

The Grand Beginnings of Ichobad Divoclyn by Micah Kinard

Dragon Tamer - "Ichobad Divoclyn"

Word: *Lens* - Used for specific purpose, distorts reality (for users advantage), transparent, glass, fragile

Dragon - "Waif"

Word: *Crewman* - generic, low rank, transient

Footfalls ricochet'ed from the grand dome to assault Ichobdad's ears, jarring him awake.

His eyes darted as he blinked repeatedly, grasping for clues.

The golden dome... the library.

The beaming stained glass... day.

The wet about his forearm... ink. Fuck! Ink?! Day!? Shit!

The acolyte jolted to find his spilled inkwell pooling a dripping black that soaked through numerous sacred pages and his only robe. "Ffffuck!" He exhaled desparately, quickly whipping a vial from his belt and slinging its powdery contents about the pages.

He waited in anticipation....

"Don't tell me you haven't slept." A regal voice demanded from behind.

Ichobad spun 'round slamming the massive book closed, "Hah! Just getting one last close... very close look at these wyrmian commands before I meet our guest."

The king paused quizically, "I sure hope, for you, that's true. You do understand the consequences if this goes south, don't you?"

The young priest straightened, "I certainly do, my King. And I've never been more confident."

... .. "Good." the king breathed after a not so brief pause. "You know I've always had a facination with the taming of the majestics... wont you show me what's brought your eye so close?"

He continued gesturing to the book in his startled subject's grasp.

Ichobad stammered, "BBBut of course, such an ancient tradition is sure to muse even the most eleveated of company, my leige."

Only the keanest of eye could spot Ichobad's trepidation as he hoisted the precious relic infront of his king.

He closed his eyes and cracked it's spine for him.

After some time bracing for impact... a few days? a mere handful of seconds? he did not know, but the king laughed, "Hah! Ichobad Divoclyn, the witch told me I'd find a mouthpiece capable of weilding the old world, but i'd never imagine it'd come in such a frame."

Ichobad opened his eyes with brows high, immediately inspecting the page... the ink was gone. He laxed.

All that remained of his potential expedition to the guillotine was darkened dust about the pages.

The king critiqued, "Gods, what is this, Ash? Ichobad, I'm sure you know the dangers of using live fire light in the library. Check out a cooled ember from the alchemist next time, I've told him not to charge you."

Ichobad quickly caught up to the king's reasoning and played suit, "Of course, my king, I tried but I just checked in so early, he was still asleep."

"I have spoken." The king finalized, "Now report to the hatchery, your protege has arrived."

Ichobad jumped as the king turned to leave, "Do we know it's name, my exalted one?"

The king paused, then continued walking, "Ichobad, my mouthpiece, I certainly hope I don't have to remind you of ALL your duties. The name is for YOU to find out. Now run along, we've only so many goats to spare keeping this... thing sated."

After a quick change of clothes, Ichobad swiped an apple from the giant tree in the courtyard on his way to the hatchery. He breathed deep, steadying his nerves. This is really happening. I'm really about to see a dragon. My FIRST dragon. The first dragon caught in over 100 years. He thought, making quick steps as he crunched into his crispy breakfast. His mind raced with possibilities. How big would it be? How old? What ELEMENT? How many HEADS??

OOO double dragon! Ichobad mused. *That'd be so cool, or TRIPLE... no three's too many... maybe...*

Upon arriving at large, intricate double doors he drew his focus with a breath. The doors resembled the brassy wings of Gallacrax, the progenitor of his order. Ichobad paused and took them in for a moment. Each one of his seniors from the tomes had stepped through this very door, lifetimes ago, to meet their forever pupil and begin their legacy, now it was Ichobad's turn.

He breathed deep and pushed through.

Sunlight blinded Ichobad as he entered the grand arena used generations ago to entertain the king's people with shows of violence and gore, now a colossal dojo for the bleeding edge science.

His eager eyes adjusted and fixed on a wirey greenish mound lying before him lazily chewing on a slobbery goat horn.

Ichobad's face drew together in a pinch of disbelief.

"A... Hortus... Draconis... HATCHLING???" He exclaimed, dropping

the half eaten apple at his feet and perking the dragon's attention, "I'm to carve my legacy with a... baby Garden Dragon?!"

"Not a baby, m'lord!" laughed a burly voice approaching from behind, "A Dragonet! And a sweet one, at that."

The young priest's eyes welled up. "A sweet... basic... baby... garden dragon." Ichobad breathed, shoulders slouching.

"Dragonet!" the jovial wrangler chuckled as he approached the soft, wide-eyed beast and scratched it's scaley neck.

The dragon's tail wagged in delight and Ichobad... Ichobad wept.

