

A certain attitude to woman

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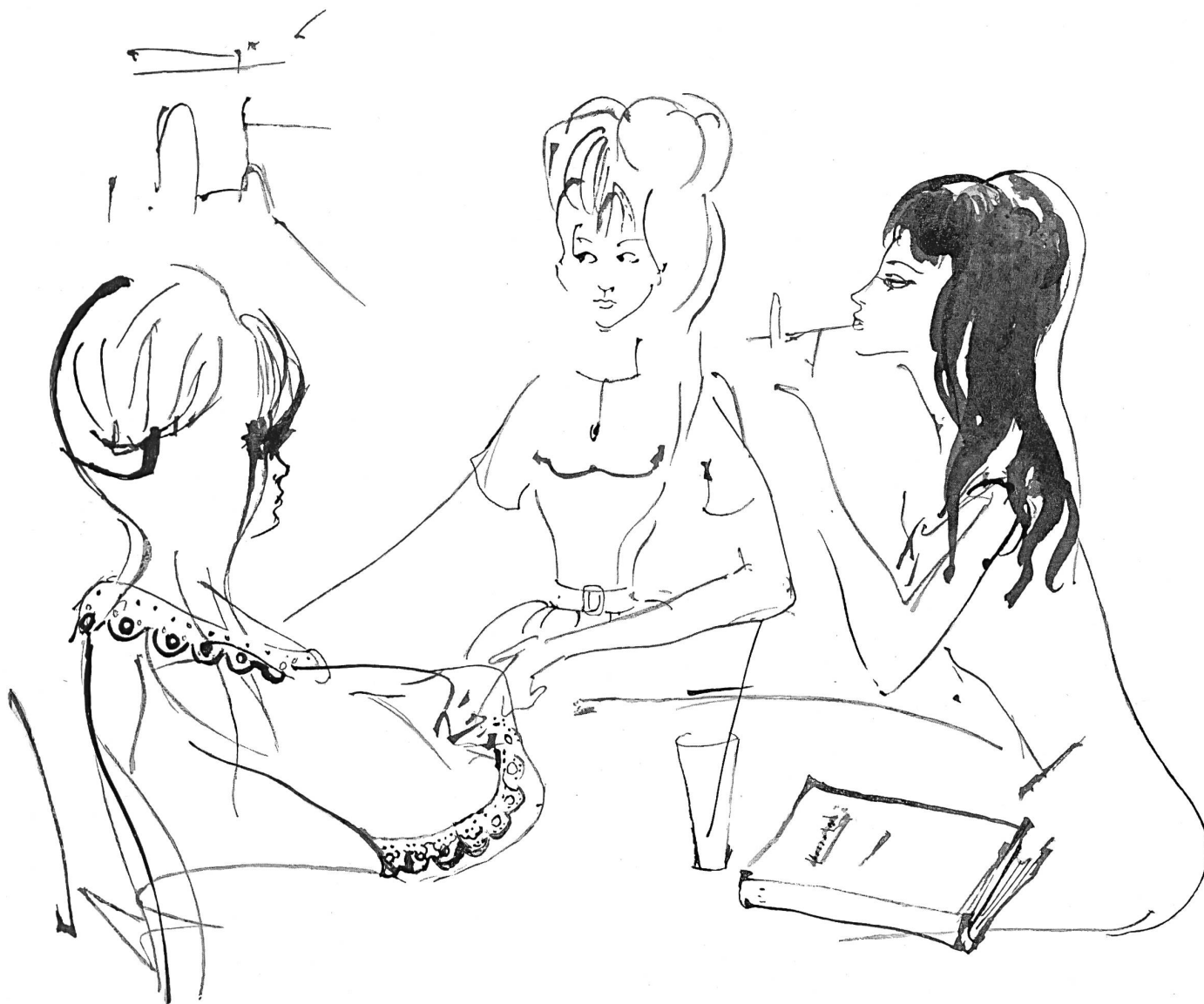
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