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Empress

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Empress

I'm not a writer. I scribble on pages, but that's about the extent of my artistic prowess. I stare into the blankness of my Mead produced pad of paper, college-ruled for your pleasure, and speculate on where my pen wandered to. Sitting at a table at the Cafe Grind, occasionally sipping cold coffee, I try not to dwell upon the name of the establishment. Very MTV-like. Just imagine, the Latte Girls and Grandmaster Valdez grooving down at the Cafe Grind. Stupid name. I came here for the trite purpose of composing verse; the Mead pad is meant for poetry. Doodles of girls and daffodils line the margins. I signal to Barlow for a scone and then.....

I see her.

It's that dramatic.

Ars Poetica sits at the table across from me. Forget blank lines for inspiration is smoking a Newport and eating cherry pie. Steam rises from the mug beside a capacity-filled ashtray, but the objects barely register with my senses in the sight of her. Black hair with blonde streaks. Cut shortly with bangs that curl around the ears. I always notice the hair first. Green eyes of ice. Cryptic? She's the Queen of Hearts. She's the Empress of a tarot deck. She has the face of a Degas diva - elegance matched with composure- and wears the role of a bohemian. Very bohemian as garbed in a silky top of white with puffed sleeves and a skirt which stretches to boot-bound ankles. A silver pendant reflects the afternoon light on the amply present portion of her...Quite a description, eh?

She looks up. Our eyes meet. She smiles. I smile back. I grip the rounded edges of the table when Barlow slides into the seat across from me.

"Hey, break time, Perry," he announces while withdrawing a carefully hidden cigarette. My hands relax. "Time for me to delight you with the wonders of the day, you know."

"Sure," I answer still caught in her.

"You know what really troubles me, Perry, troubles the hell out of me. You know what really grinds my, well, you know, pisses me royally. Patrons. Bitchy, smelly, fucking patrons griping for their god damn mochas and lattes. There's this hairy bitch..."

"I have to pee. Coffee goes right through."

"Hold it. Perry, buddy, amigo, listen to the tale of the femi-nazi. I've only got ten minutes and I have a lot to divulge, you know what I'm saying." He grins. The girl finishes her Newport. She doesn't light another. "Now she's bitching because I gave her a Canadian quarter and because her beverage's cold, so I say, 'Hey, babe, I've got your cafe latte right here.' And evidently she isn't too fond of male groins because she..."

I pour my coffee on his lap. Not really. I want to. The girl is scraping the last bits of pie off the plate. Cherry goo mixed with bread crumbs clutch the dull surface of the fork. I have a juvenile thought. I want to be that goo. Barlow grabs

my arm.

“So as she’s bashing my genitalia, this other bastard arrives to bitch about the john. He’s one of those ex-flower children or something. Still tuning out and shit. So I say..”

Barlow’s cigarette limply hugs his chapped lips; it bounces with each word, wiggles like a convulsing epileptic. I pull it out and grind the lighted end into his skull. Not really. I want to. The girl has finished her coffee. No more steam.

“It’s not my fault that we’re out of Sharmen. Do I look like Mr. Fucking Whipple? So I tell Mr. Hippie this and he..”

My spoon. I drive it into his sternum. Fountains of blood spill forth. Barlow gurgles the rest of his story. Not really. The girl drops some coins on the plate. She walks by and gives a final glance at me. I grip the rounded ends.

“Hey what’s with you, man. Hey, Perry, over here. I’m talking, Perry. Fuck.”

“There was this girl,” I mumble, “was this girl.”

“Girl? You mean the hairy bitch.”

“No. *Ars Poetica*.”

“Hold that thought, Perry. I need another smoke.”

I look out the window by my table. *Ars Poetica* is gone. She jetted. In the *Nova* that I noticed is missing, maybe. I return to my poetry and ignore Barlow. I dream of ripping off my shirt and jumping through the window. Going after her.

—*Paul Genesisus Durica*