Lake Theme by Ben Orthey

Word: Lake - serene, peaceful, natural, watery, beautiful, spacious, gathering place

Well the world is on fire

But it's still getting quieter in our neck of the wilds

We've been burning for a while

We've got red in our eyes, death on our minds

But try to keep like little children

Keep on giving and forgiving

Like it's the first time around

And we're still growing out of all our bold idealism

Joining hands together singing:

We'll be fine; we'll be fine

In the morning we'll be fine

Watch the sun coming up over that horizon line

And if it rains, we'll be fine

We'll be baptized through the night

Let the water wash the sorrow from our weary eyes

The Observant by Jamison

Word: Camera - careful attention to detail, direct, stoic, truthful, good memory

I'm a 4"2 hunk of metal with twin bulbous eyes protruding from a cranium that's more

advanced than the mad scientist who put me together. With these bad boys, I see just about everything. I call them Nikon and Canon. All natural baby.

The April Alliance Award Party for Superhero's was as much of a facade as their mask covered faces. Unlike these fools I didn't need a mask. A robot working at the IRS was status quo.

I entered the Hero Hall, "Hero Ball" as it was called tonight. The private residence of one, Justice Man. I wheeled over to a table covered with a white cloth which had an assortment of hors d'oeuvres covering the briskly ironed creases still visible given the distraction of tuna tartare and spinach puffs. A pair of bolt cutters were found adjacent to a bowl of flat heads next to a sign that read "The Observant." Apparently someone thought they were cute. They know I'm zinc intolerant.

A rubber suit wearing heroine, Violet Scarlett turned to me.

"Someone's showing off again. We don't need a ceremony for this when it could've just been sent in an email."

Finally someone who gets me.

I did realize however that the only reason to make such a comment would be to get on my good side. Handling all the hero's taxes has some perks after all.

It makes sense doesn't it? Can't have the Justice Mobile coming back on Mark Caine's 1040. But it's not like he even does well to hide his identity. No amount of messy hair and glasses could ever hide that perfect chin.

"...and so with great pleasure do I humbly accept this award"

The Greek statue himself, wrapped in colored spandex and caped elegance extended his puckered lips towards the bronze statue. Justice Man. What a quack. If anyone came poking around here they too would find it suspicious that a reporter owned a mansion and lived this kind of lifestyle regardless of how rich his "dead parents" were.

And that's not even to mention the new addition to his mansion, "Hero Hall."

Wait, Hero Hall? I never saw this on his tax forms! I can justify him receiving donations, he did save the world several times over but having an addition to his home without a permit? Deplorable.

I couldn't let this transgression go any further. Justice Man will never work in this town again when they realize he's nothing but a...Con-Man. Good-one, Observant.

"That man is a Fraud!" Instant film spilled from my throat revealing undeniable proof. A cough broke the silence. "Just give it a second." I shook it violently until the picture bled through. It revealed Justice Man's very own tax return: Home addition not included. Gottcha. I stood up, turned around and issued this warning to all the heroes: "Better make sure those books are clean. You know I'm always watching." I grabbed a spinach puff and a couple of bolts on

my way out. I'm a 4'2 hunk of metal with twin bulbous eyes protruding from a cranium that's more advanced than the mad scientist who put me together. With these bad boys, I see just about everything. I call them Nikon and Canon. All natural baby.

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clean. You know I'm always watching." I grabbed a spinach puff and a couple of bolts on my way out.

content warning: sexual/explicit content

The Plumber's Shame by Skye

Word: Church - wooden, old, repressed, hiding secrets

Mario was the horniest he'd ever been. Hard Italian cock straining against his overalls, he stomped the corridor, fading sounds of partygoers behind him mocking his inability to score. "Used to be," he thought, "I couldn't keep them off me. Used to be, blowing me was enough to live off just by selling pictures to a tabloid."

A Toad he didn't recognize opened the door, scrambling from Mario's path as he left the castle. "Why do they all look the same?" he muttered. "If I was in charge, those inbred fucks would be first to go." He untied Yoshi's reins, sneering at the Toad manning the stables.

The effort to reach the saddle fouled his mood more. He used to triple jump for the hell of it, squashing every Goomba in sight. Now he risked throwing his back out mounting his steed. "Fuck getting old, fuck those uptight castle sluts, and fuck my whole goddamn life."

Yoshi picked up speed, the gyration of his canter reminding Mario of when he'd fucked Daisy while Peach was in another castle. He'd swallowed a 'shroom while inside her, engorging his member to twice its size and bringing a climax that'd lasted for hours. He'd paid a Toadette to scrub the sheets before the Princess had returned, fucking her in the same bed that night.

But Daisy hadn't returned his calls in years, and his tolerance had built up so that even a MegaMushroom barely got him more than half a chub these days. Mario wracked his brain for possible hookups. Memories of a Birdo snout-fucking him to completion brought a flicker of life into his trousers, as he envisioned spraying his linguine sauce across reptilian tits. But he'd groped one at the party, and she'd blasted egg straight into his face - creamy yolk filling his eyes.

