

DORIAN GRAY

or; The Picture of Dorian Gray But It's A Completely Different Story About Something Else

i

Agatha idled the car up the quiet dark driveway, eased on the brake to stop before the closed garage door, and then pressed down fully on the brake to come to a complete stop. There in front of the garage door she remained for a while, staring blankly ahead, until after some time she put the car in park and took her foot off of the brake. With the car in park, she took the key out of the ignition, and sighed in the quiet that followed now that the engine was turned off. Well, it was something of quiet. A relative silence that was at once the least and the most that one could hope for in a neighborhood as pleasant as hers and Harry's: crickets or frogs or something chirped and/or ribbited; somewhere a few streets away, a dog was barking at something; faintly, the noise of a TV show could be heard coming from some neighbor's house, the volume evidently turned up very high, but not so high that Agatha could hear what show was on while sitting out here in her car.

Though it was no fault of the new trainee, Sibyl had gotten on Agatha's nerves that day. "Miss Agatha, where can I find the size on these types of Wranglers? Miss Agatha, where do these coats go? Miss Agatha, I noticed this coat doesn't have a price tag, I

don't think—do we print a new one off somewhere or—oh, here it is—do you think we should move the tag to somewhere else more noticeable? If that's allowed? Miss Agatha, Miss Agatha, Miss Agatha...”

The new girl was just learning, of course. ‘Miss Agatha’ herself had asked a lot of those same questions, she was sure. Some of them probably more or less word for word, after replacing ‘Miss Agatha’ with ‘Mrs Narborough.’

As she sat in the car, her thoughts began to wander from the week at work passed to the weekend home ahead, and all of the free time she would get to spend with Harry—Hell, maybe if the weekend shook out to be nice enough she would quit on Monday, fuck it: Live Free Die Whenever, as she had once seen on a probably home-made bumper sticker, on the back of a mini van that was adorned with a truly masterful collage of various bumper stickers; she had followed that car around for about a minute reading as many as she could before she realized that if she kept at it she would soon be lost, and should get back to her course to the grocery store. They had been new to this place then. Now they were settled. Now, if she had had the opportunity to follow the mini van today instead of back then, she would not get lost anywhere here.

Agatha got out of the car, closed and locked the door behind herself, and went into the front door of the house. In the entryway, leaning back against the coat closet door, Harry stood in a tweed suit holding a bouquet of flowers, smiling at the Agatha who had finally stepped inside.

Agatha let out a sad, apologetic, drawn out noise, and asked, “Why do you think I’m mad at you?”

Harry gave a silent laugh, turning his head away into his armpit with a sharp exhale. He stood up from leaning against the coat closet door, and sauntered a few steps to stand face to face with his wife. “You, Mrs Wotton, are not mad at me: You are in fact quite pleased with me as we are going to stay in, smell these ridiculous flowers for a second each, and then watch one of the movies I rented for your consideration on this, our year and three quarters anniversary.”

Harry extended the flowers with both hands.

Agatha smiled as she snorted. “You’re such a *dork!*”

“Yeah well you chose to marry me, Mrs Dork, and this is what you get.”

Agatha took the indeed ridiculous flowers, stuck her nose into them, and breathed in. They smelled like flowers. It was a wholly unsurprising smell, and yet perhaps by way of this fact, they served their purpose well: they smelled lovely, and Agatha drew out her smelling of them for more than the instructed second, making the one inhale last as long as she could make it. When she was finished, she extended the bouquet out to Harry’s nose for his appraisal. He drew in a similar breath, and let it out with a smile that was trying very hard to be a serious, contemplative frown. “Flowers,” he asserted. “Quite,” Agatha concurred, and stepped forward and gave her dork husband a kiss.

She gave the flowers back to Harry as she sat down to take off her shoes. When she had done this and proceeded into the living room, she saw Harry fussing with getting the flowers into a vase on the dining room table. She called to him, “What movies did you get?”

“On the couch,” he called back, not looking up from his work.

Agatha went to the couch and picked up the four VHS tapes that sat in a neat stack on the leftmost cushion.

Ferris Bueller’s Day Off, Dirty Dancing, Groundhog Day, and Pulp Fiction—four movies straight from the top of Agatha and Harry’s shared ‘to watch’ list.

“What’s Pulp Fiction about?” Agatha called.

“I don’t know,” Harry said back at a rather regular volume and from nearer by than Agatha had expected, making her jump. “I think it’s kind of an action comedy thing,” he added.

She turned to him, and cursorily looked the Pulp Fiction tape over front and back. “Want to give it a try?”

“Absolutely,” Harry said. She extended the tape to him as he walked past. He took it, removed it from its case, and got everything set up as Agatha settled in on the couch.

With the tape placed inside of the VCR and playing from the start, Harry came over to the couch as well, and the two of them settled in together, and were soon watching Samuel L. Jackson and John Travolta discussing quarter pounders with cheese.

The movie went on, with many gasps and laughs from the Wottons. Eventually, after John Travolta had jabbed an enormous syringe straight into the center of Uma Thurman's chest, Harry commented, "This movie is *amazing*."

"Do you have to pee?" Agatha asked. As rule, Harry did not comment on movies until he needed to get up for something—Though once this seal was broken, commentary on the remainder of the movie was usually fair game.

Harry gave Agatha a kiss on the side of the forehead and gently stood up from the couch. "Be right back."

"You can pause it," Agatha mentioned.

Harry did pause the movie, and went to the bathroom that was nearby to the drawing room to pee. When he returned and pressed play on the movie again, John Travolta and Uma Thurman stood in front of Uma's house, talking about everything that had happened with them that night. Harry and Agatha settled in together once more.

As the conversation with Uma and John was drawing to a close, Uma with dried tears streaked down her face recited a joke. "Three tomatos are walkin down the street: papa tomato, mama tomato, baby tomato. Baby tomato starts laggin behind, and papa tomato gets really angry, goes back and squishes him—says, 'ketchup'. ...'ketchup'."

John gave a pity laugh, and then John and Uma found themselves at least smiling a little for real, in spite of the terrible night.

"See you around," Uma said, and then turned and walked away towards her door, and the scene cut to a shot inside of the house, in a bedroom.

