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Writing IV

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Tell Me Where You Wanna Go

“Ok, so slightly tilt your head to the right.”

“Like this?”

“Yeah, just like that. Now, rest your hand on your face.”

“Where on my face?”

“Wherever’s comfortable.”

“Alright.” She rested her hand lightly beside her temple.

“Perfect.” He took a drag of his cigarette. “Now relax your jaw.”

The woman’s smile softened.

“Is it all right if I fix your hair?”

“Sure.”

He stepped towards her, delicately wrapped her straight blonde hair behind her neck, let it fall over her opposite shoulder, and stepped back. “Perfect. Perfect! N-n-now.” He sat down at the easel and put out his cigarette. “Stay just like that.”

“Will do.” Her voice was smooth like vermouth and intoxicated the clouded air.

“So, um, how are you?” His eyes darted from her figure to the canvas and back again.

“Well. And you?”

“Just dandy.” The scratch of his pencil was the only other sound in the studio.

“Do you do this often?”

“Well, yeah. It’s my job.”

She laughed. “No, I know that. I meant do you do so many...”

“Naked portraits?” He grinned without taking his eyes off the canvas. “I’ve done quite a few.”

“Ah. And...you enjoy it?”

“Just as much as painting clothed people.”

“You’re lying.”

“I know.” He began squeezing colors onto his palet. “But not for the reason you’d think.”

“What do you mea--”

“Don’t move!”

“Fuck, sorry.” She put her hand back in its place. “There was something in my eye.”

“I just appreciate the human form. As cheesy as it sounds.”

“It’s better than hearing that you just like looking at boobs.”

He gave a hearty laugh. “I’m an artist. Not a teenage boy.”

“I know some grown-up boys who would say it.”

“Sounds like you’re hanging around the wrong ones.” He plunged his brush into the grey murky water.

“I guess so.”

“So where do you work?”

“Well, I’m an escort.”

“Huh. Figures.”

“Excuse me?” Her brow furrowed.

“I apologize. I didn’t mean it like that. It’s just that.” He put his brush in his mouth to add more red to his palate. “I almost exclusively paint prostitutes.”

“What about lovers?”

“Those too.”

“How many of those’ve you had?”

“Less than you I’m sure.”

“Fuck off. It’s not like I *wanted* to be a whore.”

“What did you want to be?”

“A singer.”

“Do you still want to be a singer?”

“There’s not much to sing about anymore.”

The silence was pierced by the splash of a thick brush left swirling in the water to be replaced by a thinner one.

“What about Edith Piaf?”

“Who?”

“The ‘20’s French singer. Was raised by prostitutes. She went through a whole lotta shit and still sang like a bird.”

“Huh.” Her eyes glazed over in thought.

“‘*La Vie en Rose’*?”

“I’ll look her up.”

“You could charge extra. Serenaded sex. Ten dollars more each song.”

“Very funny.”

“I’m serious.”

“It doesn’t quite matter what I do, as long as I can make enough money to get out.”

“Where is out?” His brush strokes became slower and more careful.

“Anywhere that isn’t here. I’ll take what I can get. I’m thinking the country’d be nice.”

“Why the country?”

“It’s quiet. No one’s yelling from downstairs that I gotta pay my rent and I’ll be so far away I’ll

never have to shoo my drunk daddy out of the whore house for trying to buy a night with the little girl he abandoned fifteen years ago. I don’t have ta be tough all the time. I could think my own thoughts.”

“You’re very pretty. I think you’ve got a good chance of getting out.” He lifted his eyes from his work and met hers.

She smiled. “I hope so.”

Again there was a silence as the artist returned to the canvas and the woman did her job. She was still. She did not move, though her thoughts drifted and danced around and her eyes wandered the dark room.

“Did you always want to be an artist?” Her eyes found an old grandfather clock.

“Well not *always* I--”

“Oh crap! I’m late for work!” She jumped up from her spot and began dressing.

“Wait, are you sure you can’t stay any longer?”

“I really have to go.” She pulled her socks up. “I have an appointment.”

“Well can you come back? Same time tomorrow?”

She flashed him a smile as she ran out the door. “See you then.”