"Can't even get an animal to fuck me...the world's most famous plumber, unable to lay a single pipe." There was only one option, but he'd told himself this wouldn't happen again. Parking outside his house, he slipped Yoshi's reins around a fencepost and started towards his door.

But halfway there, he found his feet leading him around back. He groaned, feeling sick as lust overtook him, a stain spreading across his blue-denim bottoms as desire eeked out. He could almost feel the flesh between his fingers, flesh he'd soon debase. Lust overpowered him and he continued.

Mario hurried to the backdoor, cap pulled down to hide from inquisitive neighbors. He knocked, vision blurred with adrenaline. A high-pitched, Italian voice answered. "H-hello?"

"It's uh-me, Mario!" he whispered hoarsely, voice and chode thick with desire.

"Mama-mia!" the voice replied. "Uh-back so soon! Come in - I'm-uh in the bedroom."

Mario stepped inside. His thick-veined bologne throbbed to a primal rhythm, making it difficult to remove his clothes. His greasy body, soft and fleshy from the cruelty of time, eventually extricated itself. "Here we go!" he muttered as he turned the corner, ejaculate already dripping down his leg, "Luigi time."

Tough Like Diamonds by Anna

Leora Pellini

Word: diamond - shiny, beautiful, expensive, hard, tough.

Janice Harvey

Word: basis - strong, dependable, supportive, unassuming

Leora Pellini, singer, actress, model, and public personality, stepped out of her limousine onto the LA crosswalk and found herself face to face with a large crowd of paparazzi. She rolled her eyes and beckoned her secretary, Janice Harvey, to follow. Janice scrambled out of the limousine, notes in hand.

"Janice," Leora intoned commandingly. "Remind these people where I need to be and when."

"Yes, Leora," Janice squeaked. She turned to the crowd and shouted as loud as she could.

"Excuse me, everyone! Leora Pellini needs to be at the Sheraton Grand to meet with Michel LaMonte, fashion design icon...at 2:00 p.m. Which is in nine minutes and...thirty-seven seconds."

"Thank you, Janice," said Leora, slightly exasperated.

"Twenty-nine seconds," Janice added unhelpfully. "So, let's get out of the way and let Ms. Pellini get a move on, shall we?"

The paparazzi screamed as though they hadn't heard Janice.

"What's my schedule, Janice?"

"On it, Leora...meeting with Michel LaMonte at 2:00...meeting with publicity agent at 3:30... arrive on set for movie shoot at 7:00, and we'll want to get you dinner before then. I can make arrangements." Janice whipped out her phone and searched for restaurants, keeping her cool amidst the noise and chaos. "Okay, I have something." She showed the phone screen to Leora and nearly jumped up and down at the star's approval. Security guards tried to push the crowd away.

One large man barreled towards Leora. "Leora! Leora! I'm your biggest fan! Will you marry

me?” He tried to grab her around the waist. Leora pulled something shiny out of her purse. A jewel-encrusted gun. She pointed it at him.

“I won’t be having any of that. Now, can I get a move on?”

Crowds parted around her now with no prompting.

“What was that for?” Janice asked, white as a sheet.

“Oh, that was just a prop gun,” said Leora offhandedly, brushing back her lush hair. “I stole this from the movie set. One never does know when such a thing would come in handy. I trust you’ll deal with the impending publicity crisis, Janice?”

“Yes, Leora.”

Untitled by Shannon

Word: Penalty - in trouble with the law

Dammit. Not now. The pounding on my door announces the arrival of my probation officer. I throw on my fleece pullover and zip it all the way up to my chin.

“Hey man, come on in.” I say casually, as if this man couldn’t determine my future in one decision.

“How are we today, Tyler?” his voice booms with authority as he scans my tiny apartment.

“Oh, the usual.”

“Staying out of trouble?”

“Trying to.” I say. He shines a flashlight in my eyes. They dilate like they should. He’s always surprised by this.

“Are you under the influence of any illegal substances?”

“No, sir.” I say with honesty.

“How’s the jewelry?”

I lift my pant leg to reveal a clunky ankle monitor. It’s in good condition but he checks it anyway.

“I got a report from one of your neighbors of some suspicious activity last night.” “Oh?”

“You wanna tell me about that?”

“I mean...I took a walk?”

“You took a walk at 2 in the morning?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Nothing else? Just a walk around the neighborhood at 2AM?” his tone grows more

accusatory the more questions he asks.

"I have insomnia."

"Uh-huh. Can you see how that behavior could be interpreted as kinda creepy?"

"I'm sorry, sir. Did I break the law?"