"Woah," Harry said.

Agatha took a second longer than Harry to realize what the scene had cut to: on a bed there was a woman in a black dress, and she was gently fingering the lady parts of a large female dog.

"Oh," Agatha agreed. "This movie does *not* stop surprising me."

"No kidding," Harry said, in agreement with that as well.

"Do we know her?" Agatha asked.

"I don't think so. She wasn't one of the drug dealer's friends was she?"

“No, unless I missed one. Have we seen the dog?”

“I don’t think so.”

“What breed is that?”

“Uh, I don’t know,” Harry said. “Maybe a mix. Seems Boxer-ish and also kind of Lab-ish.”

As Harry and Agatha talked, the movie went on, showing sweeping shots of the woman and the dog together, close ups of the dog’s lady parts being fingered by a hand that glistened with some type of lubricant, and A B shots of the dog’s face and the woman’s face, smiling and reacting to each other. A cover of Earth Angel performed by a female vocalist played in the background.

“Is she supposed to be Mia Wallace’s sister or something?” Agatha wondered.

“I could see it,” Harry said, nodding.

Earth Angel faded out, and the woman stopped fingering the canine. The human and dog shared a mouth to mouth kiss, and when they parted, the movie showed a close up of their nearby mouths, as she whispered to the dog, “*And mustard.*”

Agatha snorted in a laugh, head reeling back in confusion. “*Okay?*”

The movie cut away to the next title card—Prelude to “The Gold Watch”—and moved on to an entirely different scene, of a kid sitting in front of a TV in a living room in the daytime, watching cartoons.

In reference to the scene with the dog, Harry said, “Whether we do get an explanation for that scene or whether they never bring it up again, this movie is *kind of* genius.”

By the time the credits rolled, the movie did *not* give the Wottons an explanation for the fairly lengthy scene in Pulp Fiction of a dog being lovingly fingered; though the explanation did exist, and would in time be found out, and in fact made the beginnings of its appearance the next Monday while Agatha was at work.

“So anyways,” Mrs Narborough said, coming to the conclusion of the story of her own weekend, “how was your weekend, Ag?”

Agatha and Mrs Narborough were in one of the store rooms, doing something that was in essence a form of taking inventory, though the regional managers liked to give these things more unhelpful names when they could accomplish it.

“It was good,” Agatha said with a smile, and paused to do some figuring. After writing down a number at the bottom of a column on a table on the paper on her clipboard, she continued. “Harry and I stayed in most of the weekend and watched a couple of movies. Pulp Fiction, Ferris Bueller’s Day Off.”

“I, *love*, Pulp Fiction,” Mrs Narborough said. “It’s honestly my favorite thing ever made.”

“Ooh, really?”

“Did you like it?”

“Yeah it was great,” Agatha said honestly. “Can’t believe all the different things they tied together and made it still completely work.”

“I know! Which one was your favorite?”

“The gangster guy and the gangster guy’s boss’s girlfriend going on a date.”

“John Travolta and Uma Thurman. Yes. Same.”

“Really?”

“Uh huh.”

“And what was with that scene after that?” Agatha asked.

“After what?”

Agatha blushed slightly as she realized what she was bringing up with her boss, but in fairness Mrs Narborough *had* said the movie was her favorite thing ever made, and so Agatha continued on about the particular scene in the movie that she was talking about, while scanning the end of a pencil down the table on the paper on her clipboard. “After the two get back from after their date, after she tells him her joke, there’s that scene with the dog? Did that ever tie in to anything?”

“Dog? I... Are you talking about something in the background that I missed? I don’t remember any *dogs* in the entire movie.”

“You can *not* have missed this dog, she was *extremely* the focus of the entire scene.” As Agatha had to go on about it in specific terms, she could feel her cheeks absolutely burning up.

She lowered her clipboard, glanced all around to make sure they were alone in the store room, and said quietly, “The scene where the woman is... *fingering*, her pet dog, on the bed?”

Mrs Narborough let out a piercing shriek of a laugh, and then covered her face with her clipboard.

As she eventually lowered it, her face was red with choked, silent laughter. Letting out high pitched wheezes, she dropped her clipboard, gently grabbed Agatha by both wrists, and eventually composed herself enough to say, “Ag—honey—I’m sorry, I do *not* think the movie you watched was Pulp Fiction.”

That night Agatha went straight home, got straight out of the car, and burst in through the front door to report this news to her beloved husband. She marched inside down the hall, and Harry came marching towards her in exactly the same fashion from the living room.

“That dog fucking scene isn’t in Pulp Fiction,” Agatha asserted, as though making an argument of the point.

“That scene of a beautiful mixed breed dog having her weird animal vaginal parts lovingly touched by a beautiful human woman’s lubricated fingers to both of their enjoyment and pleasure is absolutely not in any way shape or form in the 1994 major blockbuster movie Pulp Fiction directed by Quentin Tarantino,” Harry agreed, taking Agatha’s side of this argument that was now apparently occurring against some unknown third party—the universe, maybe, or the movie rental place that had given the tape to them. Harry had returned the tape yesterday.

“I—” Agatha began, and then vaguely held up the tape of Pulp Fiction that Mrs Narborough had lent to her as a trustworthy copy, and then lowered the tape back to her side again, and then leaned over and set it on the counter, apparently not needing it anymore.

“How did you find out?” Harry asked.

“Pulp Fiction is Mrs Narborough’s favorite movie.” Agatha glanced at the tape. “She did not recall that scene of a dog’s pussy getting played around with.”

Harry winced his mouth into a small o shape.

“How did you find out?” Agatha asked.

“Towards the end of my shift I had what sounds like it may have been a similar conversation with my boss also.”

Agatha winced her mouth into a small o shape as well.

The two of them stood in silence for a moment, both of their eyes soon settling on the tape that was placed on the counter.

“Is that the same—”

“It’s Mrs Narborough’s copy, not the copy we got from the rental place.”

“Ah,” Harry said.

The two stared at it for another contemplative moment.

Agatha sighed. “Should we... *do* anything? Call them and let them know what’s on that tape that they’re giving out to people?”

