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PULP MAG aims to be a safe, inclusive space for emerging artists of all types. We want to give a platform to unique voices with important stories to tell, no matter the medium. We believe in the importance of artist recognition, exposure, paying our creative talent, and in building a strong community to hold the work. At pulp MAG, we especially appreciate the avant-garde; we are ready to push the boundaries of art with you.

VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS MAGAZINE ARE NOT NECESSARILY SHARED BY THE EDITORS

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When the uber driver asks the wife

When the uber driver / asks the man's wife / where she's from / she says Ohio / she says
/ I've never been to New York / I've never been to Brooklyn / what's that / what's that /
When the uber driver makes / a wrong turn / the husband opens / his mouth to correct /
the oversight / the wife starts a conversation / about Dolly Parton / about politics / the
uber driver plays / dumb now / he says / what's a republican / what's a democrat /
where's all our money going

When the uber driver / makes another wrong turn / the husband closes / the app / asks
the uber driver to stop / at the curb / wonders what it's like / to sleep on a curb / but
doesn't wonder far enough / sympathizes with the homeless / drenched in theory / the
husband can't feel / cold rain on young bodies / the uber driver is asking / fake questions
still / the wife is almost giving / real answers / the husband is confused / the husband
isn't looking hard enough

When the uber driver / pulls over / the man gets his raincoat / he gets his briefcase / the
man checks his teeth for flies / the uber driver does not help / the man with his seatbelt /
the uber driver assumes / weak bones and delicate seams / of the woman's limbs / the
wife is considered only a wife / the husband is allowed manhood / when the uber driver says
/ I'm sorry / the husband goes first / he takes his wife / she is not a woman now / her
eyes pressed against the moon

Sunday Matinée

I always choose the aisle
seat at the movies.

You asked me why & I told you
safe exits only come in races;

your face said I was the only
exit you needed.

This is what it's like in marriage:
soft moon love & full kitchen

cupboards, listening to young
city drunks slathering the sidewalks

& skipping church on Sunday
just to fuck.

*

I built a window in the closet
when I was seven, a carved sea

of glass & sand. I made friends
just to miss them years later

in a different sort of castle.
Your hand is a ship crossing the moat.

*

You paint your face shut for your father's
funeral, help your mother serve

stuffed clams & white oysters:
this is a different sort of love.

Hell seems so far when you're near,
gray static unreal to this world. & I

still don't see the point of an after-
life, but you do, & that might be enough.

Visual

Zoe Leung
Acrylic, Plaster

Blue Ice



Dewberry Vine Scars

The only women I knew growing up who never married and never had children were nuns. That a woman would choose a single life was strange to me, akin to something like a black walnut tree. Other trees—pecan, pear, persimmon—were all useful. But black walnut trees were nothing but trouble. They grew all around our twenty acres off Highway 90, but we couldn't do a thing with the nuts except kick them for fun while trying to avoid rolling an ankle by stepping on one.

So, when Gwen Potter moved into the rent house that lay just north of our property line, vacated after Widow Lawrence passed, I wanted to know whether she'd be a useful neighbour.

My daddy wanted to know too. He muttered words under his breath every time we passed the homestead going into town, a string of degradations disguised as curiosities.

Gwen had moved in June, during a week when triple-degree temperatures set records all across the state. The calendar had said summer wasn't supposed to start for a week, but somehow the sun hadn't gotten the memo.

It only took a couple of hours on Tuesday afternoon for Gwen to unload one pickup truck bed of furniture along with a cab full of loose clothes, one suitcase, and several garbage bags full of who-knows-what. We watched her from our porch—our house close to the road and just across the fence line. She hefted bags over her shoulders into the little house like she was some kind of Santa Claus.

I kept waiting for someone else to arrive that day since no woman I knew would ever dare to live alone. "Is she by herself?"

"You see anybody with her?" My daddy didn't take his eyes off her movements.

"Why don't we help her?" Gwen looked to be struggling with a mattress. Unloading it from the back of the truck would have been smoother with an extra set of hands. She wouldn't have had to slide it across the gravel, stirring up dust.

“A woman like that don’t need no help.” He didn’t make a motion in her direction, and I didn’t ask any more about it.

I still didn’t know what type of woman she was, so I wondered how my daddy could know.

