

Revenge of the Tree-She Creature

The actress looks akimbo through the window
of the international magic store sees brick dust
and new cloud and white fir nothing
and keeps walking.

The actress tracks right through her apartment mess,
brushing bookshelves lined with passionals, grimoires
slowly towards the camera.

She looks glassy-eyed and glass of mind
in the compartment viewed in crude echogram –
as if she is in lowly shock herself, or grieving.

She heads forwards to the bedroom.

Once in the smileless gloom a devotee fed here,
someone guileless and believing.

The art deco bedroom walls are
block-plastered with rejigged old movie posters
featuring her idol her loved one her B-movie benefactress
in sub-Hollywood vivarium on cue, red wig meltdown
alabaster greasepaint all splayed berry mouth wide eyes
and pop technicolour jade aquarium blue gold ballgown
waltz recitals highlighting falsies double-G and cherry-gloved
not exactly self-restraint in vulgar colour cough drops
with fab retro titles and interesting-sounding co-stars:

Revenge of the Tree-She Creature,

“Sono Fobitch”, “Connie ‘Sugar’ Kuuki”.

The actress confronts her repro dresser drawer.

Something wrapped carefully
in the lesser depths of yon paper bag.

Look, she removes its bounds and bands
with sore trembling,

possibly reverent, prayerful hands.

She unwraps it slowly with fingers avant-corps,
the tissue paper crumpling
more loudly than it should,

revealing a studio still encountered under glass
in an elegantly ornate silver frame.

She has been the actresses’s idol for many years.

The picture to her face, then lowered away again.

We want we can see the lazy glowing condensation
of the actress’s breath fading on the glass.

Devout. The law of conservation mass.

The evening light countershading coming through
the Venetian blinds searches lingers

makes the room look love holy, like church wood.

Completion. Farewell. Good health. Fade out.

Fade in to any bathroom, latest evening.

Hazy, dusky light. The tiles unclear unsacrament.

The actress’s face and self reflected
in the pieces of an accident dropped mirror

a blue smear of broken glass

on her bathroom floor. Fade out.

A True Guide to the Kavoti Caves of the American Southwest

The American South-West.

A panoramic desert view.

On the road are Burt and Buddy,
both manly men in the 1970s fashion,
in a rockin' El Camino twenty-three-skidoo.

The car with bumper stickers.
Baseball pennants, flapping in the wind.
Burt, at wheel, raps fingers to Eagles choons.
And let's begin.
Buddy, shotgun, looks out window,
puffs cheech and chong roach lit
The car is creaking on a bit boohoo.

A local yokel scratches head on hard side
stares yahoo open-mouthed flashing brown dirt chew
yes this hayseed is slack-jawed stereotype yeehaw
as wayward steering wheel lands at his feet woohoo.

The car shakes, pulls up to crossroads.
The sign on left, it points kootchie-koo.
"Gay Andy's Resort & Hotel";
the sign on right adieu
sports teeth set with cavities,
"This Way to the Kavoti Cave".
Burt and Buddy shake their heads
and laugh, turn right,
yet the car it goes kabloo.

the confusion, the flounder
the toxic masc ballet subject to purview
the somersault through smashup
deck chairs at pool-side tables
the crumpled matchbox car on road
Hullabaloo.

Just two free birds hittin' the road,
smokin' the tunes,
seein' the sights lookie-lou
Now stranded miles from anywhere
at Gay Andy's Hotel & Resort it's true

Yep, I know what they're going to do.
They'll have to play along.
They'll have to pass with drag queens too.
Men with tall high blue wigs and bathrobes
who cross their legs at knees in deckchairs

munch tortilla chips with guac
sip florid fruit-encrusted cocktails froo froo.
Burt and Buddy will smash and mash and kiss
afore escape and toodle-oo.
Burt and Buddy start to tongue in hotel pool aqua hue.
Palm trees and cloudless skies, resort bamboo.
Kitsch dolls that dance on dashboards, hula-hu.
Starring Claude Nine as “Burt”
and Dirk Chablis as “Buddy” too.
The credits flare up blue.