“It... I mean, we *could* call them and let them know, yes. We could do that if you wanted to.”

“Go on.”

“I think it’s a better cut of the movie with the dog scene?” Harry said, employing quite some degree of played up uncertainty—Agatha could quite plainly tell that her husband was not uncertain of his opinion in the least, though he *was*, in kindness, ready to drop the topic and let it go if she gave the slightest hint that it would be wise of him to stop saying the things that he was presently and tentatively saying. “Not *better*, I take *that* back actually, but more *interesting*,” Harry clarified.

Agatha nodded. “I agree.”

“Oh do you now?”

“I do,” Agatha said, and smiled a little, and shrugged. “What if we just leave it? Let the next person see this ‘interesting’ cut of the movie too?”

Agatha and Harry shared a kiss, and the two of them went to go start on making dinner.

iii

For a time of approximately five months, three weeks, and some small additional number of days beyond that, nothing more came of the tape that the Wottons had watched. It was, by their estimation, the strangest thing that had come into their lives in that time, but it was not the most worthy to remark upon: They had seen it, yes, but aside from the occasional speculation about

whether the tape was still in circulation and whether some other unsuspecting couple was watching it right now and what, do you suppose, they think of it, there wasn't much more about the tape to discuss. Harry got a promotion from engineer to project architect. Agatha had Thursdays dropped from her schedule at work in order to pursue painting lessons and generally other creative endeavors. The Wottons around this time were discussing at length whether they wanted to start trying for a baby—they both did want to start trying eventually, but were in agreement as to their tepid uncertainty that now was the right time. Many Saturdays, the two went out on dates, to lunch or to a park. One muggy Saturday afternoon, Harry and Agatha were in the midst of an enjoyable and very sweaty walk down a trail at a state park, when they walked around a bend in the trail, and Agatha stopped in her tracks and barred her arm out in front of Harry, stopping him in his tracks as well.

Up ahead, a woman sat at a bench. There was also a dog lying down at her feet. The woman wore athletic clothing, and had her long black hair back in a ponytail. The dog was panting; the dog happened to be facing the Wottons, and wagged at them as the panting and lying continued.

"That's *her*," Agatha said.

"Do I know her?" Harry asked.

The Wottons were both catching their breath a bit.

"She's the woman from *Pulp Fiction*. *With the dog*."

Harry wheeled around to face away from the woman and the dog. "I think you're right."

"Wait, we *are* going to talk to her, aren't we?" Agatha asked.

"Yes, *I* want to," Harry agreed. "I'm just, actually nervous. I think we could have happened upon the entirety of the actual cast and it wouldn't be as big of a deal to me as this."

Agatha tugged at Harry's wrist. Harry turned back to facing forward on the trail, and the Wottons approached.

The sweaty woman gave a polite though rather indifferent wave as the sweaty Agatha and the sweaty Harry neared. The dog continued to pant and wag, and seemed to be smiling at the approaching couple.

Agatha and Harry, both smiling as well, stopped in front of the woman.

“Hi,” Agatha said, and Harry also threw in a “Hi” of his own.

“Heya,” the woman said, and gave her little wave once again. “Need any water or anything?” she asked.

“I think we recognize you from somewhere,” Agatha said.

The woman did then smile a little too, and glanced away. “Oh yeah? Where from?”

Seeing the woman’s face up this close, Agatha felt absolutely certain that this was indeed the woman from the movie. Harry felt much the same way as his wife did, though more from looking at the dog.

“*And mustard*,” Agatha whispered in her best impression.

The woman squirmed and gave a few little stomps as she smiled completely. “You’ve seen it!” she said. Looking down to the dog, she repeated, “Someone’s seen it!”

“Truly great performances,” Harry said. “Big fans. Always a pleasure to meet your heroes.”

“This is my husband Harry, my name is Agatha,” Agatha said, and extended her hand.

The woman shook the hands of each of the Wottons. “Dorian,” she said, introducing herself. Pointing down at the dog, she added, “And this comely young lady is Gray. Do you wanna say hi?”

The dog stood up and went to the Wottons. Harry crouched down and pet Gray, stroking down her back and rubbing at the front of her chest as she wagged. Agatha threw some approving headpats into the mix, and then turned her attention back to Dorian. “Do you mind if we sit down?”

“Please,” Dorian said, and made room.

Harry sat at one end of the bench, petting Gray who had come to sit in front of him. Agatha sat in the middle, with Dorian on the other far end.

“I suppose you’re wondering what the hell you watched on that tape,” Dorian said.

“We hadn’t seen it before, we legitimately thought it was part of the movie,” Harry mentioned.

Dorian fist pumped to herself.

“But yes,” Agatha went on, “after learning that was *not* part of the movie...” She looked back and forth between Gray and Dorian, and asked, “Is it a kink thing?”

“Art project,” Dorian said, and turned her head back to have a drink from her water bottle. “She and I *are* together—”

“Oh, alright.”

“—but if you’re asking about our apparently *seamless* appearance in Pulp Fiction, yeah, that was just an art project, not even my idea.”

“Oh, really?”

Dorian nodded. “Some friends of mine from New Mexico, going to art school there, they came up with this project to try to add in ridiculous scenes to movies but do it well enough to make it look like it was always supposed to be there. And apparently they thought of me and Gray.” She craned her head forward to look at Gray when she said the dog’s name. The dog wagged, and came over and laid down at her feet again. Dorian gave Gray a couple of pets down her back and then left her alone. “But yeah. Heh. It was fun to make for sure, and I’m sure my friends would love to talk with you sometime. As far as *I’m* aware you’re the first people ‘in the wild’ who have definitely seen any of these.”

“I *love* that idea,” Agatha said. She glanced both ways down the trail, and then asked, “Is it legal?”

“It is!” Dorian said. “A legal expert signed off on the project. Apparently as long as the movie you’re working with is labeled as rated R, you can show animal fun parts doing pretty much anything. It’s only human nudity that gets you in legal trouble.”

Harry chimed in to say, “Against store policy, surely.”

“Oh, yes,” Dorian nodded. “Fifty dollar fine for taping over any of the films, which my friends do have set aside and are more than happy to pay if the matter should come up.”

