

A man with dark hair and blue eyes, wearing a black leather jacket over a white t-shirt, is looking directly at the camera. The background is a vibrant, stylized city skyline at night with purple and blue lights. A large, glowing pink moon is visible in the upper right corner.

FAKE DATES AND *Fanged Mistakes*

Short Story

Alice Winters

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-Read after you finish!

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Proofed: Courtney Basset

Julian

“We’re going to the movies,” I demand as I step into the living room where Casimir is reading.

“Why’d you make it sound so much like a threat? Should I be worried? Never mind... I *am* worried.”

“What the hell do you, an ancient vampire who could crush your enemies with a flick of your wrist, have to worry about?” I ask.

Casimir gives me quite the look. “A lot of things! I couldn’t sleep last night out of fear of whether or not I was holding hands right. I had a nightmare that I reached for you, but I no longer had fingers, I had wings and you *still* ridiculed me for my hand-holding. It was traumatic.”

“Oh wow... I’m just... I sound like an awful person! How ever will the big, bad vampire survive?”

“Maybe... if you painted a picture for me... while naked, I’d feel good enough to go to this movie with you.”

“Deal,” I say as I hurry off to the room that Casimir has dubbed “Julian’s Room of Gustov Greatness” which... I guess is supposed to mean where I paint Gustov? I hadn’t been quite sure, so I replaced the sign he hung on the door with “Casimir’s Room of Torture.”

Casimir is nearly giddy as he hurries in after me.

“You can even pick the pose,” I say.

“Really?” he asks, looking excited. He grabs Gustov and flips him onto his back and sets him on top of my painting table. “Maybe like this...”

no! Like this!” He lifts him up so he’s sitting on his butt while Casimir holds his front paws up in the air. Gustov is loving every moment of this, prepared to be manipulated into any pose as long as he’s being touched.

“Oh yeah, I like that one,” I say as I see how Gustov has now tried to jump over Casimir and is hanging over his neck, tail whapping Casimir in the face. “I like the way the tail repeatedly bashes you in the eyeball.”

“See, Julian, this is how we’re different. I’m prepared to suffer for these paintings and you just... refuse to.”

I gape at the man while holding one of the canvases like a bat. “I will spank your ass so damn hard if you think you suffer more than me during the creation of these paintings.”

“Some nights I even lie awake, thinking about how much you’ve made me suffer, forcing me to wait weeks and months for all of my paintings. Even worse is how you won’t let me watch what you’re making sometimes!”

“You’re ridiculous,” I decide. “Absolutely ridiculous.”

“Other times, I lie awake and just stare at the beautiful paintings and question how you don’t see what a gift you have. The gift of Gustov painting. It was like you fell into my lap just to paint for me.”

“I’m so glad that if I ever get fired from the university—likely for being caught in the nude—I have a job selling Gustov paintings.”

“I’d never allow you to sell them. They’re all mine.”

“Think of all the houses in the world that could have Gustov in their living room.”

Casimir isn’t as pleased by this as I thought he would be. “They don’t deserve The Gustov.”

“Ah, of course. Are you finally happy with a pose?”

“I am,” he says as he puts Gustov behind his neck, legs hanging over his shoulders which he holds to keep the dog from falling. Gustov uses this moment to lick his ear. Then Casimir puts one foot on my chair and poses.

“So you want to be in it?” I realize. He never wants anything but Gustov in the paintings. The one time Ezio tried being in it, Casimir dragged him out of the room and forbade him from speaking for a full hour as “punishment.”

“I do.”

“Oh wow, interesting.”

Casimir is clearly waiting for me to snap a picture of it, like I usually do, so he can put the dog down, but I’m just taking my sweet time getting my paints gathered.

“Do you... want to... take a picture of the pose, maybe?” he asks as Gustov has realized that Casimir has no option to ward off the licks. He even stuffs his tongue *right* into his ear. I can’t imagine that was pleasant at all.

“This one is just too detailed to go off a mere picture. I think I need to see it in the flesh, you know? To get the full feeling from it. To really grasp the aesthetics of... *Gustov*.”