Home screens and slowed-down action scenes,
shaved-hair dykes and mincing queens
the butches, nellies yell, I knew.
Frame-by-frame, smoochie-poo.
Remote control in hands, it is that kinda pic
the blue dragon queens stir blue highballs, wig shampoo,
each with a sparkly swizzlestick.
To the rhapsody of glamrock kazoo
and cheesy talk show drum tattoo
Horton hears a Who
a sage Gore Vidal V/O intones,
“*It’s Gay Andy’s!*”. Ballyhoo.

This film’s a guide to the Kavoti Caves
of the American Southwest,
and a manual that is true.
It makes no difference who you are,
when you swish upon a star o buckaroo.
The hilarious heterosexual cowboys
Burt and Buddy kiss and grope hoo-hoo
Ironic viewing still is mocking old taboo
The opening credits roll by don’t harsh my buzz
ahoy there skippy kangaroo
the swizzle disco mirrorballs and the camp voodoo
The movie’s starting,
let’s start watching and move on shoo shoo

You Do Voodoo

Voodoo. Who do? You do. I do what?
I’ll tell you what I do, I order pink-frosted
from Voodoo Doughnuts, beloved of Portland,
Oregon, an emporium that specialises in éclair
dolls with maple glaze and X eye X there that’s now
properly spaced for full dead emoji icing effect with a
complimentary pretzel stick with which you stab the pastry
and out oozes raspberry jam “blood”, but other-product pink-frosted
novelty doughnuts are coated with fluorochrome Peptol Dismal,
that’s what I do. You do voodoo.

You do voodoo in an early-morning living room,
as royalty-free Cole Porter and Bowie croon in the background
as *Blazing Saddles* plays on your small TV VCR
which is how we know it's 2004 and not now
which is how it is suggested through the royalty-free nature
of everything that this may not be our real grim world where
everything has a price-tag perhaps I can also interest you in a top hat
with five secret pockets and a 10% off bunny
and you continue even through the curlicue hieroglyphs of the
title sequence that illuminates us the prurient in terms of
directors, producer, composer, camera because
the doll is all ready for its close-up.
That's what we do, we wait passive for illumination. You do voodoo.

So a close-up on a young homunculus
with red hair, that's what comes next.
It is roughly 12 inches tall,
a standard set by Ken dolls.
Then a long, intimate slow money shot
of a female hand sticking a pin into its arm.
This doll is already covered with nails.
We find such votive offerings in Austria.
Nkisi from the Congo Basin. Perhaps you
stabbing an ex's old photograph or
subjecting it to cool scissors.
You remind me of a man.
What kind of a man?
A man of power.
What kind of power?
Voodoo. Who do? You do. I do what?
You remind me of a man.
What kind of a man?

Culpability, even though your hand fumbles with doll,
you falter, and you, trembling, begin to pick out nettles.
Even though the camera has pulled back
to reveal you to be a glamorous dark-haired
woman in your mid-thirties, removing prick after prick,
and also to reveal a small milky alcove.
You remind me of a man.
The dark larger room with mall-goth touches,
indeed the whole planet and adjacent galaxies
such as the Canis Major Dwarf Galaxy,
has been plastered with vampire film posters
stuck up with Elmer's Glue once the original cellotape adhesive
aged out and grew frayed after the first 12 billion years.
Not *The Hunger*, *The Vampire Lovers*
or anything too identifiably lesbian at this point.
Those posters come later.
In the background gods from older pantheons
fiddle with the answering machine.

Out of both contempt and focus
as you de-pierce dolls and ineffective nazars,
you have your back to them,
but they've definitely been keeping
a blue cyclops eye on you.

Accountability and a closeup of the doll's
Sharpie smirk again, as you continue to
remove the needles at the speed of light —
what exactly was your initial unspeakable
intention, anyway, these punctures are everywhere—
but each pin you pluck
leaves a little drool of blood,
and each drop of blood is blue.

