

Batman Rides Shotgun with Barbie

By David A. Romero

Batman
Drove Barbie's red Corvette
Because what use did Ken have for it?
I found Mattel red plastic
Tucked away in a corner of my sister's room
This Corvette
A perfect open-aired ride with detailed wheels and hubcaps
Friends would come over
And while younger
They wouldn't question it
But as the years passed
More of them would ask,
"Isn't that for girls?"
My father drove our family
Would often comment on my mother's driving
Suggest it was dangerous
Even though she's only been in one accident
Her entire life
But dad was the breadwinner
Mom earned like she drove
More
On the side
I've never followed an order from a boss who was a woman
Like I've never gone through a quick lane change
On the freeway
Riding shotgun with one
Without first second-guessing it
I'm a sexist
I've never said "boss"
Without feeling the need to add "woman"
To codify
Like how some people
Can't help but specify
That "the jerk" they ran into at the store was
"Black"
"Hispanic"
"Asian"
Other
Because
"Well
You know
How THEY are"
And that this is all much worse

When the identities of race and gender
Intersected
I wish that when I said “boss”
It wasn’t a straight white man that came to mind
Even though most of my bosses have been women
I wish that I wouldn’t find the need to second-guess them
That I could look up to my bosses
Imagine their career path
Their story
Their ambition
Their struggle
See their good qualities
Admire their professionalism
Aspire to be more like them
I wish that the line between me and them
Wasn’t as sharp as Batman and Barbie
I wish that I didn’t have to throw that red Corvette away
All of those years ago
Because some idiot told me that it was “for girls”
I wish that those idiots at Mattel
Hadn’t told generations of young women
That the only car in the toy line
Belonged to Ken
That it was up to a man to drive them
To give them money
You are assertive
Not bossy
Bold
Not dangerous
Open
Not emotional
Adaptable
Not irrational
They pay you an unequal wage
To keep the wheel in their hands
The keys in their pockets
But fuck a glass ceiling
You were meant to drive a convertible
That check
That raise
Those benefits
Equal pay
They are yours
You already know
You don’t need me to tell you that
It’s more for me

To come to terms with
To stop being such a chauvinist
It's time we stopped looking in the rearview
But instead
Towards the road ahead
I never liked Ken
He can ride in the backseat
And for a change
Let the kids play
I'd like to see Batman
Ride shotgun
With Barbie.