A few days later, she came up the gravel drive onto our property near the evening as the sun set low against the fields. My daddy and I were both sitting on the porch eating supper, trying to catch a breeze that didn’t want to come.

As she approached us, she raised her hand to wave, and I yelled out “Hi there!” while my daddy just sat and chewed with his mouth open.

That’s how we found out her name, and when I told her mine, she said Marilyn was a pretty name: “Like a movie star,” she insisted.

But my daddy just grunted and said, “She’s named after her mother.” I didn’t know much about her, only that she ran off when I was two but not to make movies.

One thing I noticed about Gwen that summer was that she always dressed in layers. A half-closed button-down shirt over a ribbed tank. A tight t-shirt beneath a cottony tunic. A dress so threadbare anybody could see the outline of her slip right through it. Her clothes must have been worn and washed and dried and worn again with more regularity than my father’s prayers.

That first evening we met her when she reached her hand out to shake ours, the sleeve of her shirt inched up. My daddy was the first to ask, “Where’d you get them scratches?” The corner of his mouth curved into slyness that I didn’t understand yet was uncomfortable to see.

She withdrew her hand and pushed down the fabric, tugging at the fraying hem as if covering the marks would make them disappear from the conversation. “I was picking some dewberries.”

But her skin was bruise-colored in all the wrong places and berry season ended in May. My father grunted as I bit my tongue.

We didn't see Gwen too much after that, at least not up close. She never hung her clothes on the line to dry, even though there was a good one stretched taut between two poles on the side of the house. I saw her walk to the mailbox now and again, but I don't even think she did that every day.

Sometimes, if I was up real early in the morning, I'd see her at the fence line reaching her hand over to touch our cows. They weren't much of anything. Around Texas, only poor people had the kind of herd we had, a Heinz 57 mixture of beef just to help pay the bills. On fancy ranches, owners had Angus. The dairy farmers had Jersey. Brahmas were kept for 4-H projects. Longhorns were only for people who had too much money to spend. Our cattle were held like city people held stocks. Just like they watched the stock market, we watched auction barn prices, hoping to time a sale just right. Sometimes we did. Mostly we didn't.

When I turned thirteen that summer, my daddy did give me \$20. There wasn't cake, but that money was as sweet as any slice of one.

I stowed the money under my mattress until I could spend it all. I wondered how Gwen got her money and what she spent it on since she didn't have a man around to tell her how. One day when my daddy was in town and I saw her walking to the mailbox, I met her and asked. "So what do you do all day?"

She answered, "Same things as you," but I doubted that was the truth.

Still, that little bit of contact between just the two of us started a chain of loose encounters that stretched throughout the summer like a string of pearls, little gems of conversation that I latched onto because I had never heard words like what she was telling me.

Her advice to me started with boys. She warned, "Don't marry the first one you ever kiss."

I had to admit that I'd never kissed a boy but I sure wanted to.

She also told me about womanly things that my daddy never did.

"Keep one good bra at all times, one that don't get stretched out in the wash.

You'll need it when you go out. Or want to get a job." She counted the reasons on her fingers. "Or need to impress somebody's momma."

I wasn't sure about the wisdom of the last part of what Gwen said, but she didn't give me time to ask questions because she kept right on dishing.

"Don't ever let no man tell you how to spend the money you earn." I had some restrictions from my daddy, since he was the one who had to drive me to any place to spend my money anyway. But I registered the tip in my mind just the same.

Gwen also told me, "Only share your sweets when you're ready." If that had a double meaning, I wasn't quite sure. Either way, I chose to think of it as a twist on what I heard from my kindergarten teacher that sharing is caring.

Regarding my appearance when I went out, Gwen told me, "Never forget to wear mascara." Geez, I wanted to buy a tube so bad, but my daddy said I was too young for it. When I could buy some, Gwen told me how. "You don't need the fancy stuff. Pink package drug store kind will do just fine. But slather it on, thick as sheet cake frosting." She pulled down the skin under her eye with the fingertips of one hand while she mimed with the other.

"So that's how it gets on there." I was wonderstruck, never thinking that each eye's application was a two-handed job.

I learned more from Gwen that summer than I did from any teacher. I liked to think she was brought to the rental property just for me, to give me these bits of advice that I could use and stow and learn from in ways that I never had before.

