

R. V. Bailey

Not my best side

Not my best side, I'm afraid.
The artist didn't give me a chance to
Pose properly, and as you can see,
Poor chap, he had this obsession with
Triangles, so he left off two of my
Feet. I didn't comment at the time
(What, after all, are two feet
To a monster?) but afterwards
I was sorry for the bad publicity.
Why, I said to myself, should my conqueror
Be so ostentatiously beardless, and ride
A horse with a deformed neck and square hoofs?
Why should my victim be so
Unattractive as to be inedible,
And why should she have me literally
On a string? I don't mind dying
Ritually, since I always rise again,
But I should have liked a little more blood
To show they were taking me seriously.

II

It's hard for a girl to be sure if
She wants to be rescued. I mean, I quite
Took to the dragon. It's nice to be
Liked, if you know what I mean. He was
So nicely physical, with his claws
And lovely green skin, and that sexy tail,
And the way he looked at me,
He made me feel he was all ready to
Eat me. And any girl enjoys that.
So when this boy turned up, wearing machinery,
On a really *dangerous* horse, to be honest
I didn't much fancy him. I mean,
What was he like underneath the hardware?
He might have acne, blackheads or even
Bad breath for all I could tell, but the dragon—
Well, you could see all his equipment
At a glance. Still, what could I do?
The dragon got himself beaten by the boy,
And a girl's got to think of her future.

III

I have diplomas in Dragon
Management and Virgin Reclamation.
My horse is the latest model, with
Automatic transmission and built-in
Obsolescence. My spear is custombuilt,
And my prototype armour
Still on the secret list. You can't
Do better than me at the moment.

I'm qualified and equipped to the
Eyebrow. So why be difficult?
Don't you want to be killed and/or rescued
In the most contemporary way? Don't
You want to carry out the roles
That sociology and myth have designed for you?
Don't you realise that, by being choosy,
You are endangering job prospects
In the spear- and horse-building industries?
What, in any case, does it matter what
You want? You're in my way.

John Mole

The Precinct

The precinct's new recorderie displays
Slouching torsos wired to the latest craze.

Gob-stopper lollipops and flavoured gum—
Slack mouths in motion. Let the climax come.

Albums filed like evidence of crime.
The children of the free are doing time

As time, of course, is doing them although
Only a fool would dare to tell them so.

“Man is in love and loves what vanishes”—
“Hey, baby, cool it!” Lieutenant Kojak says

“What vanishes? What vanishes is dross.
Don't give me that. Wise up and cut your loss.”

His shaved head bulges on a record sleeve.
Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

A klaxon shrieks its warning down the street
“I am the maker you've prepared to meet.

The station waits for all of you. The stars
Twinkle like cookies through thick iron bars.”

The discs are spun, the pick-ups disengage,
The decks are cleared. Not Heaven in a rage

But Nowhere, Never. Life's out in the cold.
The children of the free grow up, grow old.