A fallible god in the cosmic microwave radiation
backgrounds, trying to record on the machine, says,
Hi, you've reached number redacted.
We're not at home right now, so please leave our number, oh *fuck* it.
You've finished removing all pins,
the doll is now oozing blue lymph,
and again the camera pulls back to
a midshot as you ease a sigh of relief,
shove the doll over with your hand, and walk away.
Hi, you've reached number redacted;
I'm not at home... *Sbit*.
The holy camera
moves in again, CU on doll.
There's one pin you've missed,
just on its right hand.
The obscure camera
hovers on this omission for a few seconds,
then pulls back wide this time
to show you rushing
to show you pulling on a coat
to show a patriarchal deity still fiddling with the machine.
You remind me of a man.
What kind of a man?
A man of power.
Hi, you've reached number redacted.
We're not at home right now,
so please leave a message
and we'll get right back to you. Thanks.
From somewhere behind the Andromeda Galaxy,
the machine beeps. That okay?
Sufficiently convincing that you have a boyfriend?
Do gods *lie*?
You're already out of the flat.

You're caught in a bit of a blueberry jam.
A dirty sign reads GLAMOROUS DRY CLEANERS.

You drive past one of several oddly
named stores, "Blue Apple." Voltaire
says every man is guilty of all the
good he did not do, but Voltaire's
always rabbiting on about men. 10% off.
You remind me of a man.
Buy what Count Voltaire is selling.
I ain't buying what you're selling, you whisper
from the driver's side.

Your foot on the gas and your index on the horn.
You've got the horn. Delayed, at last you coast
in notorious London traffic until you're
cut off by a purple station wagon to whom you give the finger
until you cursing understand it's manned by a known redhead
This glaring motorist all your voodoo birds
come home to roost at once.

Yet you're a brave one and
you set your jaw, put your car in gear and
screech into a parking place outside a film studio.
Have I mentioned you're an actress?
And a fan of vampire films?
You grab your bag and run through
the glass doors of the building.
Interior, a makeup room. You rush the the door;
you emerge seconds later via the lies of cinema in
in femme fatale vampire full slap.
You remind me of a man.
This fakery's enabled cheaply by
your double in production,
or by a simple digital morph in post.

The image of a spinning rhinestone swizzlestick
retreats until we see it glint weakly on a small screen
amongst other small screens in a privy editing room.
All other squares show us you in vamp drag,
running down a hallway. Mogul suits, male and female,
watch you dashing across the screen.
Due to the selected aspect ratio crop,
we don't see any of their faces.
And if such types were in shot above their necks,
we would quickly understand that
they have no eyes, noses or mouths;
they have been peeled off crusts;
they are crunch-boiled eggs.

We enter the small but professional studio set of
Sister Blood, a glossy vampire side project for a
bigger-name production outfit, the anticipated
mise-en-scene is a romantic bloodsucker dance piece.

There is a director's chair with an emblazoned name.
It's always empty.
You remind me of a man.
What kind of a man?
A man of power.
The music playing now is classically spooky.
The red-haired, red-goateed, ambitious, smarmy
(and just a little camp) Assistant Director rushes in.
Seconds later, so do you. Present also is Amy, your co-star.
There is a minimal flirting film crew in one corner of the room,
where one of the female sound technicians
has her hand on a camerawoman's ass.
The AD flexes and they freeze, but he only
stalks to the stereo to click off the
Toccatina and Fugue in D Minor.
Oh my Götterdämmerung.
You're six minutes late, he says to you.
Sorry, you respond. Your red apple cheeks
have been dipped in caramel; he'll see the flush.
You remind me of a man.
He is speaking slowly and precisely:
I called you at home to see if you had left yet.
He is speaking insinuatingly:
Fresh voice on the answering machine – new boyfriend, eh?
Don't let us be the last to know.
But he knows.
I won't, you say.
The patriarchal gods have done their utmost
with the heterosexual voicemail message.
He is drawing a contrast between you and all others:
I'm sure all of us would love to stay home
snuggling and shagging with our new sweeties and
being late for rehearsal, but we prefer to be professional.
You are saying:
It won't happen again.

