



CORRECT

LINE

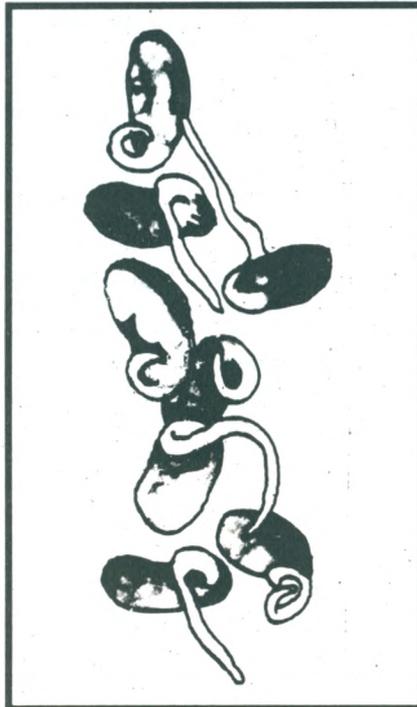
COOKING

Roll Play

I have been told by those who may have reason to know that I am annoying in the morning. Now, esteemed readers, as you well know I am not given to unnecessary acrimony. Otherwise I might point out that clearheadedness, the ability to enunciate and to navigate between rooms without bumping into walls are not usually seen as instances of annoying behaviour—except by those given to imitating three-toed sloths in the morning. Indeed, if I were of an argumentative nature, I might point out that grumpiness, blank stares and a total inability to *do* anything (particularly when this nondoing is done in a blue terry towelling dressing gown) is truly annoying.

More relationships must crash on the rocks of the morning than on any other obstacle. There is something fraught with difficulty about the transition from the blissful unconsciousness of the night to the cruel exigencies of the day. The tedious scrabble for matching socks/stockings, the need to restrain oneself from rugby tackles for bathroom precedence, and the inability to linger over food create the right ingredients for argument.

Breakfasts can be miserable things. Muesli is my particular horror. Muesli is to breakfast what Volvos are to cars. It is eaten, not for pleasure, but for safety—for a balanced, sensible entry onto the bright, straight highway of life. (In my other job I compose desk diary entries.) And, like most Volvo drivers, muesli eaters are totally unconcerned with the effect they have on fellow travellers. A muesli eater's grim determination is aesthetically repulsive. It marks a premature sloughing off of any lingering pleasure from the night. Not that a muesli muncher would know about that. Indeed, muesli eaters don't like pleasure. If they find a doona feather in their hair, they pluck it out and discard it, without first stroking their face with it. If they detect an unauthorised smell, they Norsca it sooner than one can say 'pine



fragrance'. Muesli eaters see the body as a machine for work, and stoke themselves in order to get through the day. At least some muesli eaters hide their antisocial habits. Others actually publicly discuss the constituents of the vile concoction, and such vital issues as whether you toast it (presumably to make its consumption even noisier)

or take it raw, like a real Scandinavian. Personally, I'd make them all wear a beige fabric bowl sewn on their clothes to mark them out from civilised humanity—and thus prevent one making the mistake of going home with them, and having to confront the chow down the next morning. Talk about miscegenation.

Toast can be just as bad too but in a sadder, poorer way. Precut bread with a smear of something ordinary symbolises the segmented lives we live. The work day penetrates the ordinary morning and renders it already part of someone else's time. The only option is how many slices we can have in the allotted time. Questions of thickness, smell and texture are quite redundant.

Far be it from me to attempt to describe the perfect breakfast. However, for me it would be exactly like this:

Swathed in warmth, she woke slowly as the smell of coffee being ground wafted upstairs. The quiet bubbling of the espresso mingled with her last dreams. Wearing a non terry-towelling robe, he entered the room carrying a tray. The yellow orb of the grapefruit mingled with the gentle harshness of the coffee in her mind. Two soft eggs curved out from near a thick blanket of warm brown toast, which seemed to bleed butter. Stretching, she picked up a strawberry and passed it over her mouth, the stalk tickling her lips. She tasted the delicate red, and the soft tang reverberated down from her mouth to her feet, still hidden under the sheet.

But at this moment, dear reader, I always wake up. Still, to use an irrelevant quotation from the appropriately named Bacon, "Hope is a good breakfast, but it is a bad supper". And who ate the last Weetbix?

Penelope Cottier.