But one day, her pickup wasn't in the driveway, and the potted plant of aloe vera she kept on the front porch had been turned over, the juice-rich spindles kicked into the dust below. I asked my daddy if he had seen Gwen, but he just said she was gone, moved on to some other place.

"You never know what's up with women like that," he concluded, but it was no sort of conclusion for me.

Mario Loprete
Oil on cement
100cm x 100cm

Sista Awa



Candid

Crossroads (2002): movie about three girls on a road trip. One of them is pregnant. One of them is Britney Spears. We sing her song 'Lucky' on the four hour drive from Vancouver to Kelowna.

A tabo is a plastic bucket found in Filipino washrooms. Typically used for washing your butt or nether-regions. Manual. The poor man's bidet.

Walmart sells disposable cameras, but London Drugs develops them. I'd never ask you for a solo, so you're only in the group shots, and you're not even looking.

Human bodies have the same percentage of salt as the ocean. Our stomachs have more neurons than cat brains. Most of my molars have more filling than tooth.

Headlights on cars look like faces and yours reminds me of a snotty rich kid from a Disney Channel original movie. The kind of little shit that wears a white suit and too much hair gel.

In Green Grass Valley, there are pillows but no beds. I still haven't washed the blanket I brought to camp because it used to smell like the two hours we stayed up watching the stars and telling riddles around the fire.

The big dipper is just a giant tabo in the sky.

When I tell people about liking you, I tell them about when we went kayaking and you took my shoes from my boat. Your grin as you rowed away pulled me under the lake and I've been drowning there ever since.

Kitchen Sink



The Girl

to the teachers who indulged my creativity
but not my masculinity.

the day I said goodbye
to the girl
she begged me not to go.

she said she could be everything
we'd ever hoped for,
even if she
never quite completed me.

she said that we've shared
too much together
to move away from each other.

like old houses separating stone
from mortar
she said she was fundamental
to my broadening shoulders,

that to fit my growing frame
I must be smaller—

to be liked I must be quiet,
soundless, cloistered.

even now,
like losing an old friend
because one of you
couldn't figure out how
to truly understand the other.

the day I said goodbye to the girl,
I questioned everything
I had ever stood for,

still unsure if it was social constructs
blocking my way ahead,
or her.

binary waves

cut reality into pieces,
interfere with who I am,
and who I wish to be.

I still wish to be—
a slim, supple body,
with ruined empathy
towards masculinity,

but presently presenting
as handsome,
not pretty,

I try desperately not to become
the very men who hurt me.

breasts still bruised
from those who tried to
touch and uphold
my unwanted body.

like the boy in the bedroom.

eyes asking please,
mouth asking for one more touch

even as disgust ruptured my throat
my lungs screaming mercy
as he reached for me.

my presentation is not a choice—
it protects me.

only,
sometimes I think
it's not about my gender identity
at all—

it's about the fearful girl
trapped deep inside my body

who is still twelve years old,
and uncertain

as the boy
who she thought was her friend,

reaches for parts of her
she didn't know existed.

Behind the Scenes



1/4

Behind The Scenes

Gracienne 19

A Beast of Burden

the sadness unspools
from my chest.

uncoils it's tendrils,
awake again,
slithers through my veins,
bubbles and hisses
the bitterness to life.

it wakes up rage,
which pulls me upright
like a marionette,

makes me
kick down the front door
with six blows

and for every memory of you,
it lights another object
inside me on fire.

now, I drive with tinted windows,
unable to see outside looking in,
so I content myself
with my own interests,

hollow as they may ring
when someone
pushes my buttons,

I fly apart, screaming—
till the pounding
in my ears
becomes hard rock,

till my body
defrosts

till the sadness
retreats to its den,

as the purple bruises heal
over freshly tattooed skin,

till the scars you made
in invisible places

don't burn
when I touch them.