Agatha snickered, and shook her head.

Dorian looked both ways down the trail, and then leaned a bit closer, and said, “I also have an appearance in Reservoir Dogs if you want to see it.”

The Wottons looked to each other. As subtly as could be silently screamed, Harry’s eyes were pleading, as were Agatha’s.

Agatha turned to Dorian, and reported, “Absolutely we want to see.”

Arrangements were made to meet up at Dorian’s on next week’s Saturday. An address was written down and handed off,

phone numbers were exchanged, and the two couples got back to continuing their hikes in opposite directions down the trail.

“I think I *like* her,” Agatha commented, when they had gotten a very far distance away so as not to be overheard.

“You sound a little surprised to,” Harry noted.

“I mean I’d like to get to know her more, but yeah. I am *actually* looking forward to meeting this lady and her dog again next week.”

iv

Agatha and Harry pulled up the driveway to Dorian and Gray’s.

“Nice place,” Harry commented.

“Really nice place,” Agatha agreed, and the two of them got out of the car.

Agatha went to the trunk, took out a rolled up poster, and brought it with as she and Harry proceeded up the little path from the side of the driveway to the front door.

When they rang the doorbell Gray answered first, coming scampering and barking. Eventually Dorian arrived after, and actually opened the door for the visitors.

“Hiii,” Dorian said, keeping Gray held back.

Harry crouched down. Dorian let Gray go, and the dog shot forward and said hello to the man, and to his wife who stood beside him, holding a rolled up poster high over her head, away from the dog. The dog, incidentally, had very much noticed this, and seemed to be considering jumping up on Agatha to see what the visitor was keeping from her.

Harry reached up and took the poster from Agatha, and handed it over to Dorian.

“What’s this?” Dorian asked, holding it.

“Open it and see,” Agatha encouraged.

Dorian worked off the rubber band that was around the poster’s center, and unrolled the thing.

Dorian gasped.

The poster was the movie cover for *Pulp Fiction*, but instead of featuring Uma Thurman on the bed, it featured the actors from the added scene, the human woman in a black dress and

her canine counterpart. The human and the dog both laid on their chests beside each other and looked towards the viewer with a distant, disapproving but almost seductive gaze.

Dorian looked between Agatha and Harry. "Did you—"

Agatha raised her hand. "I paint. After I did that one I had it scanned and printed. I can give you the original too."

"Oh my *god*. Well, thank you. This is really impressive."

"Oh yeah and you only make movies."

Dorian snickered, and carefully rolled the poster back up. "Would you two have any interest in grabbing lunch before we watch the movie? I know of a couple places near here. Or we could order delivery."

Agatha and Harry looked to each other, and each made a face that said they were agreeable to that. "Yeah we could eat," Agatha said, turning back to Dorian.

"Want to walk?" Dorian asked Agatha, though Gray, also hearing this, gave a vehement 'yes' of a bark. Dorian smiled and shook her head, and added, "It's like half a mile. Dogs are allowed inside, but honestly the weather's nice enough we could sit outside anyways."

The Wottons agreed to this. Dorian clipped a leash onto Gray, and the four proceeded out of the house, and began away down the street on foot.

"I found this place when I first moved here a couple years ago," Dorian mentioned, in reference to the cafe that they were heading for. "I have no idea what they do differently to everywhere else, but they have kind of the best sandwiches I've had in my life. Like, consistently. I have not once had bad food here."

"No pressure, then," Harry said.

"Do you two live around here? I think you said you do."

"Other side of the city, but yes, not far in the scheme of things."

When the four had arrived at the cafe, Dorian cupped a hand over her eyes and pressed her face against the window to look inside past the reflective glare that the sun made on the rest of the window otherwise. Apparently catching someone's attention she gave a wave, and then a thumbs up. "We can sit down," she said to the Wottons.

The three humans took seats around a round wooden table, and the dog remained standing for the time being, nearby to the human who had hold of her leash.

“May I ask what it is you do?” Harry inquired.

Dorian planted her chin in her cupped hands. “What, like, job, hobbies, interests?”

“Anything notable that passes the time of modern living for you.”

Dorian leaned back in her chair, tipping it so it stood on just the back two legs. “For hobbies, tennis and running. For a job, computer programmer.”

“Oh *really*,” Harry said, and now he leaned forward. “I’m curious how similar our jobs are.”

“Yeah?”

“Architect.”

“Oh, interesting. I think mine is more boring than you would guess, actually, but it does pay the bills, that’s for sure.” Dorian looked to Agatha, and asked, “Painter, you said?”

“Well, not as a *job*.”

“What? Hey, why not?”

Agatha shrugged, and smiled down at the table.

Harry leaned in with his wife, and mentioned, “Really might be something to look into in the coming months, if it’s something you think you might be interested in.”

Agatha gave Harry a kiss on the cheek, and then, turning back to Dorian, explained, “We’re going to start trying for a baby.”

“Oh! That’s exciting. Do you have any kids already?”

“This would be the first,” Agatha said. She and Harry held hands, one over the other, on the tabletop.

Shortly after that moment, a waiter came out and handed out menus and took drink orders and gave Gray a pat on the head, then returned inside.

As the humans looked over their menus, Harry said, “So, do you and Gray have any puppies?”

Agatha elbowed Harry.

“As a matter of fact we do,” Dorian said, and set down her menu. “I am not their biological mother, though. We ‘borrowed’ a stud dog for a little while and, hey whadaya know, puppies.

They're grown now though, all off to other homes. Some of the families do still send us Christmas cards."

The waiter returned with drinks, took every human's orders, collected the menus, gave a treat to Gray who very clearly knew from past experiences that he would be giving her a treat, and departed again back into the building.

"Agatha has a mean serve, you know."

Agatha rolled her eyes. "I *had* an okay serve, back when we were in college. I haven't swung a tennis racket in about two years."

"Would you want to sometime?" Dorian asked.

"Honestly?" Agatha said. "Kinda."

"We should!" Dorian said. "Let me know when, I can make the time."

Agatha had a sip from her lemonade, and Harry had a sip from his soda.

