

The Manananggal is a mythological monster originating in the Philippines. She takes the form of one woman in two halves. You don't see it at first. She just lives near you, or comes close to you. You don't trust this neighbor, despite seeing her on a routine basis. It's something about her communication, which is strained and full of holes. And her appearance, which is incongruously attractive. Her desire seems to rise like a swollen polyp beneath the garble of her words and skin. You suspect it's an ugly thing.

Who you calling ugly? When a woman's life is at stake (it's never not), then you can become a femicide tool.

Trail her with your suspicion, you misogynistic-xenophobic cop brain. Watch her creep into the forest at night and lurch stiffly. She scans her surroundings to make sure she is alone. Her body rips in half at the waist as though from an internal bomb detonation. Her legs remain perched on the ground, while her torso begins to levitate, sprouting wings and a long tubular sucking tongue, designed for penetration and extraction. This torso flies back towards the village, in the direction of prey.

Now you have evidence of her terrorizing. She sucks the viscera out of sleeping villagers, as her own organs dangle from an open wound. She sucks unborn fetuses out of pregnant women, while her own uterus is in shreds. Whatever is inside is pierced, dissolved, slurped up, aired out, passed through a twisted metabolic process that makes no sense. Her split body is a crack in our community.

The Manananggal dies when she cannot reconnect before dawn. You can kill her. Find her severed legs still waiting in the forest and throw some salt and garlic onto the bloody stump. She will scream and melt into a stew.

* This summer, Manananggal has appeared in Berlin. A new series of figurative sculptures crafted over the last two months by Amy Lien & Enzo Camacho have been placed at several different locations across the city of Berlin, constituting an exhibition in pieces, with no central axis.

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