Visual

Edward Supranowicz
Digital

Sourpuss



132 Street

the mosquitoes are thirsty for the warmth
inside of us. you laugh as they tickle
our necks. your brown finger reaches
for a morsel of roti off our plate packed
with spicy fried carrots. ants line dance
around our criss-cross-apple-sauced legs
and the air buzzes. our knees are ashy,
our feet are dirty, and our mothers
are always at work. i follow your bandaged
finger pointing to the building. *i wanna be
like that guy. / why? / cause he's in the
center.* the road is broken. drivers cuss
as their tires hit pothole after pothole.
it's shaped like a snake, but no one
slows down. an oak scent overwhelms
the street. at the end is a train track,
the lights always flash—no train ever shows
up. the building is surrounded by a chain
link fence. we are surrounded by a black
railing and spider webs. a thick dark smog
rushes out of the building, excited
to pollute our air. *they musta done
great things.* the stop sign freshly
spray painted reads *don't STOP.* we stare
at the building. it stares back. we just
wanted what was on the outside,
not the inside.

Visual

Celesta DeRoo
Chronicles of Cambium
Earthenware ceramic
sculpture, acrylic paint
2019

Chronicles of Cambium





The Ballad of Bartre the Bold

There were probably worse ways to die.

Bartre the Bold's knees shook, rattling the joints of his armor. Being eaten or incinerated by a dragon would at *least* be quick, would it not?

It had taken the better part of the afternoon to scale the mountain's winding path, and despite the best efforts of his noble donkey, Peaches, he'd been forced to climb the last part on foot, clinging to scrub-brush that threatened to tug free of the thin dirt at any second, and hurtle him back down the slope like a runaway wheel of cheese.

Now, puffing and sweating beneath his mail, the polish of his plate dulled by a light coating of mountain dust, he stood before the yawning cave mouth, easily thrice his height, and contemplated his life choices. Maybe it would be a small dragon?

Clearing his throat, he drew his sword from its sheath at his hip and held it before him. The tip only wavered slightly. If he was lucky, the beast would be out hunting or asleep. Though, the ritual of challenge would void that latter possibility. Why couldn't he have tried for the title of rogue instead of knight? Then he could simply sneak in, snatch the kidnapped princess or dispatch the beast in its sleep and be done with it. No fire, no fangs, no death.

What were those words again? Dragons were said to be very particular about formalities and politeness. He licked his lips. "Ah... Ho! Yon fell wurm! I challenge thee, stand forth and do battle this day!" He'd barely stumbled over them, and managed to sound confident too! Master Silverblade would have been so proud.

No burst of movement from the murky cave depths, no blast of fire or roar of challenge. Bartre shifted, a bead of sweat dripping from his nose. *The Complete and Exhaustive Hero's Handbook (Saddlebag Edition)* said he needed to announce himself at least

twice before entering, just to be sure his foe had heard or was not indisposed. He walked a few steps into the shadow of the cave's mouth and tried again. "Ho! Yon fell wyrm! I challenge thee—"

"All right, all right, I'm coming! Keep your codpiece on."

From deep within the tunnel, a gust of hot air swirled past him, accompanied by the sound of something immense shifting over stone. Heavy footfalls echoed over the walls. A ripe, animal musk assaulted his nose, twined with the scent of char. Twin yellow pools appeared in the gloom, flickered out, then reappeared closer—eyes the size of his head fixed on him. Beneath the slit-pupiled gaze, tiny goutts of flame gave hint at the beast's form, sparkling off of wicked fangs nearly the length of his sword.

Was the ground shaking with the dragon's steps, or was it his own trembling? The ground. Definitely the ground. Confidence, that was the key here. No need to think about how he could easily fit inside that maw, and how his armor might as well be paper before those fangs and claws.

With a deep sigh that swirled hot air and dust around Bartre, the creature stopped before him, raising its neck to look down, the tips of its head-spines nearly scraping the ceiling of the cave. Sunlight glittered off its ruby scales, each appearing the size of his fist and far tougher. Its forelimbs fell a scant few paces in front of him, lethal black claws easily in range to bat him against the wall like a cat with a ball of yarn.

"Well?" the dragon grumbled, "What do you want?"

For some reason, Bartre's throat was completely parched. His voice came out much more a squeak than the intended noble cry of challenge. "I seek to duel with thee, great beast!"

"Yes, yes, of course you do, but why?" The dragon lowered its head closer, nostrils flaring, granting Bartre an uncomfortable view of stoked flames beyond tendrils of mucus. "Are you *sure* you're a knight? You don't smell like one, and that armor isn't even enchanted. Where's your horse? Where's your banner and squire?"

