

scene of their existence, the law of their affinities or contrasts, the restrained, wafted fragrance of their charm, their souls' silent yet indiscreet confidant, the sanctuary of their past. As happens when beings and objects have lived together a long time in simplicity, in mutual need and the vague pleasure of one another's company, everything here is amity. The pride of the old firedogs, loyal servants agleam with the honor of their masters, softens under the gently cordial gaze of the flame, and the dignified air of unmoving armchairs offers a welcome in this room where their lives slip by, where every morning they are taken to the window to be dusted down, their punctual dotards' circuit or sluggish revolution always rounding off at exactly the same hour.

How many particular amities we come to know in a seemingly humdrum room, just as in a draft that stirs or drowns beside us we can see, when the sun falls across it, infinite, lively eddies. Look at *The Diligent Mother* or *Saying Grace*. There is amity between the sewing box and the old hound who comes each day to his usual spot, lying as he always does with his soft, lazy back against the box's cushioned fabric. It is amity that so naturally draws to the old yarn winder, where they will feel so at ease, the dainty feet of the distracted woman whose body unwittingly complies with habits and affinities she unknowingly accepts. Amity, again, or marriage between the colors of the fire screen and those of the sewing box and skein of wool; between the inclined body and contented hands of the woman preparing the table, and the old tablecloth and dishes that have stayed intact, her careful hands still feeling, after so many years, their mild resistance where she always holds them; between this tablecloth and the light, which as a memento of its daily visits gives the cloth the softness of cream or of Flanders linen; between the light and the whole room it caresses, where it slumbers or wanders or cheerfully slips in unannounced, with such tenderness over so many years; between the warmth and the fabrics, between people and things, the past and this life, the bright and dark.

[Fiction]

CREATIVE LICENTIOUS

By Jen George, from "Instruction," which appears in *The Babysitter at Rest*, a collection of her short fiction that will be published next month by Dorothy.

THE WAREHOUSE

The Warehouse is a temporary structure with a mirrored exterior, built by admitted students before

orientation, located on the infield of the Aqueduct Racetrack in Queens, off-season. Inside The Warehouse, various materials and tools: sheetrock; plywood; plexiglass; table saws; welders; cement mixers; glue; epoxy; caulk; a first-aid kit; a table on which to draw doodles or scratch names, butts, or penises in butts; old calendars defiled by butt and penis drawings; drywall; fiberglass; ropes; whips; hooks; horseshoes; shovels; latex gloves; etc.; and a

[Prescriptions]

PRO TIPS

From *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition*, a fourteenth-century encyclopedia by Shihab al-Din al-Nuwayri, an Egyptian scholar. The book was published this month by Penguin Classics. Translated from the Arabic by Elias Muhanna.

Take equal parts of carrot seed, arugula seed, autumn crocus, and cottonseed kernels, and knead them together in elecampane water or arugula water. A suppository can be made out of that, and it will raise a mighty erection.

Take one dirham's worth of the scorched skin of a jackal, the scorched hooves of a goat, the scorched hoof of a donkey, scorched thorn apple, a scorched sea crab, scorched polypody, and Persian thyme, and grind them all to a fine powder. Knead it in ben-tree oil and let it refine. Then the woman may administer it as a suppository with the weight of two carob grains. This will tighten the vagina so that the woman becomes like a virgin.

Take some elephant urine and give it to the woman to drink without her knowing what it is. Then have sexual intercourse with her. With God's permission, she will become pregnant.

Take the head of a black crow and scoop out its brain. In place of the brain, put some dirt taken from the spot where the woman whom you seek sits, and also a little detritus from the bath, along with seven grains of barley. Bury the crow's head in the ground, in a moist place. Once the barley grows to the height of four fingers, take some of it and rub it on your hand, wipe it on your face and forearms, and then approach the woman without speaking to her. She will chase after you and will not be able to live without you.