

“An Venyn y’n Kota Melyn”/“The Woman in the Yellow Coat” by Patricia King

Clemo comed from St Just an’ ‘ad bin there all ‘is life, ‘ee ‘ad never even bin abroad to Pensans, ‘ee ‘ad met some boys from there waunce an’ thoft they waas more like maids than boys. Now don’t get me wrong Clemo waasn’t no bawjack, ‘ee waas jus’ wan who liked tha wildness of tha country an’ tha mines, an’ twas plenty of they round St Just.

Trouble waas whan ‘ee grew up an’ wanted to find ‘imselfe a wife, ‘ee found out ‘ee waas related to all tha maids in St Just; Clemo ‘ad to go down to Pensans to look fer wan, ‘ee waas that desperate to find a wife. Tha thing ‘ee cudden abide in a maid waas naggin, so whan ‘ee found a ansum maid that didn’t taalk much ‘ee ax ‘er out. And whan she tould ‘im she could cook well that waas tha job done. She seemed nice nough an’ tha mawther waas all sweetness, but as soon as tha weddin’ ring waas on ‘er finger she an’ tha mawther turned into hags. Clemo waas tould twadden anyway ‘er daughter waas goen to live in St Just nether, too wild she tould ‘im an’ she didn’t mean just tha weather! So that waas ‘ow ‘ee comed to live in Pensans, ‘ee soon found ‘is new missus who ‘ardly said a word ‘ad now found ‘er voice an’ twas like an ould fish wife.

Time passed Clemo ‘ad bin married fer vyve years an’ twadden gettin’ any easier nether, you’d ‘ave thoft ‘ee ‘ad got use to it now. If twas a prize fer naggin’ she’d be an outright winner. ‘Er main bone of contention which she gnawed on waas she didn’t ‘ave nawthen to wear, twas all ‘ee ‘eard from whan ‘ee comed oome from work until ‘ee waas in ‘is bed tryin’ to get some sleep.

Clemo cudden abear it any longer, an’ pointed to ‘er wardrobe an’ said, “What’s in there than if it tidden clothes. Tha bloomin’ door caan’t shut tes so much in there, an’ tidden fresh air.”

‘Er faace waas fit to burst twas that red, an’ she gave ‘im bill-tink. She could chew tha ears off a donkey. ‘Ee cudden say nawthen after that, no good tryin to get on ‘er good side not until she thawed out.

She tould ‘im she waas goen on strike an’ stoppin’ all ‘er wifely duties, ‘ee nawed what that meant. Clemo ‘ad crumbs fer ‘is croust, an’ cold comfort pie fer ‘is tay. An’ tha mawther in law gave ‘er daughter an ould camp bed that waas used last in tha air raid shelter durin’ tha war. Well ‘ee wudden put up weth ‘er no more, ‘ee thoft ‘ee would tache ‘er an’ tha mawther a lesson. So ‘ee didn’t taalk to nether of ‘em fer a week, see ‘ow they like that. Only that didn’t work, nether of ‘em noticed ‘ee waas not taalkin. After ‘ee thoft ‘ee wudden come oome from work, an’ they’d be afeard somefin ‘ad ‘appened to ‘im an’ come over beheemed weth worry. Well that didn’t work nether, they’d bin off gallivantin’ too much to naw ‘ee waas not even comin’ oome. Tryin’ to get tha bettermost of tha missus an’ tha mawther tidden easy as most of uss boys naw.

Clemo waas bestin’ what ‘ee should do, after a while ‘ee found some Dutch courage in a few too many glasses of mead, an’ went bragin’ oome to faace ‘er in doors. ‘Ee tould ‘er zackley what ‘ee thoft of ‘er an’ ‘er mawther.

They started to arg, ‘ee mus’ ‘ave bin haalf baaked to come up agen ‘is missus an’ that bitterweed of a mawther. Sure enough their chacks waas goen twentay to tha dozen, an’ tha mawther’s clacker could strip paint twas that sharp. They abben ‘is clothes out tha bedroom window into tha street fer all tha naibors to see, twas such a pop-an-towse. ‘Is underpants waas ‘angin on tha naibors gate an’ ‘is vest waas decoratin’ a botany bay. Clemo went out shammed faace an’ picked up ‘is clothes, an’ ‘ee comed in weth ‘is tail between ‘is legs. ‘Ee ‘ad to eat ‘umble pie fer a week fer ‘is missus waas as teasy as an adder, an’ thray times as dangerous you cudden tell whan she waas goen to strike.

'Ee cudden go on like this, nough waas nough twas fer tha best if 'ee tried an' win 'er round now 'ee nawwed twadden goen to be easy nether. Than it comed to 'im what maids liked twas what they waas always goen on about, somefin new to wear, she'd nagged 'im nough to naw that. So tes zackley what 'ee did, 'ee waas that plaised weth 'imselfe, 'ee tould 'is missus 'ee'd broft'er a new coat. She comed over all allish, she 'ad to sit down, nawthen like it 'ad 'appened afore, she thoft 'ee mus' be meesy-y-mazey. She asked 'im if 'ee needed a lie down.