"I..." It took Bartre a moment to realize the creature was indeed asking him a

question. "I do not have them yet, cannot afford them on my own. I am only an apprentice knight, you see, and must complete this task to earn my title." Straightening, he pointed his blade at the dragon, despite how his mind gibbered to drop it and run. "Which is why I am here! To strike true for the name of justice, and—"

A blur of motion. Stinging pain in his wrist. The sword spun away to clatter against the wall of the cave, leaving Bartre staring at his empty hand.

"Honestly." The dragon shook its forepaw and examined one of its claws. "You knights are really going downhill these days. Didn't even chip a nail on that blade. So, what, some king wanted you to bring him my head? Tell me which one please, I'd like to pay them a visit. Or are you just after my treasure? That's rather impolite you know. I'm not terribly fond of thieves."

Unsure what else to do—turning to run was pointless after all—Bartre shook his head. "I am no thief. I am here to rescue the princess Isolde, should she still live, or avenge her death if you have slain her."

The dragon reared back, hissing, and Bartre cringed, anticipating the blast of fire that would cook him where he stood. That great head whipped down, snout halting inches from him, jerking a strangled cry from his throat as those reptilian eyes stared into his.

"You're here for her? Really?" The dragon's voice was likely a whisper by its standards, though it still seemed like it was bellowing in Bartre's face. It glanced over its shoulder, pupils widening, then back to him. "Why didn't you say so earlier? Thank the gods! I'll happily give you any treasure you want if you take her with you!"

Bartre coughed, the smoke hissing from the dragon's nostrils nearly overwhelming him. "I do not understand. You stole her from her father's castle."

"Is that what king what's-his-name told you? I suppose they might see it that way. But no! There I was, minding my own business after liberating some gold from a church, when this princess comes running up, tiara and all, climbs on my back, and *orders* me to fly her to my cave! There were some knights chasing after her, which I couldn't be bothered to deal with, so rather than waste my time arguing with her, I flew, thinking I could send her home later."

A shudder passed down the length of its neck. “But she refuses to leave! I can barely catch a day of sleep without her demanding I bring her food or water and entertain her. You have to help me!”

Bartre stared at the dragon, attempting to resolve the image of this colossal predator cowering before a young girl. “You did not simply eat her?”

The dragon’s muzzle wrinkled. “Goodness no. That’s a horrible stereotype!” Massive wings fluttered, settled, the dragon adopting a posture that radiated offense. “We don’t eat humans, we eat *metal*! Did you think all that gold and silver is because it’s pretty?”

“You could have roasted her with your fire,” Bartre said, his confusion growing.

“Certainly, but that is hardly polite, and dragons hold politeness in the highest regard. Now are you going to help, or not?”

“I... suppose I will try?” How fearsome was this princess, to have a dragon so cowed?

“Thank you! Please, follow me!” Spinning about and narrowly missing beheading Bartre with its spiked tail, the dragon lumbered off into the depths of the cave.

Bartre followed, squinting to see through the dingy murk. While it had been implied that he would have to slay the dragon, in truth his task was to see to the safe return of the princess. If he accomplished the deed and didn’t need to take on a fire-spewing behemoth to do so, that was no one’s business but his own, was it not?

A gleam in the darkness ahead bloomed into the warmth of torchlight, speckled with refractions like ripples on a pond. Mindful of his step as not to tread upon—or be upended by—his host’s tail, Bartre stepped into an expansive chamber, filled end to end with the piles of riches one would expect of a dragon’s hoard. Several cauldron-sized braziers lit the space, the flames mirrored in every direction from mounds of gold, silver, gems, and other trinkets.

In the center of it all, a young woman lounged supine across a throne festooned in sapphires, her slippered feet dangling over one of its arms. A tiara sparkled among her dark curls, and the fine blue silk dress she wore matched the description of the wayward princess. A thick swath of gold and silver necklaces dangled down her chest, and rings adorned every finger, spattering her entire form with multi-coloured jewels in an obscene display of wealth that cared little for sensibility.

“Back already, Scales?” the princess said, looking up at their intrusion from the book she held in a manicured hand. “You didn’t bring me the mutton I asked for I see. What are you waiting for? I said I was hungry!”

