

A LITTLE LAD IN PARIS

Continental

Before the end of the year, Basil Hallward was a critically acclaimed artist living in Paris; he had displayed his portrait of a beautiful lad, Dorian Gray, per request of his dearest friend, and sometimes enemy, Lord Henry Wotton, along with beautifully detailed and colorful landscapes at an art show in the early summer, and won the hearts of everyone almost instantly. The people of Paris were practically throwing money at him. Dukes and princes bidden on and begged Basil Hallward for the portrait of Dorian Gray – he had politely informed them that the portrait was not for sale, and directed them to his other works – and ladies and duchesses hounded him for a masterpiece of their own likeness.

With the unsuspected fortune that his new found “fame” (if one would call it that) brought him, Basil bought a beautiful studio in a more secluded, rural area of France, outside of Paris, with emerald-green rolling hills, and a massive garden tended to by two gardeners. The windows and doors were always open in the following summer, and he spent a great deal of time, when he wasn’t painting, sketching and smoking cigars on a divan in the summer air. He kept one valet and one maid, paid them exceptionally well, and treated them even better. They felt like family to him, and he thought of them as such.

He kept a little lad for himself in Paris, as well, a pretty little thing of 27 years, of Danish origin, with pale blonde hair and the warmest, darkest blue eyes he’d ever seen. He was pale and thin and graceful, well dressed and of a royal bloodline; his name was from Shakespearean Denmark and it rolled off the tongue like poetry. Henry once commented that he looked a little like Dorian Gray, but Basil saw no such thing; his little lad in Paris was everything to him now.

Basil Hallward loved him deeply, just as the boy loved him; they’d been drawn together at the art show where Basil had had his big break. The Danish lad of such high status admiring his art – admiring the artist, actually, the lad would later confess – was what drew the patrons to him. He had loved him from the minute he spoke to him, with his deep, gentle voice, and his even gentler nature.

Now he sat in his sunlit studio, reclining on the divan, with a nice, but not expensive cigarette between his lips, sketching the little lad that sat on his lap, not as an accessory, but as a necessity. The lad stroked his hair continuously, like a worry stone, and kissed his forehead and cheeks and neck every now and then, as if to remind Basil that he was there, that he loved him. A little opal ring glittered on the lad’s left ring finger; they were wed from the moment their lips had first met, he had said once in the garden, dreamily, but Basil bought a ring anyhow, for, as much as he loved his secrets, he wanted the ladies of France to know his boy’s heart was with another.

The lad took the cigarette out of his mouth and replaced it with his own, his dainty fingers caressing the line of Basil’s jaw as he kissed him deeply.

Basil smiled, quite dreamily, as he pulled away from those rose petal lips.

“Will you sit still now, Hamlet?”

The lad sat back on his lap and looked at what Basil was sketching: his likeness holding a skull in his hands, as if he were studying it with morbid curiosity.

“Alas, poor Yorick!” he cried, watching with delight how Basil Hallward threw his head back in that odd way that used to make his friends at Oxford laugh.

“Alas, poor Yorick!”

ROSES AND TURPENTINE

Ruis

“Remind me again why I am sitting here“, he murmured, shaking his head slightly. “Can’t you just, you know, take a photo?” He had been ignored by his friend entirely for the last hour, so instead he’d been absorbed in a music book, occasionally tapping incomprehensible rhythms on the armrest of his chair, a counterpoint to the quiet scratch of brush on canvas. The air smelled of roses and turpentine, and Dorian was growing bored. His voice grew louder and more animated. “It’s not

as if I need a life sized portrait of myself, so if you are not going to use this as part of your graduation project anyway, I don't see why..."

"Hm?" Until now, a hypothetical observer standing in the doorway, observing the scene, might not even have noticed the second young man in the room. Basil had been working quietly, concentrating on his work. Even when he looked up, he seemed to blend in with the background, with his easel, with the canvas on which he was painting something not immediately visible from the entrance. "As I told you before, it's personal. A photo can change, be filtered, be blurred. This will not."