Dorian, the Wottons then noticed, had two glasses of water in front of her, one with ice cubes and a straw, the other with just water and nothing besides. Dorian took a sip from the water with the straw, and as she did, Gray came and sat down beside her, looking actually rather polite. Gray picked up the unadorned glass of water and began pouring it out in front of Gray's face: Gray turned her head and began lapping at the stream, and finished off the glass of water in one go, albeit with half of the water ending up on the ground.

"Have either of you two ever had dogs?" Dorian asked, and took another sip of her own water.

"No, I never did," came Agatha's answer, while Harry said, "The family had a couple growing up."

Agatha then added, "I did have hamsters, if that counts for anything."

Dorian laughed a little. "I wasn't trying to keep score or anything, just curious. What were your hamsters like?"

"Cute," Agatha answered. "Digging holes, hiding things in their cheeks, running on their wheels. You know, hamster stuff."

The waiter emerged with a tray of food.

"Oh, that was fast," Harry commented.

Three plates were set down in front of the three humans, as well as a bowl of many various meat scraps set down in front of

Dorian to be given to Gray. The waiter also set down a new unadorned glass of water in front of Dorian, and again went back into the building.

Dorian set Gray's bowl down in front of her, and the dog began wolfing everything down. As Gray ate, Dorian looked to the Wottons expectantly. "After you," she said.

Harry bit into his sandwich. "Holy mackerel."

Dorian glanced to Agatha.

Agatha bit into her sandwich as well. "What the *fuck*, did they do to make this so good?"

"Right??"

Agatha did then cover her mouth with her hand, and, continuing to talk with her mouth full, added, "Pardon my language."

"What? Oh, yes, language. I was very offended, but apology accepted." She then began eating her sandwich as well, and the four of them made short work of their lunches.

When the meal was over and paid for—Dorian in the end managed to insist on the bill, leaving as a compromise that the Wottons could leave as generous a tip as they wanted—the four made the short return walk back to Dorian and Gray's house, and all proceeded inside, Gray being taken off the leash once all were in.

"In spite of being such a movie star," Dorian pretended to boast, "I don't actually watch many movies. So my theater set up is just, y'know, a TV in the living room if that's alright."

"Lead the way," Agatha encouraged.

Dorian did lead the way down the hall, and into a living room furnished all around with couches and chairs, a fire place against one wall, and the promised television set against an adjacent wall. Hung up on all four walls were many framed pictures of dogs, horses, goats, and various other animals as one might see on a farm. On the floor were an assortment of rugs that one might well not in the least mind taking a nap on.

One of the couches, comfortably big enough for three, was centered in front of the television set. Gray went and laid down in front of this couch, and Dorian invited the Wottons to have a seat.

"I already have it set up to just before our scene," Dorian mentioned, turning on the VCR.

Harry and Agatha glanced to each other. Harry mentioned to Dorian, "We actually haven't seen the original *Reservoir Dogs* at all."

"What!" Dorian exclaimed. "Okay, look away from the screen then, I'm rewinding it to the beginning. Unless you two need to be going actually, I wasn't trying to take up all of your time today—"

"No, not at all!" Agatha said, she and Harry both averting their eyes from the screen as instructed. "We'll stay if you'll have us."

"Awesome. This isss going to take a minute to rewind. Do you want anything? Popcorn, drinks?"

Harry and Agatha again looked to each other. "We're usually good without snacks when we watch movies at home," Harry said, "but we are in no way averse to the idea either. We'll have what you're having."

"Not exactly traditional movie food, but I was actually going to have some coffee I think," Dorian said.

"Oh, now that you mention it I could really go for a cup too," Harry said, and Agatha concurred with, "Same."

"And. The. Movie. Issss. Al. Most. Reeaaa... *Wound*, done. Okay, I'll be right back out with coffee and then we'll start this."

Dorian departed from the living room, leaving the Wottons alone with their host's better half, who laid in front of the couch with her chin buried in the carpet, eyes closed.

Agatha curled up close beside Harry, and in her smallest whisper, asked, "Is this weird?"

Harry whispered back, "Existence? Yes."

"*This*," Agatha insisted. "I'm pretty sure we're about to watch that dog get fingered. Like, again. It seems weirder to watch knowing it's coming, and knowing it's not actually part of the movie."

"Should it?" Harry asked. "Seem weirder?"

"I don't know," Agatha whispered. "That's kind of my point, is that I don't know."

"Do you want to leave?" Harry asked. "Give me a signal and I will extract us as politely or expeditiously as you want."

Agatha leaned forward and looked down at the sleeping canine for a moment. Above all other things, the dog in that moment appeared to be, in Agatha's estimation, as contented as a creature of any sort at all in the world possibly could be.

Agatha leaned back in with Harry, and added in yet another whisper, "*She is a mother*, apparently."

"I think it's fine," Harry agreed. "At least going on what we saw in the last film, assuming this one goes along the same tracks. I remember when we were watching that scene and we still thought it was part of the movie, one of the things that struck me as the entire point of the scene was how caring the woman was to the dog, how loving, how empathetic she was to this creature who traditionally would be considered 'below' her. It seemed like everything was for the dog's—Gray's, as we now know—It seemed like everything was for Gray's enjoyment, and nothing else."

"Don't let me think it gets you *too* excited, dear," Agatha said, and gave him a kiss on the cheek. After a moment, she asked, "Actually, like completely for real now, would you do that? With a dog?"

"You're asking that question about two years and ninety five days too late for the answer to be anything other than an unqualified no, my love," Harry said, and kissed his wife on the cheek as she had kissed him. "But back before I found that lovely young woman at the tennis courts who would let me awkwardly try to flirt with her?" Harry gave a hum, and then a sigh, and then a head wobble as he considered it. "I really don't think *I* would ever be interested in an escapade with the tetra-legged. Maybe if one had ever begged me enough and made puppy dog eyes, I wouldn't have been able to say no just for her sake."

"Really really?" Agatha asked. "No joking, I want to know if you actually could have done that—say it was before you had ever met me. Swear, I'm not trying to make it a jealousy thing, I just want to know."