Fade to a later moment, interior, studio set.
Sister Blood, filmed rehearsal, Scene 15, Take 4!
So says AD. Ow! Motherfucker!
He has slammed the clapperboard
hard down on the fingers of his right hand.
The doll's right hand – did you perhaps leave a spear behind?
Yes, you remember.
It's all jelly doughnuts and pretzel sticks now.
Yes, you recall.
He throws the clapperboard in the air,
which proceeds to come straight down on his head.
Yes, you recollect.
What kind of power?
Voodoo. Who do? You do. I do what?
You remind me of a man.

A wardrobe assistant
who has been whispering naughtily into his phone
looks up in surprise.
The camerawoman and the sound technician
exchange glances.
The camera pans at last to you,
looking on in sheer happy wonder.
It won't happen again.

Now, this scene is supposed to be romantic,
says the AD, finger throbbing like a garnet,
Do you girls know what I mean by romantic?
Yes, says Amy, and No, says you.
The AD breezes past the overlapping dialogue.
You remind me of a man.
A man of power.
The two of you didn't feel very comfortable
with the subject matter in the first rehearsal.
You didn't feel chilled out. Shame, really.
Well, I felt relaxed, you say.
Neither of you looked it.
There are a couple of techniques you could use.
For example, you could both face the camera a
bit more while the two of you are dancing.
Exactly. Be more natural and be more free. Here!
With his doll fingers, he unzips your tops down more.

And keep your mouths open more often.
I mean, come on, it's 2004 –
you're allowed to be more primal.
Some more girl-on-girl type stuff...
But it's just a dance scene, says Amy,
it's supposed to be romantic, right, but sexless.
You know, like in *Philadelphia* or *Kissing Jessica* –
Oh, no, girls, no, no, no. We want you to,
what's the phrase, I got it,
“express” yourselves, not “repress” yourselves.
Okay – The music starts again.
That's it.
You and Amy begin to slowly move
together in one of this world's
creepy, classical tangowaltzes.
You remind me of a man.

One-two-three, one-two-three,
more relaxed, that's it, more sexy, more free,
no, don't look at each other, look at the camera, look at the camera,
closer, press closer together for the tango number,
closer, sexier – remember, camera! – closer, sexier.
He'll have his revenge.
What kind of power? Hoodoo.

You do. You remind me of a man.
The pace quickens frenetically into tango moves,
the music speeds up into Romanian folk tunes,
faster and faster, until we see Amy move the wrong
way and leave a long lipstick smear along your arm.
It's all jelly doughnuts and pretzel sticks now.
The scene dissolves in a *Bewitched*-style lipstick
swirl effect and corresponding jingle-type music.
In a medium nocturnal shot,
we join Burt and Buddy outside the storefront sign of
GAY ANDY'S GAY BAR under sparkling diamanté alphabets.
We dissolve into the night. You do voodoo.

Wonderful-land

She dials a number on her mobile.
Her voice gets lower.
No, I can't say it. Because.
She grabs a can of pop.
Are you going to the big-wig party-gig?,
a colleague asks.
Next Sunday? Fake smile. I forgot.
Show up in your Sunday best.
True scowl.
She takes a very long swig
of her very soft drink,
as if she were inexperienced
drinking whiskey.

The small home kitchen. Chrome sink. Plate, cup.
And no kidding, huckleberry finn, his bloody right hand.
Don't blink. He banged it up.
That underbidding, lightly chosen
ruddy pin hanging on a doll's right hand,
bright haemoglobin the knuckle the angle of
incidence the glitch in – I need a drink —
Still think it's a coincidence?
And get this, he'd been sleeping badly
the night before beeping snooze alarm the bed
o funny farm, I'm sorry I didn't say I loved you,
I don't regret this, he said he felt
you make me melt sweetcakes I plain adore you
he said he felt pins and needles all over.
Where are you going?
You're blowing somewhere
Somewhere that's not Neverneverland.
Your soapy hands on jeans, and the failed hug.
Maybe we could try for Wonderland instead. Wonderful-land.
Nope, the faucet tap corrosion a soap bubble pops
with a loud explosion. Wham, then bam,
then thank you ma'am. The door treble slams.
o honey o lambchop she won't she proud blinks down

upon her fingers. Acusador, pop, pop, there are weep sink sounds
loud as an artillery artery don't linger wonderlands o love
out damn spop she scrubs her hands.