Dorian shrugged. "Suit yourself", he said. "I don't have to understand it. There's nothing wrong with those landscapes, of course. I like them. Love them, even. But really, if you absolutely have to work now, on a summer day like this, you should be working on something for your grade, not... this." While he was speaking, the movement of the paintbrush with its hypnotizing sound slightly slowed but never stopped, and Dorian had the unsettling feeling Basil was not even really looking at him in that moment, was just seeing him as another object of art. He frowned. "I told you. I don't want that picture anyway. So why are you still painting? Art for the sake of art? Now this guy here", Dorian exclaimed, waving his music book in the air, "has some extraordinary ideas about art as well."

Basil had to squint to recognize the writing on the title. He sighed when he read the name Stockhausen. That at least explained why earlier he had not been able to decipher the notation in that book, squiggles and sharp lines and colored dots instead of the music notes he was used to – not that he was an expert on those, of course. "So that's what you are working on now?", he asked instead of answering. "No matter what I think of that noise people insist on calling music, I really don't think I can agree with him on the matter of art. Let me guess – Henry suggested this as the topic of your thesis? He really is a bad influence on you. You should have stuck to Schumann, I would have been happy to lend you the sheets. But anyway, you sat perfectly still today, and I'm almost finished with the painting. Do you want to look?"

Laughing, Dorian got up and walked over to the canvas. An invisible observer might have noticed Basil's blush when Dorian put his hand on Basil's shoulder, might have heard Dorian's sharp intake of breath

when he looked at the picture – but certainly, they'd clearly observe the contrast between those two, would have judged Dorian extraordinarily handsome, beautiful even, and Basil perfectly ordinary if not actually plain. Still, Basil looked quite content while Dorian contemplated the canvas.

Motionless, Dorian stood there, quiet for a longer time than Basil was used to from his friend. When he finally spoke, it was unexpected. "I hate it", he said. He was not thinking of how his words might hurt Basil. Rather, for the first time, he became aware of something all the world's photo filters had been able to hide from him, that he looked like this, right now, on this day of June, and would never be quite the same. Already, he was ten minutes older than the face looking back at him from the canvas. He remembered something Henry had told him in seminar the other day, of youth and only living once while the flowers outside the atelier would bloom again next summer... And it only hit home right then. It was unacceptable and horrified him profusely. "Is that really what I look like to you?"

When he answered, Basil did not look at him at all. "I've often enough told you how beautiful you are. You never seemed to mind." He swallowed. "You can't mean to tell me this picture doesn't look good. I know it does. It might be my best work so far, and you think it's bad?" Again, there was silence, this time not even broken by brushstrokes, until quietly, bitterly, Dorian started to laugh.

"Oh, it's beautiful, all right. I love it, and maybe it's even a part of myself you're showing. Or rather yourself? Isn't that the problem? Hasn't that always been your problem, Basil? You see something beautiful and you love it. All the paintings and sculptures and installations, so what am I to you? Another beautiful thing? Sometimes I believe you would prefer me as something in a museum, a beautiful and cold and dead thing. Would you love me then? If I were like this picture, timeless and forever beautiful? Oh, now I know why you're handing in those landscapes. You're a great painter, but you are a coward, Basil, and maybe you always were."

Sighing, Basil began to rummage around until finally, between his pencils and brushes and paint tubes, he found what he'd been looking for: his palette knife, the one he usually just used for backgrounds

because it was not suited to detailed and delicate work. "A coward, you say?" And with that, unhesitating, he slashed the canvas. "Here. I would not want a mere painting, a bit of canvas and paint, to come between us, so... It's yours now. You can frame it if you want. Maybe it's even better than before like this, according to your standards." Almost relieved, Dorian grinned at Basil. "You're right", he said. "It's art now, when it wasn't before. Wouldn't have thought you a Stockhausen fan, though."