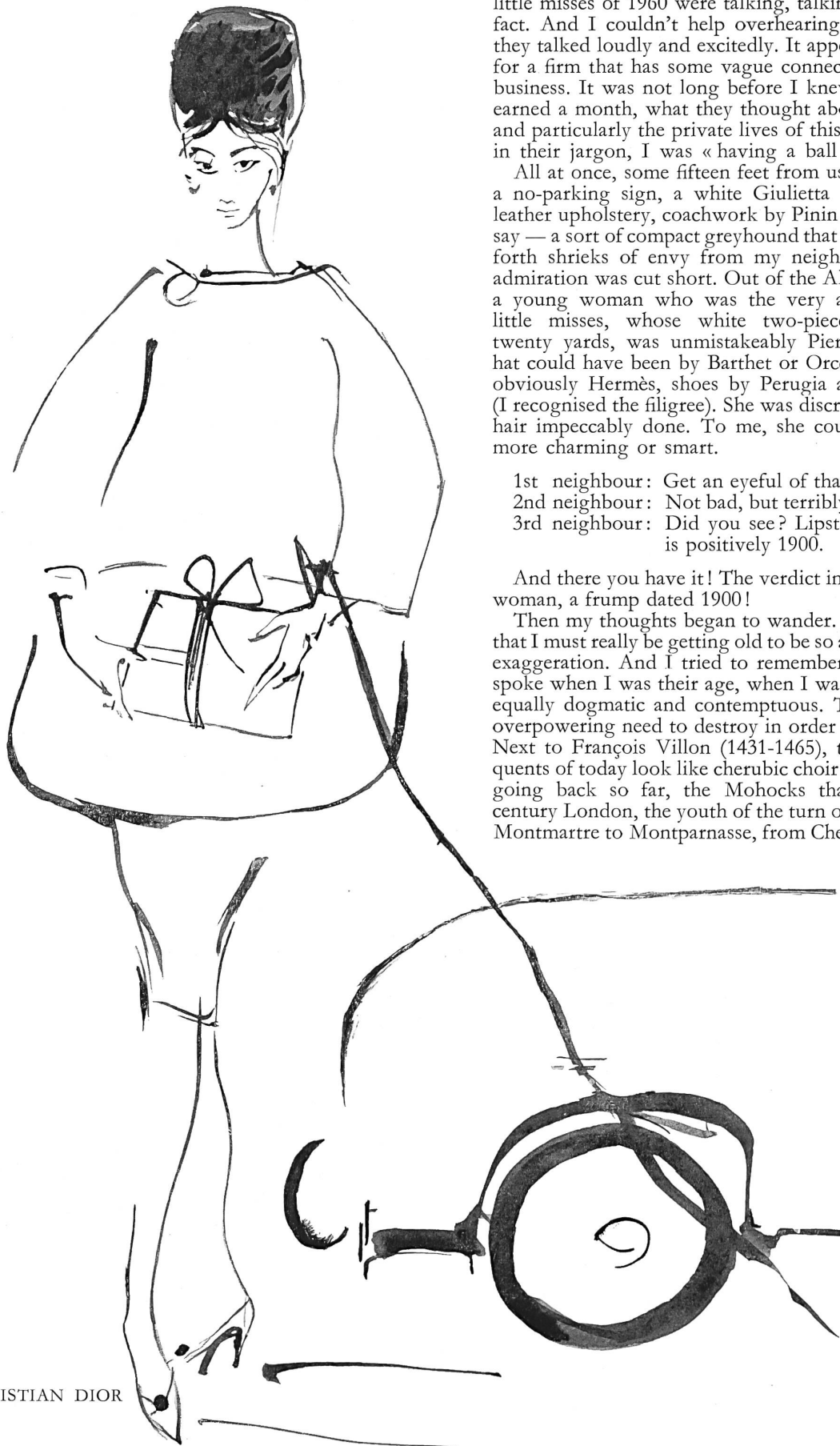
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A certain attitude to woman