"I *do* think I could figure out the mechanics and perform some very robot-esque service if it seemed sufficiently demanded of me, yes. But you know I tend to be much happier with words than with actions. I wouldn't be happy for a minute

with a girlfriend who didn't appreciate my goings on, and who didn't have at least a fighting chance of talking my ear off as much as I talk off hers."

Agatha gave Harry another kiss. "I didn't realize I still had things to learn about you, Mr Wotton. I thought you had blabbered everything there could possibly be to blabber about."

"Just wait until you get me in the same room as a goat, Miss Agatha."

"Oh *stop*," Agatha said, and playfully pulled away from her husband who playfully continued to cling to her.

"Til death do us part, but some things—those things being goats, of course—a man can't be held responsible."

"You shut up, you're going to embarrass me in front of my new friend."

Harry did drop the subject of goats, and on the subject of dogs, only returned briefly to add, "I suppose the succinct version of my thoughts on the matter of sensuality au canine would be to say that I feel no attraction, but I also feel no revulsion either. Which is how it goes with most things, I like to think. They merely are, it merely is, I merely am, and other such materialist drivel."

"Quite," Agatha affirmed, in hopes of actually shutting her husband up about the topic before Dorian did make her return. Switching the topic and no longer whispering, she asked, "Pulp Fiction and Reservoir Dogs—Wait, do I have that right? This one is Reservoir Dogs? Re-ser-voir?"

"Reservoir, yes. This movie is Reservoir Dogs."

"Aren't Pulp Fiction and Reservoir Dogs written by the same guy?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Starring the same people?"

"Oh I'm not sure."

"Do you think that's part of the art project thing? That they're both from the same writer?"

"We could ask," Harry suggested.

Before much longer, Dorian did return with coffee for the humans, pressed play on the VCR, and settled in on her side of the couch—Gray scooped onto Dorian's toes as the human was

settling in. Dorian reached down and pet her partner a few times.

“Is this the same writer as Pulp Fiction?” Harry asked.

“It is,” Dorian affirmed.

“Was that part of the reasoning in choosing which films the two of you would make your appearances in?”

Dorian produced an amused contemplative face, and tilted her head. “I think it was kind of a coincidence actually, but you’d have to ask my friends. It really was them who set most of this up, we really did just play our roles as actors.”

Harry was prepared to raise another question, but as the dialogue of the opening scene began, he dropped the questioning and watched.

A while into the movie there were two men in a car: one of them had been shot and was panicking, and the other—the driver—was trying to calm the shot man down. At a certain point the scene cut to an exterior shot, and showed the car careening off the road and down into a dried up concrete river. The camera rotated to follow the car as it continued along down the concrete, but in rotating, the camera came to Dorian and Gray closer in the foreground—Dorian wore a sharp black suit, and was on her knees on the concrete fingering her partner who stood there and received the stimulation. The camera lingered on the two new characters, and allowed the car to continue driving out of the frame. Eventually, in a continuous shot, the camera came closer up to Gray’s sexual parts and Dorian’s fingers working their way in and out of them in an almost business-like fashion. Eventually Gray seemed to lose interest in the fingering, and she turned to kiss Dorian. The woman and the dog did begin making out—“improvised,” Dorian commented from the couch—until eventually, the sound of a car’s motor could be heard growing louder again, and then the same car as before returned into the frame, drove back up out of the dried up concrete river where it had gone in, and the camera rotated away from the woman and the dog to resume following the car. Suddenly there was a cut back to the car’s interior, and the dialogue between the shot man and the driver continued.

“Amazing,” Harry said.

Agatha gave a golf clap, and Harry joined in. Dorian did a small bow, inasmuch as she could without getting up from the couch.

“But yeah,” Dorian said. “Some copy of that *might* still be in rental circulation somewhere. Dunno. What do you think, Gray?”

Gray looked up at Dorian. Dorian bent forward, and Gray stuck her tongue out and the woman and the dog shared a little kiss before Gray then turned away and planted her chin on the soft rug again. Dorian gave her a few strokes down the back and then sat upright again.

The Wottons remained at Dorian and Gray’s a while longer, chatting on this and that, and Agatha arranged a tennis date with Dorian for the following Thursday evening.

V

A couple of months passed. It was a Sunday morning, and the Wottons were lounging in the living room, Harry reading a book on Kierkegaardian philosophy, Agatha reading a newspaper.

“Mets won their last game,” Agatha mentioned.

“Oh good,” Harry said.

“Harry I will clean every room of this house spotless right now if you can tell me what sport the Mets play.”

Harry lowered his book, and looked up at the ceiling. “Hockey?”

“No, dear.”

“Well.” He shrugged, and went back to his reading.

With a smile and a shake of the head, Agatha went back to her reading as well.

Shortly after that moment, the phone rang. Harry, being closer to the nearest receiver, answered the phone call. “Yellow.”

“Hi Harry,” came a friendly voice.

“Dorian, hello,” he said, and then looked over to his wife and mouthed the name ‘Dorian,’ which received an eye roll and a thumbs up.

“Is Agatha there? I wanted to talk to you both.”

Harry pressed a button. "Got you on speaker. Agatha, Dorian, Dorian, Agatha."

"Hi Dorian!"

"Hello! You two won't believe the enigmatic troupe of people who have just arrived in town."

The Wottons looked to each other. Agatha shrugged, and Harry shrugged as well. Harry asked into the receiver, "Who would that be?"

"Only my film friends."

Agatha made an excited noise. "When do we get to meet them?" she asked.

"*They* get to meet *you* at your soonest convenience at my house," Dorian answered. "If this arrangement is agreeable, of course."

Harry held down a mute button on the phone, and turned to Agatha. "Right now?"

"Right now," Agatha said with several nods.

Harry released the button on the phone. "How does immediately sound, Mrs Dorian and Mrs Gray?"

"Most agreeable, Mr Wotton. You are as always welcome any time. Take care."

With that, the line went dead, and Harry hung up their end as well.

"Was she making fun of me?" Harry asked.

"Making fun of you in what way?"

"Enigmatically, I just feel I was the butt of something."

"I'm sure it's all in good fun, dear," Agatha said, and gave Harry a kiss on the cheek.

The two of them made brief work of getting ready and getting into the car, and making the short drive across the city to the Dorian-Gray residence.