DORIAN GRAY'S NEW HOUSE

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What a view- Paris is as beautiful as Dorian had heard. The window of the mansion on a hill by Paris was filled with a sight almost as perfect as it's current viewer. Strangely enough, even though he'd come there to "monitor" the renovation of his new house multiple hours ago, he hadn't looked out the window even once up to that moment. He was enjoying himself so far- the builders were muscular and sweaty, just the way he liked them. Though he must admit, the hunt wasn't very amusing that day- they were all generic, easy prey. Dorian licked his beautiful upper lip as he thought of the excitement unique prey brings to the chase.

He looked back inside, shaking off his thoughts. He was just starting to plan how he would ravage his fourth of the day, when he came in: tall and mysterious, his body language composed and suspecting, yet arrogant, his eyes revealing intelligence while his face is covered by a mask that Dorian's experienced eyes recognize as hand made. The architect's voice and way of speaking revealed experience in singing as he ordered builders around; the grace of his movements as he directed them showed the dexterity of an artist or musician, maybe even both. The picturesque teen's mouth began to water- unique prey indeed. He seemed to be an intellectual: Dorian could not wait to melt his brain into goo.

Dorian had to wait until the job on his house was done- a second thought had told him it'd be problematic if the architect in charge of the entire renovation would get too attached. Something about human emotions and heartbreak or whatever.

But the awaited day had finally come- the job was finished, and Dorian generously threw a party for his employees (he's kind and beauti-

ful. Just kidding. He's only beautiful.). While ignoring the flirting of the eleven employees he'd gotten to know more closely, he hosted as perfectly as he does anything else, while giving extra attention to a certain mystery-boy.

After multiple hours, the workers finally went home- even the persistent flirtatious ones, and the ones who'd stay by the food table until a) there won't be any food left or b) they'd be removed by force.

The prey turned to leave with the late workers. "Wait, architect? Do you have a bit more time this evening?"

The man stopped walking and turned around to see a young beauty sitting on the couch, leaning on it's side. The teen smiled warmly and patted the seat beside him, making his body language as welcoming as possible.

"Yes, I think so... why?" the stranger said as he walked up to the couch. He sat down a bit farther from Dorian than he was supposed to, wearing an mistrusting expression.

Dorian didn't let it faze him. "Well, first of all, you never told me your name."

"It's Erik."

"Erik~ so you're an architect for a living? How long have you worked with this agency?" Dorian shifted on the sofa to face him.

"Not long. I've... had a few changes in my life recently." He didn't seem happy to think about it.

"These thoughts don't seem to make you happy..." Erik chuckled bitterly. "Maybe you could do without thinking for the evening?"

"What do you m-" but Dorian was already on his knees on the sofa, closing the distance between them, and putting a hand on Erik's chest- "m- mean?"

Dorian leaned over his prey and whispered in his ear, knowing the feeling of his breath on the other man's neck would be driving him mad. "I'm sure you already know."

The man beneath him gasped. Dorian looked into his eyes, who were shining so desperately that Dorian's ego grew even larger than its average everyday size.

Then, suddenly, the prey closed his eyes and seemed to shake off the feeling. He slipped from the couch and stood up, leaving the hunter to fall gracelessly on the sofa, having rested his weight on this idiotic bastard.

Dorian was burning with frustration. He was so close! And this little. Fucking. Idiot.

There are knives in his kitchen. 'Erik' wouldn't be his first.

He took a deep breath and ended his second-long almost-tantrum. He turned to his prey while putting on an innocent, hurt expression. "What happened? Do you dislike me?"

"No it's not you it's... I'm..." he looked away from Dorian. "It's too good to be true. People... don't want me."

"And is that a reason to break my heart?"

The architect looked back at him in surprise.

"Would you withhold yourself from me for the way some other people have treated you?"

"Well I, um, I..."

Dorian stepped off of the couch in a subtly sexy way, so subtle you'd think it's unintentional.

"Oh, loosen up, you. Won't you like a bit of fun?" He winked seductively, knowing he'd already won.