“You have a guest,” the dragon growled, its claws digging into a pile of gold so tightly Bartre expected the clinking pile to fuse in a mutilated mass. “And would you kindly stop wearing my lunch?”

“Who is he? He looks boring. And you can’t eat these, Scales! They’re far too pretty and I want them!”

Unleashing a sigh that sent several stray coins clattering, the dragon swung about and lumbered past Bartre back the way they’d come. “I shall leave you two alone. I expect your business to be resolved by the time I return.” This last came with a baleful look over its shoulder towards the princess, and a pleading nod to Bartre that undermined the veiled “or else” behind its words.

“Mutton!” The princess shouted at the retreating beast. “It comes from sheep! I know you’re capable of finding some.” When the dragon didn’t reply, she sat up, huffed and turned her ire upon Bartre, closing the book and placing it on the arm of the throne. “Well? Who are *you*? Are you supposed to be a knight? That armor barely fits you, and shouldn’t you have a sword?”

“Milady, I am Bartre, knight apprentice, and needs dictated that I must leave my sword behind to enter here.” The usual protocols of liberating a captured princess didn’t seem to apply here, and given how she was seated, the standard means of addressing a ruler seemed more appropriate. Approaching, Bartre fell to one knee after kicking aside a loose scepter. “If it pleases you, I have come to escort you safely away from here.”

“Ugh, I thought I was very clear to father’s knights. I’m fourteen and I can do what I want!” A slippered foot stomped, jangling her many necklaces. “I like it here. You can go back and tell him that.”

“Milady, your father is quite worried—”

“Then he can come up here himself! Do I look like I’m in danger? Scales is a perfect gentleman and does whatever I say. I don’t need your help.”

The prospects of achieving knighthood were appearing slimmer by the moment. When in doubt, change tactics. That’s what Master Fellguard would say. “Milady, surely there is much more for you back at home. Why should one of your great beauty and obvious wisdom waste away in a dingy cave like this?”

Princess Isolde brightened, though her arms remained folded across her chest. “Well, at least you also know your manners, apprentice knight. But do you have any notion of how dreadfully *boring* it is at father’s castle? Every day it’s little more than royal court sessions, the endless blathering of old nobles, dreary balls, and functions... The tournaments are exciting at least, though not nearly enough of those. And the knights are all the same, beating their chests and vowing to fight for my honour as if I need them to defend it! I’d like to teach them all a thing or two in the melee, but no, *proper* princesses aren’t *allowed* to learn swordplay.”

“Could you not ask the royal fencing master to teach you?” Kneeling was growing tiresome on his knee, but he dared not risk offending her by rising without permission.

“I tried that, but father forbade him to do it.” Sighing, she stood and stepped around piles of loose treasure to where the lavishly decorated hilt of a blade stuck up from a mound of ornate goblets. “They were plotting to bundle me off to Lady Decorum’s Finishing School soon. *Blech!* As if I need to learn how to be a ‘proper princess’. I simply could not stay and allow that to happen.” She seized the blade and pulled it and its sheath free, scattering tableware. Holding it aloft, she placed a foot on the top of the pile. “This is more like it! Don’t I look positively dashing?”

“Indeed,” Bartre agreed. Perhaps there was a solution here after all. “In fact, that would be good enough to admit you into the Hero’s College.”

“Do you really think so?” She tilted the weapon, catching her reflection in its polished silver sheath.

“Absolutely.” When he’d looked into applying, the form had been impressively short, summing up to filling in one’s name, their place of birth, and whether or not they had an enchanted weapon. They didn’t seem to expect much in terms of literacy from their applicants. Perhaps that was what contributed to the low survival rate among graduates. “I think you would do very well there.”

“I have always loved the stories.” The sheathed blade swished through the air, her practice swing showing impressive balance perched as she was atop a shifting pile of treasure. She broke into a grin. “It’s settled then! That sounds like a much better use of my time than sitting around learning the proper way to hold a teacup or stitch a hem. Thank you, sir knight! Farewell, I am off to be a hero!” Slinging the sword over her shoulder, skirts and dashed past him like a blue-clad cyclone.

