

# Reality Scare

Louise Bak

## Réalité alarmante

*La narratrice s'adresse à une amie comateuse étendue sur un lit d'hôpital. Les médecins, infirmières, garçons de salle et appareils médicaux font leurs rondes, soignant le corps déperissant de la femme. Leurs traitements deviennent de plus en plus importuns pour la patiente et la spectatrice/narratrice. Finalement, la patiente se réveille, demande faiblement de l'aide et mord la main de son docteur dans un acte de résistance. Mais est-ce que cette action n'est pas, en fait, seulement le fruit de l'imagination de la narratrice qui, comme la patiente comateuse, est réduite à un statut d'objet impuissant par les autorités institutionnelles?*

*Résistant au potentiel mélodramatique que la situation pourrait créer, Bak décrit la scène avec des termes provenant de différents genres de la culture populaire: fantasy, science-fiction et gothique. Le résultat en est un tableau troublant démontrant les multiples façons dont les institutions, comme la maladie, marquent les corps qu'elles touchent.*

amnesic sisterhood      *where are you?*

<sup>day 1</sup> and ointment is squeezed from a tube  
into your eyes and the lids are taped shut

while Godzilla chews plateglass sandwiches  
to catch a glimpse of Scheherazade  
warring under mosquito netting

*are you asleep?*

your chest lifts like gallium *Bat'telhs*  
coming full circle-jerk on your body  
through massive bank of molestation machinery

IV pole and plastic bags collect      ochre urine  
liquid stool and menstrual blood

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while your eyebrows  
twitch like an RSC veteran

*are you waking?*

no

<sup>day 23</sup> and i hold your hand where  
your poniard *Tremere* fingers  
have given way to elongated polyp stalks

*are you angry?*

lying here instead of joining Maita  
fighting with the Communist guerillas  
against Marcos  
with eyeshadow intact

it happens at night when a nurse  
attempts to pry your fingers from the siderail  
after minutial static  
makes *Gangrel* troll-twirls of hair  
shadow-snakes up against  
pink beaks of predatory birds  
spitting up *Arcturian* fizz beneath surgical masks

*are you in a wormhole?*

a ziggurat of windfall twitches  
on my sweet sixteenth which grabs me by the throat  
like a Branch Davidian-sarin gas hose

<sup>day 41</sup> and still no signs that you can  
help me

blow out semisolid candles burns under necrotic constellations  
of paper stars fixed to hospital walls  
if falling is falling backward  
i cradle your head back down  
pillow is scarcely dented by  
the weight of it



discussing Gina Lollobrigida's fuckable quotient  
as she shows off hexacanth breasts  
in a gold-foil suit  
behind fibre glass

mindsan

i do not understand

alive

the sun rises salvaged

i too

become *Malkavian*

when you suddenly

miscarry...

## Notes

*Bat' telh*, Klingon battlesword (From the *Star Trek* television series).

*Tremere*, the magic-using warlocks and witches in vampire legend.

The passage about "Maita fighting..." refers to a woman named Maita Gomez who was a runner-up representing the Philipines in the 1988 Miss Universe Beauty pageant, who within 24-hours of her victory, joined the Communist guerilla struggle in the jungle against Ferdinand Marcos.

*Gangrel*, the vampires of rural areas according to vampire tradition.

*Arcturian Fizz*, Riker and Kirk's favourite drink, known for its pleasure enhancing components (From the *Star Trek* television series).

*Ventrue*, the elegant and aristocratic vampire of Gothic legend.

*Huris*, the sacred prostitute in heaven (Islamic tradition).

scolex, part of tapeworm which is attached to the wall of the gut of host by suckers and/or hooks, sometimes called the 'head'.

hexacanth, six-hooked embryo of tapeworms; develops from egg and if it gets into suitable host, grows into larva.

*Malkavian*, refers to vampiric figures who are cursed to be forever mad.