A pause, and the architect slowly leaned above him, and touched his short, flawless nose with the big bump in his mask where the nose would be. Dorian kissed his prey, then moved his lips to skim their way to his cheekbones, through the neck's side and onto the nape of his neck, where he gave Erik a long, soft kiss. All the while, the other man's hands were tightening their bodies together, first with gentle, fragile caution and then with utter desperation. Something about the way these hands were working throughout his torso gave him the feeling that they pet lovingly as well as they can choke in bloodlust, much like his own. Dorian started sucking on the nape of the architect's neck, and then realized something:

They were in his home. What if the man would want to stay? What if he started to clean the house and imply commitment? Oh no, they can't do it here...!!

Dorian stopped to look into his victim's eyes with a playful expression.

"I want to show you a place."

The teen tried to think up a place for them to be while taking the architect by the hand and going out of the house. He didn't quite know the area, but the trees over there looked like part of a forest. Luckily, they were. It was a bit strange, how willingly this man followed Dorian - an almost-complete stranger - to what could be a perfect murder. From experience, he could get away with it if he wanted to. On the other hand, the dick had always ruled over the brain.

In the depth of the forest, only seen by the birds and only judged by the faraway stars, a pure-faced sinner forced his prize's back to a tree and kissed the breath out of his lungs. In seconds, the century-old-teen's shirt was already on the ground, and hands were going through his hair, all over his skin. Dorian started a thorough research beneath the clothes of his mystery man, from the the chest downwards. Then 'Erik' pulled his hands from Dorian, quickly unbuttoned his shirt and continued his previous task- that is, mashing the bodies together like there's no tomorrow. The teen wondered what instrument the man plays, and how well he must play it, with that dexterity and speed which he's showing tiny bits of. He could think of a certain flute he'd like him to play, but he already has other plans for this man. Dorian moved his mouth from the architect's, whether because kissing upwards for so long started hurting his neck, or because he wanted a closer look on what the open shirt revealed. His lips moved around the body in front of him in a downward course as straight as him, that is to say, often going sideways and with occasional circles. The musician weakened his pressure on Dorian's skin and was now gently petting everywhere from the young man's belt line to the tips of his hair, softly and lovingly, not leaving a millimeter untouched. The teen slipped a hand beneath Erik's underwear and held his ass. He couldn't tell what was more delightful: the firm roundness in his hand or the loud gasp above him. Either way, it was clear who was going to be top tonight ;).

The morning after, Dorian woke up to see the man beside him still sleeping. He was slightly worried the man would have difficulty sitting in the near future. Just kidding. He didn't care. He quickly and quietly put on his clothes - he had decades of practice avoiding consequences - and was turning to leave, when he noticed the one thing yesterday's one was still wearing. A special little white mask. This prey took a while to cap-

ture, and yet, he knew so little about him. Looking at him now, he seems to be at his late twenties to early thirties. But Dorian didn't quite care about the man's age or his life story- he was curious about his mysterious, white, hand- made mask.

Dorian could, technically, care less about the man's privacy, but only if he detested the concept of him keeping his privacy, and hated privacy in general. The teen gingerly removed the mask off of the sleeping face in front of him, and looked at it in the morning light seeping through the leaves.

Only it wasn't quite a face. It was a horrible, twisted, agonizing sight, and it was somewhat stuck to a head, but Dorian couldn't quite call it a face. Yet it was staring at him, eyes closed but bone peering, surrounded by scars and veins and things that were supposed to be skin, should have been skin, all where they weren't supposed to be, together presenting something utterly non-human.

It was as if his own soul was looking at him, reminding him of the horrors he had left in his trail.

Dorian put the mask back gently, not to wake the sleeping man. He put the strap back as it were before. He walked to his house, not glancing half a glance behind him. When he entered, he locked the door.

BLOOD AND GUTS IN HIGH SCHOOL (1978)

Kathy Acker

Janey's all alone in her room. She's learning Persian slowly:

this peasant
that peasant
good peasant

(Note the endings here:)

a better peasant
this peasant is better
than that one.
the best peasant

(or:)

a better peasant
the best peasant

(the word (good) is deviant:)

the best peasant of
this democracy.
this peasant is the
best of all.

(is not) (more) (room) (one) this is the only room,

Janey wrote,
(Is not) (other) (a thing) (chair) there is only a chair.

(there's no word for "cot".)