Bartre stared after her, at last rising to his feet with a groan. Did she know where the Hero College was? If not, she probably wouldn’t have much difficulty finding out. Hopefully, she didn’t decide to make off with Peaches and leave him to trudge home on foot. Did this count as succeeding at his task? He *had* liberated her from the dragon. Speaking of which, it had promised him a treasure, had it not? He looked around the glittering cavern. Here was wealth untold. There were surely enchanted weapons here, perhaps even a proper suit of armor. Yet, there was only one thing he truly needed, and he was no thief!

Several minutes later, the ominous scraping of scales joined a blast a hot, sulfurous air from the tunnel. The dragon poked its head in, its muzzle parted in a toothy smile that would have been reassuring on most other creatures.

“She’s gone! Finally, I can get some sleep again. Thank you.” It bowed its massive head, smoke curling from its nostrils. “As promised, you may take anything you like as your reward.”

“About that. I had hoped I might ask for a boon instead.”

The dragon tilted its head. “Is that so? Ask, then. If it’s within my power, it’s yours. Do you have any idea how irritating it is to have someone constantly mucking about in your food?”

He didn’t, but he nodded. “Could you write a letter of reference for me, to state that I succeeded in freeing the princess? I am rather... lacking in proof otherwise.”

“Ah! Of course, for your knighthood. It would be my pleasure.” Shuffling to a corner of the cavern where a writing desk stood tucked into a corner, it produced a pair of dragon-sized spectacles from beneath the desk, perched them on its nose, then with perfect poise, seized a quill between two claws. It daintily pinned a sheet of parchment to the desk and squinted down at the page through the spectacles, forked tongue flicking. “Now then, what name shall I be making this out for, sir knight?”

Bartre grinned. “Bartre. Bartre the Bold.”

Visual

Michael Thompson
Mono Print

Supermen



Maddy



Someday I'll Love Ivy Edad

After Ocean Vuong

Ivy, plant your feet
on the earth that birthed
you. Let your limbs jump
offshore. Bury the seeds
of your toes in the dirt.

Step out to find
your skin. Dig
six feet deep
to exonerate old vines
disambiguation tried to bury.
Ivy, listen to me.

You are meant to crawl
on wood. Ivy creeps the masonry
of bleached concrete. Constricts
every brick with juvenile hands.
Erodes thick asbestos walls. Stains
from hederas entombed in moss.

18 Gertrudes is a fortress.
Underneath the green
metal roof is wood.
Home is not just
a place to sleep.

It's a place
where you can
lie whether your
eyes are open,
or closed. Ivy, release

the smell of mother's
wet hair as she dries it
with the fan. Let droplets
blow kisses on your face.
This is as much as she'll touch you.
Mother says, "Pass this on."

Cup your hands under
your chin. Catch hot acid.
Let it dribble down
to your palm. Carry it
to your father's bedroom.
Sit on the empty bed and wait—
until he forces his lids to shut.

As a child you took
your parents hands
and pressed them together.
To bring back pieces
that were hopelessly falling apart.

Ivy, open your eyes.
You've stretched your arms wide
enough to embrace the dead
trees inside. Feel their blunt
bark peeling under your
pressure as you
try
try
Try.

Ivy, don't worry.
Observations don't have to carry
so much weight that you break.
Count each time you feel
your veins snap.
Watch them prod out
of your skin. Replay
these moments in poetry.
Let your mother's shrinking body
sleep as the sun sets.
Let your father's body
fade with the moon.

Ivy, don't be afraid
when you're ripped
from the trunk you cling to.
Fall and pay attention.
The soft wind is cradling you.
You've already carved
a room for resilience.
Let a synthesis of growth
and decay teach you.
Climbing can slit your skin.
You can pluck leaves
with your fists.
Grab wavering branches
that slip you back
on the ground.
Remember, vines thrive
through thick chaos.
Walk barefoot,
bite the thorns
off your crown
and continue.

Evolution of a Rose



My dad voted for my raptor

I call him on the phone and
I just want to talk and like I always do I
make a list of achievements I want to tell my dad—
 I am getting all A's.
 I am laying eggs and balancing them on branches.
 I am preening every single day.

I can't make phone calls in the house
 not with all the chatter and the feathers
so I take a walk by the creek where
the wilder birds lurk and build nests of concrete in the trees.

It's November 2016, four days after an election of birds.
 I don't tell anyone that I only vote for
 blue jays—who are terrible and sly but at least beautiful.