Time — A Sunday in May. Place — Avenue des Champs-Élysées. The sky was a delicate blue silk, with streamers of white organdie trailing very high. On the right, just before the Étoile, there is a pavement cafe. As usual it was packed to overflowing. A large number of foreign tourists, with a sprinkling of native Parisians. And among the latter, three girls sitting at the table next to mine. They were of the type we have gradually grown to accept as part of the contemporary scene, that is to say with their hair piled high on their heads bird's nest style, their faces covered with a layer of almost beige-coloured foundation, their lips grey and their eyes as heavily mascaraed as those of the vamps of the early days of the silent screen. They were wearing somewhat sloppy sweaters through which jutted the inevitable provocative bust, balloon skirts, shoes in need of a good polish, cheap costume jewelry. And of course, the half-crumpled packet of « gauloises » was there on the table. These three typical



CHRISTIAN DIOR

little misses of 1960 were talking, talking a blue streak in fact. And I couldn't help overhearing their chatter, for they talked loudly and excitedly. It appeared they worked for a firm that has some vague connection with the film business. It was not long before I knew how much they earned a month, what they thought about the latest stars and particularly the private lives of this new elite. In fact, in their jargon, I was «having a ball».

All at once, some fifteen feet from us, right in front of a no-parking sign, a white Giulietta drew up — black leather upholstery, coachwork by Pinin Farina needless to say — a sort of compact greyhound that immediately called forth shrieks of envy from my neighbours. Only their admiration was cut short. Out of the Alfa Romeo stepped a young woman who was the very antithesis of these little misses, whose white two-piece outfit, even at twenty yards, was unmistakably Pierre Cardin, whose hat could have been by Barthet or Orcel, whose bag was obviously Hermès, shoes by Perugia and clip by Sterlé (I recognised the filigree). She was discretely made up, her hair impeccably done. To me, she could not have been more charming or smart.

1st neighbour: Get an eyeful of that!

2nd neighbour: Not bad, but terribly old-fashioned!

3rd neighbour: Did you see? Lipstick! Her make-up is positively 1900.

And there you have it! The verdict in a nutshell: an old woman, a frump dated 1900!

Then my thoughts began to wander. And I told myself that I must really be getting old to be so astonished by their exaggeration. And I tried to remember how I acted and spoke when I was their age, when I was — need I add — equally dogmatic and contemptuous. The young feel an overpowering need to destroy in order to build up again. Next to François Villon (1431-1465), the juvenile delinquents of today look like cherubic choir boys and, without going back so far, the Mohocks that terrorised 18th century London, the youth of the turn of the century from Montmartre to Montparnasse, from Chelsea to Greenwich.



LANVIN CASTILLO

up ». Admittedly elegance has never, at any time, been the prerogative of the very young. But they were ready to have a try, they were attracted towards this elegance which would come as surely as their curves would develop. Today, whether natural or artificial, these curves still exist. They fill out bodices and give greater roundness to skirts, but they are only to be revealed it appears through sweaters and blue jeans. Take the starlets of today, dress them at one of the great couturier's for a gala reception, a command performance or a film festival and what do they look like? I'll tell you, they look as if they were in fancy dress!

From time to time certain magazines seize on a « New Wave » star, take her to Dior, Laroche or Givenchy, and



MAGGY ROUFF

Village, were quite a problem too, to put it mildly. But the youth of those earlier days, even though aggressive in art and literature, nevertheless had a certain respect for beauty and elegance. They still loved and appreciated pretty women who looked like women and had a certain chic.

All that, you will say, has absolutely nothing to do with the matter in hand. But no, I object. It is very much to the point, it is extremely important, because an age's attitude to woman, fashion and chic sets the tone of society. And this tone has its repercussions in the economic field. I'll be coming back to this point.

The result of the present attitude is that women of the « New Wave » no longer know what it is to « get dressed

from there to Arsac to have her photographed; the result is far from encouraging. And even the promoters realise that the whole thing is a flop, because two pages further on our pouting starlet is shown at home, hair down, dressed any old how, one foot bare, the other in a shapeless old pump. And she is much better that way.

That is the whole trouble. Because in Los Angeles, Rome or Paris, the idols of our day no longer know how, no longer even wish to get dressed up. Our age is recreating woman; and she is no longer a woman, but a charming little hybrid and badly thrown together at that. And as youth is by the nature of things always in the right, she cuts the ground from under the feet of those who for centuries had no other purpose than to beautify women. I am thinking of the fabric designers, couturiers, milliners, shoe-makers who depend on the publicity they receive, but who, if the new way of thinking and the new values become more general, will see their clientele shrink like Balzac's ass's skin to be restricted to a well-to-do, not so young elite.

You will reply that there will be a mass fashion for the young, a fashion that will provide work for a big industry. I take of my hat to big industry, but I cannot help deploring the end of chic.

Unless... unless the wheel turns, which is possible. Unless people grow tired of the new wave style, which is bound to happen and unless, as a reaction, there is a new surge of affection for the very feminine style. But I must admit I am rather sceptical...

GALA