When they arrived, they found two vans parked outside, and several people in very cute or very ratty clothing standing in front of the garage smoking. Dorian and Gray stood outside with everyone, though neither of them held a cigarette at present.

The Wottons parked on the street, and stepped happily up to meet this new host of long spoken about strangers.

"Basil," one of them said as they walked up, making quite a coordinated shuffle of blowing out a plume of smoke to the side,

moving their cigarette to the other hand, and extending a hand out to shake with the Wottons. Basil introduced everyone who was there, and Harry and Agatha introduced themselves.

Many compliments were given and questions asked all around.

"We were about to do a shoot for a third movie pretty soon here if you wanted to join us," Basil offered.

"Oh?" Agatha inquired.

The impenetrably androgynous individual nodded, and then looked Harry up and down, and said after blowing smoke out of the side of their face, "You might not be a bad fit for one of the roles, actually."

"What film?" Harry asked.

"Army of Darkness—"

"I. am. *in*," Harry said, and stepped forward and shook Basil's free hand in both of his.

"Harry, you should ask what the scene is—"

Harry unhanded Basil, and said promptly, "I do demand to know what the scene is before agreeing to this."

Basil went to one of the vans, opened up the back, and returned with a rubber mask of a face that was comically stretched out vertically—the stretched out face of Bruce Campbell, the star of Army of Darkness.

"You know the part where he gets sucked into the book?"

"Off my heart."

"We're gonna add a scene that takes place inside of the book. Dude gathers his bearings, stands up, walks down a short hall, and sees Dorian fingerbanging Gray there."

At this Basil gave a high wave to Dorian and Gray, who had moved to the yard and were standing with a ring of people who were drinking. Dorian waved back, and Gray wagged, and came over.

Basil went on. Harry crouched and pet Gray as Basil did so go on: "We get a bunch of over the shoulder shots of him raising his hand like he's about to interrupt, but then he gives it up, walks back down the hall the way he came in, and jumps back out of the book. We were going to have James play the role, but *he's a bitch!*" The last part was said loudly over to the other group, apparently for James's interest.

One of the young men, probably James, lifted up a middle finger over his head without looking.

Harry stood up from petting Gray. He leaned in with Agatha, and said, "It is a bit risqué."

"He doesn't *join* at all?" Agatha asked Basil.

"Nah," Basil answered. "Mrs and Mrs wouldn't be into it."

"Oh you kids have fun," Agatha said, and shoved Harry lightly forward.

Basil received Harry by grabbing him by the wrist, and raising Mr Wotton's hand up high as though a wrestling match had just been won. "Mount up!" Basil shouted to everyone, "We have our Bruce!"

Cheers and claps came from all around. Harry met Dorian's eyes, though only briefly before Dorian blushed and put her head down in her hand.

"On set by eleven, rolling by noon!" Basil called to everyone, and at that point they lowered Harry's hand and went off to one of the two vans that awaited.

"This really is alright?" Harry asked Agatha discretely, as a river of art students poured around them.

"I know it's just fun between friends," Agatha said. "Really, don't touch them while they're literally in the act and I don't even care in the least."

"Gray is very friendly, I do need you to confirm there's no cooldown time between 'in the act' and me being permitted to pet her."

"I trust you, dear, I'm sure you'll do fine."

Dorian joined in with the conversation between the Wottons. "Mind if we catch a ride with you two?"

"Please," Agatha said, and the four proceeded to the Wottons' iron chariot.

"Crash course, what do I need to know about being an actor?" Harry asked from the driver's seat, as he pulled out onto the street to follow after the departing vans.

"You'll be more embarrassed if you don't go for it than if you do go for it."

"Wonderful, I feel possessed by the theatrical spirit already. Anything else?"

"The director is right."

“Perfect.”

A short while later, the two vans and the car pulled into the otherwise empty and weed-ridden parking lot of a vaguely industrial, corporate, brutalist cement building.

Everyone piled out of their vehicles. Basil lead a parade of actors and observers and people holding film equipment into the building—there were no front doors and there was in fact a lot of water damage and evidence of wild animals having at least passed through at some stage in the time since the doors had gone missing. The parade proceeded down a large stairwell, and at the bottom of this stairwell, they found a small concrete room wherein the stairs ended, a small concrete hallway, and a small room on the other side thereof.

Lighting and cameras and boom mics were arranged. Harry was given his wardrobe, and went around the corner with Agatha to change. She carefully pulled the rubber mask down over his face, made sure it was aligned correctly, stepped back, and then doubled over laughing.

“Was zo funny, doll?” Harry asked, doing his best Bruce.

“Stop!” Agatha squealed, unable to get up from the floor.

Harry did stop, and offered her a hand for when she was ready.

When she was, she accepted it, and Harry helped her to her feet. The two returned around the corner. Harry, aware of all the eyes on him, stopped and did a pose of shooting finger guns out to either side.

“Yes!” Basil said. “Ohhh my god yes. Places, everyone, we’re starting in two minutes. That means places *now*.”

Harry did take notice of the bed, or perhaps altar, that had been constructed in the non-stairwell room while he had been changing. Coming up to waist level was a platform draped in red cloth, and decorated on top with a careful arrangement of black and crimson pillows and blankets. Around the platform were poles from which red gauzy curtains hung, like an old-timey bed. In all, the platform was the most thoroughly lit thing on the set, sufficiently attention-grabbing for purpose.

As Basil had called places, Dorian lifted Gray onto the platform, and the two found their places on the platform’s center, Gray standing upright on all fours, Dorian in a red dress

lying on her side behind her, propped up on an elbow to have her face level with the mixed breed dog's sexual organs. Noticing the Wottons looking, Dorian gave a big smile and a friendly wave.

"Mr Campbell?" Basil called.

Harry wheeled around, and then followed the beckoning director. Agatha lingered back with the other observers, out of line of sight with the upcoming shots.

In the other room, vines had been hung from all the stair railings, including those far above, such that they hung down from overhead into the frame. Standing face to rubber face in this room-like area, Basil gave Harry the rundown. "We're here to get four shots, three starring you. The first one, you're sitting in the center of this room on your ass, legs straight out to either side, head rolling around a little. Camera's gonna do a tilting blurry thing and make it clear that your dizzy, you've just been dropped into this place, you don't know what's going on yet. Got it?"