I will not talk about birds with my dad—it is best
 left unspoken. I paused to gaze at my rippled reflection
 in the water before I call and I note my beak
and I can't tell what kind of bird I am.

Dad wants to talk talons and remind me
 of that last time a great hawk swooped down
and fed on my carcass. This might have only been
a week ago or a year.

Violence doesn't have a timeline—it happens over-lapping
 and in tandem. I don't know why we get on the subject.

I said I wasn't going to talk about birds or blue jays
or my body. What can a father know of his child's body
what beak has dug in his shell.

He tells me he voted for a raptor because he loves
the sheen of his feathers and I lose all language—
just bird calling into the receiver. I'm trying to explain
what that means for me but instead I am throat and throat and
throat.

All birds of prey are the same. You let one in and then come
all the rest. At least an owl—maybe he could have
at least voted for an owl who can use wisdom to seem less

like the scavenger of my fears. Even now
I can hear the screaming. Even now I am just
a fleck of breaking. Even now I am praying for
a moment's rest in the woods.

I hoped in those moments after the call that a great raptor
would come devour every piece of my body

would he understand then?

Bios

Adam Chace

I call myself a photographer first and a digital artist second. This style of portraiture came out of wanting to change what portraiture could be considered. Throughout history, we as humans have always wanted a new way to see ourselves or the future, etc. This is my declaration of how to see people around you in a “new light”. My name is Adam Chace I am a second-year fine arts student at KPU. I’m focusing on digital art/photography during my degree. I pull inspiration from the abstract, artificial intelligence within art, fashion, contemporary portraiture, etc.

Audrey Wick is a full-time professor of English at Blinn College in Texas. There, she is a writing teacher who writes, with two women’s fiction novels and two romance novels released from Tule Publishing. Her writing has also appeared in college textbooks published by Cengage Learning and W. W. Norton as well as in *The Houston Chronicle*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Orlando Sentinel*, and various literary journals. She believes the secret to happiness includes lifelong learning and good stories. But travel and coffee help. She has journeyed to over twenty countries—and sipped coffee at every one.

Celesta De Roo is an intuitive visual artist who explores her relationship with the land through personal experiences, visual interests, and cultural or heritage background. She enjoys looking at formal elements in nature and exploits a curiosity through observations and manipulating the materiality of the medium. Through this manipulation, she recreates the anecdote into a new physical form in either installation, painting, mixed media, or sculpture.

Edward Michael Supranowicz has had artwork and poems published in the US and other countries. Both sides of his family worked in the coalmines and steel mills of Appalachia.

Gracienne Llavore is in her third academic year at KPU and has just recently moved to the Fine Arts department. She is a visual artist with a focus on drawing and video production. Her main source of inspiration comes from song lyrics written by a wide variety of musicians. She hopes to pursue art well into the future.

Ivy Edad/Ruthless is a Filipinx writer born in Manila Philippines. In 2014, she moved to the stolen territories of Katzie, Semiahmoo, Kwantlen, Kwikwetlem, Qayqayt, and Tsawwassen First Nations.

Ruthless is studying Journalism and Creative Writing at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. She writes about the effects of diaspora in her life. Ruthless is part of the Slamapalooza team that represented KPU in CFSW 2019.

Ruthless attributes her relationship to prose and poetry to an indecisive lover. She writes to make words love her back, and revels in the rejection she constantly receives.

Jasjit Mann is a first year student at KPU, studying Creative Writing. She found her love of poetry and fiction in the second grade after reading Harry Potter. When she isn’t reading or writing, she enjoys going for long walks, swinging on swings and spending time with her friends.

Kacey Hughes is a second-year Fine Arts student at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Working mostly in ceramics, she loves to make beautiful things out of mud. Currently exploring functional pottery and sculptural installation.

Leila Nicar

Occupant of the unceded Kwantlen, Musqueam, Tsawwassen, Katzie, Semiahmoo, Qayqayt, and Kwikwetlem territories (otherwise known as Surrey, BC). Third-year creative writing major at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Writer of emotionally-charged words. Cartoon enthusiast. Lover of mountains, scented candles, and Cinnamon Toast Crunch.

PULP MAG IS SEEKING VOLUNTEERS!

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