hesitating gesture of one who reaches forward to stroke a shy and possibly rather dangerous bird, he put out his hand. It hung there trembling, within an inch of those limp fingers, on the verge of contact. Did he dare? Dare to profane with his unworhiest hand that ... No, he didn't. The bird was too dangerous. His hand dropped back. How beautiful she was! How beautiful!

30 Then suddenly he found himself reflecting that he had only to take hold of the zipper at her neck and give one long, strong pull ... He shut his eyes, he shook his head with the gesture of a dog shaking its ears as it emerges from the water. Detestable thought! He was ashamed of himself. Pure and vestal modesty ...

There was a humming in the air. Another fly trying to steal immortal blessings? A wasp? He looked, saw nothing. The humming grew louder and louder, localized itself as being outside the shuttered windows. The plane! In a panic, he scrambled to his feet and ran
35 into the other room, vaulted through the open window, and hurrying along the path between the tall agaves was in time to receive Bernard Marx as he climbed out of the helicopter.

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