"Got it."

Basil gave Harry a pat with both hands onto both shoulders, and then stepped back, calling, "Places!" one last time.

Harry took a seat on his ass, as instructed.

"Hands limp at your sides, wrists up!"

Harry adjusted his arms.

"Rolling? Action!"

Harry lolled his head around for what seemed like a long time, but, the director was right.

"Cut!" Basil called. "Look good on your end?"

Someone behind the camera nodded.

Basil came forward and knelt with Harry. "Okay, this next one is your main shot. We're cutting to a new angle, closer up on your face. You're going to stop rolling your head, touch your fingers to your face—just a little bit, you don't have to mug about it or anything, just kind of feel it and quickly accept it—and then stand up, walk down the hall with maybe a little stagger once or twice, and then stop at the threshold of the next room. Camera will be following behind you. Watch Dorian and Gray doing what they really do do such a good job of. Raise your hand every now and then like you're about to try to cut in and get their

attention, but never do. We'll be intercutting this with close ups of Dorian and Gray, so we'll leave it rolling here on your part for longer than we'll actually need to use, and we'll take the best parts. Eventually when I call it, do one last hand raise, visibly give up, and turn back down the hall."

Everyone got into their proper places, Basil called action, and the scene went smoothly as described: after staggering down the hall, Harry stood and watched his new human friend perform very thorough cunnilingus on his new dog friend; every so often, he raised his hand as if to stop them, and they went on as though they couldn't see him there. When they had as many takes as they wanted, Basil gave the call, and Harry gave one last hand-raise, lowered his hand and slumped forward for a brief moment, and then turned and went back down the hall.

Afterwards they quickly filmed Harry's last scene, which only involved setting up a new camera angle from the other corner and lower down, and then having Harry jump up as though he were jumping all the way back up the stairwell. He made it one, possibly two entire inches off of the ground—apparently with some very clever freezeframing, cutting, and audio design, this would be sufficient to make it seem like he had jumped all the way up the stairwell and back out of the book.

The final shot of the night was the close-ups of Dorian and Gray. Harry and Agatha stood side by side, hand in hand, alongside many others, watching as the woman made her partner's female dog parts look as appetizing as anything in the whole wide world.

When Basil called cut, a round of applause came. Gray wagged, and Dorian stood and gave a curtsy.

As everyone packed up, Harry disappeared around a corner to change back into his street clothes, and Agatha followed after him to make sure that he knew his anatomy was every bit appreciated by her as Gray's was by Dorian. During, Harry's mind wandered to the previously seen acts less than he expected—hardly at all, except for two brief times when he felt like it maybe should be on his mind and he tried to impose it on the present circumstances, but then it slipped from his thoughts without his even realizing it, as the present moment more strongly allured his facile and fickle attention. Agatha felt

similarly during, though had tried to impose thoughts of human on canine cunnilingus four times during, to still equal unsuccess, and also to less feelings of wanting to gag than she might have expected some time prior—having known Dorian and Gray for some while, and now having seen the act personally for some time, it was, in the most benevolent usage of the word, nothing. One private shoot and change of clothes later, and the Wottons returned up the stairwell, out of the building, and returned the cloak and mask back to Basil, who bowed as they accepted it.

As all of the art students were getting back into the vans, the Wottons, Dorian, and Gray began ambling back towards the car that they had arrived in.

“Well that was fun,” Dorian said, conspicuously looking forward off into the distance instead of looking at the Mr or the Mrs directly.

“That *looked* fun,” Agatha said, and then stooped down to give Gray a few pats as they walked. “How was it for you?” she asked the dog.

The dog did not answer, though in the moment, it had indeed seemed to look like fun from start to finish.

The four got into the car.

“What’s the turnaround time for these like?” Harry asked. “How many years before my debut on the—”

“Years!” Dorian interrupted, and shuddered as she put on her seatbelt. “We’ll probably be watching the tape a few hours after we get back and then we’ll drop it off later tonight.”

When all had arrived back at the house, large quantities of alcoholic beverages were put up for grabs in the kitchen as Basil and a select few others marched upstairs with the tapes.

“Care for anything?” Dorian offered the Wottons. Dorian herself held one of her water bottles. “White wine?” she offered Agatha. Looking to Harry, she noted, “I don’t believe I’ve ever seen you drink, Mr Watton.”

“Well, perhaps I’ve earned a beer and a shot of whiskey.”

“Okay macho man,” Agatha said, and then gave Harry a kiss. “Let’s start you off with a beer and see if I’m not holding your hair back in an hour.”

“Wise,” Harry acknowledged, and grabbed a beer from off the counter. He twisted off the top, and had a long and shallow sip of the cold and revolting beverage. Agatha accepted the glass of white wine that Dorian offered, though then remembering that she and Harry were trying, she set the glass of wine down on the counter shortly after Dorian departed to go speak with someone elsewhere, and left it there as she and Harry made their leave of the kitchen as well.

Finding an unoccupied love seat in the living room, Harry and Agatha sat down together and eavesdropped on the gossip of all of these strangers who surrounded them.

Some hours later, Basil and their company marched back down the stairs with the copies of the tapes in hand, and applause resounded through the room. The rest of the night was marked with many occasions for applause—applause at the movie being placed into the VCR, applause at the movie starting, applause at Bruce Campbell’s many one-liners, uproarious applause when Bruce was sucked into the book, applause and whistling at Dorian and Gray, and applause when the credits began to roll.

Basil, Dorian, Gray, Agatha, and Harry all climbed into one of the vans, as well as a couple of the other art students, and the seven of them were deacclimated from the party with a final sparser round of applause from those who were outside as they drove off. Agatha and Harry held hands on the drive.

When they had arrived at their destination, it was dark out. Basil parked across the street from the movie rental place, and began walking across the street with the rented tape in hand. The other occupants of the van piled out, and lingered around the van, watching into the store windows as casually as they could manage while one of the art students somewhat casually filmed. Casually, Basil went into the store, set the tape on the counter, and returned the picture of Dorian/Gray.