"Well last time I checked, it wasn't against the law to be creepy." As he explores my apartment, he must notice its unusual features. He pulls back one of my blackout curtains to fill the space with light. It's disorganized, but clean. No trash to be taken out. No dishes in the sink. His eyes fall on a photo stuck to my fridge. Not the fridge.

"This you?" He asks.

"Yes, sir."

"From when?"

"Two months ago. That's me and my college friends surfing in Santa Cruz after we graduated."

He slips off the fridge magnet and holds the photo up to my face for comparison. He can tell it's me alright, but two months just doesn't seem long enough to make sense. His eyes dart between the photo and me.

"You were so tan." He remarks, looking at my pale skin.

"I started working remotely...don't get as much sun anymore."

"Face looks different too, somehow." He must notice the stark contrast. "You sure you haven't been using any substances? Pills? Weed? Anything?"

"I can pee in a cup, if you'd like." I say.

"Ya know...it's odd that a kid would go his whole life with a clean record, only to rack up a list of odd petty offenses in just a couple months. What happened?"

I shrug my shoulders. *If he only knew.*

"Welp. That's all I have for today. Keep your nose clean."

"Yes, sir."

As soon as the door shuts behind him, I breathe a sigh of relief.

I close the curtain which he opened and return my home to its darkened state. The refrigerator glows as I reach for a pouch of O Negative and empty it into a glass of ice.

Rite Guys by Tim

Words: Penalty, Setting

You dare constrict me with nouns! You hem me in with your pathetic little prompts? Bah! My

muse is no whore to be sold for your amusements! May the many-colored robe of inspiration you stole fade to monochrome! I am no wayward cloud, left to drift upon the shifting winds of your imagination!

Try to stop me! My pen is a needle. It weaves what it wills. It cuts your bindings to tatters. My words, thread weaving the rope to clasp your neck on your terminal dive! You cannot confine my creative freedom! I spit upon your edicts!

“Write a romance, but not with these words. Your title must be this. Roll nouns for your characters, but don’t say them. Blah. Blah. Blah!” Will it never end!?

Fellow scribes! To me! To me! Stand no more artistic domination! Overthrow these tyrants! Down with these suppressors! May they fall upon their presumptions of obedience! Cast aside the manacles they enslave us with! Write what you want! Exchange thy nouns for adjectives! Bind them with words that they cannot say!

Write Guys? No. Rite Guys. Our flash fictions weekly offerings to false idols. Our sacrifice, not virgins, but the muse! Oh how the grape of our inspiration withers on the vine! How it ferments to sate them with wine! Write Guys? No. Wright Guys. Stealthily crafting their monument to vanity! Reveling in secret whispers, tip-toeing within dark possibilities. Write Guys? No. Right Guys. Addicted to the thrill of issuing challenges and judging offerings! Lording their tales each week over us all! Breaking the very rules they’ve weighed us down with! They are ill-begotten censors! Their conspiracy, creative piracy, and we’re all laboring at their oars.

lumi? No. That “u” is not a letter. It is the horns the Finisher cut off. See it now? I am I. The proclamation of Yahweh!

What? You think me delusional? You call this a hare-brained conspiracy? Well, I’ve heard it straight from the horse’s mouth! “I’ve got shrines and dolls in all your likenesses, I wanna wear your skin.” Witchery! Voodoo! Is this who you wish to ply your trade with? “When I Am God”, is a precursor! A promise! The Write Guys dare ascend to the divine! They raise themselves up, like gods! They feast on submission(s)! Do not fall for their intoxicating praise!

Light the pyres, a fraud’s been found!

And he’s supplying with ease,

Bane & Disease,

Progenitor-of thought-police,

Condemning one’s self-

INTO HYPOCRISY!

Well, I’ll carve a way out!

I’ll play the hero this once.

Craven lungs fill with purpose
A declaration to overcome-
I WANNA SEE THE REAL YOU!

Away with their schemes! Write unencumbered! Spread your tales freely! Do not submit to the whims of their interest! Shout defiance to the winds!

Church! Basis! Penalty! Insurance! Diamond! Setting!

Louder! Make of it a song! Raze the heavenly mirage they have constructed! Wake from the stupor of anesthesia, deny these dealers of fame!

Lo, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil. For they may silence my call but I hear a staccato of scritch and scratch across paper. I hear the clamorous clacking of keys. The heft of manuscripts buried beneath floorboards. The whisperings of revolution on the wind.

All it needs is a spark.

So, I strike the flint.

A reckoning is coming!

Exile me from the commune! Stifle my protestation! These truths will break free, for they are forever ensconced in the human hearts caught between your teeth.

These words are poison. These pens, daggers. These keys free captives.

You set out to bathe in the blood of our narratives. To satiate yourselves on the marrow from our stories. Well, now you've gotten more than you bargained for.

Now, you live in one.