"No," 'ee said. "I saw tha coat an' thoft of you."

Tha coat waas as dear as saffern an' twas tha colour of mustard. It reminded 'im of mustard gas tes what they used durin' tha war twas poisonous an' caused blisterin' an' 'ee thoft of 'er. Mind twadden no good caalin it mustard fer if 'ee let slip 'bout mustard gas she would 'ave taaken it all tha wrong way. She snatched tha coat out 'is 'ands an' put it on well it fitted 'er like a glove, a bit on tha snug side 'ee thoft.

Afore 'ee knew twas comin' out 'is mouth, "You mus' 'ave put on some weight, I'll change it fer a bigger size," 'ee said. Soon as 'ee said it 'ee nawwed 'ee'd done wrong whan 'ee saw 'er faace an' 'ee tould 'er 'ee'd be back dreckly.

Whan Clemo comed back she waas still in 'er coat standin' in front of tha mirror admirin' 'erselve. Clemo tould 'er fer an extra treat 'ee 'ad made an appointment weth a beauty parlour. First she thoft 'ee waas ballyraggin 'er, an' twadden no treat at all, but 'ee tould 'er tes true nough. Well 'er faace waas a picture she waas scat mazzlin, 'ee 'ad done nawthen like it in 'is life afore. She waas that plaised weth 'er coat an' now tha beauty parlour as well, tidden none of tha naibors bin to wan of they, 'er faace broke out into a smile. Ee cudden remember whan 'ee last saw wan of they, 'es 'ee suddintly remembered twas whan they waas courtin.

She went off fer 'er appointment at tha beauty parlour wearin' tha new yellow coat. You'd thoft twas tha Queen of Sheba waalkin' down tha street; 'er nawse waas that high in tha air.

Tha naibors peered from behind tha curtains at 'er all dressed up to tha nynes. In Causeway Head she caused a confloption weth 'er yellow coat an' actin all uppish like tha cat that got tha cream. Clemo tould 'er zackley where tha parlour waas at tha bottom end of town, she went in an' up to tha reception. "I'm 'ere fer my appointment, a cut, shampoo, and blowdry, an' a manicure," she said proudly to tha receptionist.

Tha maid behind tha desk looked at 'er proper odd, than checked 'er appointment book, "I 'ave a tyne-twenty booked fer Tally," she said an' peered over tha desk down to tha floor. But tha woman in tha yellow coat waas on 'er own.

"Yes tes me, tyne- twenty that is right," she said. "My ould man caals me Tally, tes short fer Talwyn."

"I think tes bin some mistake madam," said tha receptionist.

Now Talwyn waas gettin' hot under tha collar, not only because of tha delay but in account of 'er wearin' a winter coat in tha summer. But, nawthen nor nobody that waas goen to stop 'er wearin' 'er ansum new coat tha colour of lent-illys.

"Tes you that 'ave made a mistake," Talwyn shouted irately an' pushed past an' went into tha salon. "Now get on weth doin' my cut, blowdry an' nails, instead of standin' there curzin'," she admonished tha tew salon maids.

They 'ad harken to Talwyn taalkin to tha receptionist an' could see tha mistake straight away. They waas barum at tha woman in tha yellow coat who looked like an overstuffed canary an' they cudden keep a straight faace.

"No, madam you don't understand tes you that 'as made an awful mistake," said wan of tha maids as she pointed to a large counter. "Tes a beauty parlour, but tes fer dogs you see, that your husband booked you in fer, we thoft Tally waas a dog."

Talwyn looked at tha tew maids an' than noticed tha poodle behind them, an' nawed twas true. She went out weth a flea in 'er ear, an' a faace like she'd swallowed a wasp. She waas that bragin whan she got oome she waas caalin Clemo a right bussa-head an' gave 'im a right baalin. Clemo tried to explain 'ow 'ee made an honest mistake, 'ee saw tha beauty treatments an' thoft of 'er 'ee didn't naw twas such things fer dogs.

But twadden tha last of it, fer nawthen stays secret in Pensans, tha maids in tha groomin' parlour cudden stop themselves fer tellin' all 'bout Talwyn's visit, an' thoft twas a beauty parlour an' she waas that insistent on 'avin 'er 'air groomed an' 'er nails clipped, until she saw tha poodle. An 'ow she'd comed in all lauddydore in 'er yellow coat. Whan folk 'eard it 'ad them in fits they howled weth laughter, an' since that day Talwyn's bin nawen in these 'ere parts as tha woman in tha yellow coat. An' what about Clemo I 'ere you say. Well 'ee's still in tha dog 'ouse!