

VILLAINEX – PAULA BRETT – SYNOPSIS

The show begins with X, child of a high-ranking hero family, taking part in a daily pledge ceremony, in which the restrictive values of the hero realm are laid out. They admit to the audience that they are dissatisfied and that they are not as dedicated to the Hero lifestyle as they should be.

As they muse on a potential solution, there is panic outside as a beautiful Villainess swoops by on her dragon, terrifying the residents of the castle. X admires her confidence, and her freedom – to dress and express herself any way she likes. X realises that, amidst the pandemonium, they can make a break for it. They try to find their lover, Pax, who is one of the serving staff in the castle but they are unable to. Feeling the chance slip away, they grab a sack of laundry and flee.

Having found a dark, damp and suitably evil-looking place to carve out their new life, X sets about finding their villainous style. They know there are certain requirements that must be met if one is to be considered a proper villain. They toy with the extremes of feminine and masculine presentation, and remember their Uncle Cyrus, who was exiled from the Hero realm for villainy.

Finally settling on a look they feel confident and comfortable in, they head off to a Speed-Minioning event – a networking event for Villains and prospective Minions to meet and team up. The event is quite overwhelming and X almost ducks out, rattled by the invasive and judgemental questioning from some of the prospective minions, but eventually finds someone they gel with, and agree to go to the Emerging Villains International Linkup together the following night.

Back in the lair, X sets about practising their Villain Song, a staple of any good villain. They also settle on their name – Villainex. After a showstopper, they are feeling on top of the world and ready to face the judging panel at the Linkup, but quickly realises they are late to pick up their minion, who has taken offence and spurned them. They set off to the ceremony alone. Having blagged their way in, tiptoeing around the no-minion rule, Villainex (as they now call themselves) finds themselves in a very loud, very dark and disorienting space. Things get worse when their entire identity is picked apart by the judging panel, complete with teasing, dismissal of their gender identity and underlying it all – the feeling that no matter how Villainex tries, the system is rigged

against them. Their song falls flat, of course, and burning with shame they leave the club.

As they flee, they unexpectedly run into X's Hero fiancée, who has been sent out to find Villainex and bring them back to the hero realm. He tries to convince them, in a very unappealing way, to come back home, and to him – reminding X that they did not find the community and acceptance they were seeking among the villains. Beaten down and on the verge of hopelessness, X reluctantly leaves with him.

There is a flurry of activity in preparation for the upcoming wedding. X laments the shame they feel at failing to break away, and dread at the inevitability of a life of misery. However, at the crucial moment, Pax appears on a dragon, sweeping Villainex away.

As the pair flee, the audience hear Pax's voice, describing her life as a fairy tale. She takes Villainex to live among the mundane – neither hero nor villain. She reflects on the fact that neither Hero nor Villain realm really provides any security, and no one can really belong there, because both have been contrived by the pain of a privileged few. X, having settled into life among the mundane, reflects on what it truly means to belong, and find community. They observe that expectations are different here, and are dependent on actions and willingness to show up and help, rather than a constant competition for praise and attention. They mourn for their lack of guidance, but try to give guidance to others. They acknowledge that they have found healing and hope at last.