Casimir grimaces. “I don’t know about that. You’re... phenomenal, Julian. I bet you could even remember what we look like so I could put this dog down.”

“Don’t make me blush, Casimir. I... I would love to remember, but I just... I can’t, you know? I think I used up too much of my brain’s capacity trying to remember all these names you call me, like Toto and Lassie and... was that Clifford?”

“Those are pet names. They’re cute. They’re all the rage. Just like this pinky promise thing you have going on. Alllll the rage.”

“Ah... so you’re saying I should feel rage when you call me Toto like I’m some teeny dog you could stuff in your purse?”

“I’ve literally *never* seen you take this long to prepare paints. You generally just start painting.”

“Yes, but I want this one to be perfect, you know? I mean... you go to all of this work and it’s not perfect... then what? I might as well just give up, you know? Since you’re using my chair to pose on, I’ll have to sit on the floor, I guess,” I say as I get comfortable on the floor with my canvas, paints, and water before gasping. “I forgot something.”

“What’s that?” he asks as I get up and hurry over to him. Gustov is now just chewing on the side of his head like it’s a big chew toy.

I grab the tie he’d put on to go into some meeting at one of his companies and swiftly undo it. “Are you as dreadful at meetings with your companies as you are with the werewolves and vampires?”

“When you’re rich, you hire others to speak for you. I just stand there and glower. They think I’m evil but I’m actually just thinking about how I told you to paint this while naked.”

“Ah, right. I forgot,” I say as I leave the tie draped around his neck before my fingers trail down, unbuttoning as I go. I can tell he likes the way my fingers drag down his bare chest, and he even leans into my touch. The grin on his face tells me that I have presented him with the only thing that could get him to put that dog down... and it’s only because he could drag me off to bed.

But nope! I must paint the man what he wants! I grab the paintbrush full of paint that he hadn’t noticed I’d tucked under my arm, and paint a nice, pretty penis right on his chest. “Now we’re good. Sorry for the holdup.”

“Oh joy. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” I say as I head back to the canvas. “Shit, that’s right. I gotta be naked for this. Wait... you want a show, right?”

Gustov has figured out that if he leans forward far enough, he can actually lick him right in the nose and Casimir can’t push him away.

“No licking!” Casimir demands.

“Oh! But he’s precious. How could you refuse him the licking? Are you... are you being mean to The Great Gustov? Are you going to make him The Grieving Gustov because he’s been told no for the first time in his life?”

“Dammit, dog, stop! And Julian, why are you taking so long to get undressed? Come on!”

“But... I thought you’d enjoy the show.”

“I am, I am. Ooh, wow, look how long it takes you to pull up the corner of your shirt. Is he going to get his arm out of the hole... no one will get to know because he’s still slowly pulling it up. He might be thinking it’s seductive but the look of sass on his face tells me it’s not.”

That makes me laugh.

“Casimir, what’s this painting going to be called?”

“Ah, right. It’s called Gustov’s Servant.”

“Very fitting.”

“Thought so,” he says as Gustov stuffs his nose against Casimir’s face and breathes loudly before throwing his head back.

“I’m going to be real honest, it’s probably going to be another five or so minutes while I do finger exercises. I like to warm up my fingers before I begin. I do a little routine for each one.”

“Oh wow, I’d love to watch,” Casimir says.

“Right. And a... one... and a two...” I say as I wiggle one finger.

That's when Gustov crams the banded poof of hair that sits on the top of his head right into Casimir's eyeball.

"FINE. I'll put the dog down if you'll finally get naked," he says as he sets Gustov down while I pop my clothes off and drop down on the ground in the nude, ready to paint, brush in hand.

"Casimir, how the hell am I supposed to paint that pose if you didn't wait for me to get a picture to reference?" I ask.

He gives me a look. It's still a sexy look but it's quite the look. "Just paint him. I don't care what he's doing."

I wave at the dog that's using his newfound freedom to lick his groin. "That one work?"

"Beautiful. I can't wait to hang it up for all to see."

"Alright, you want him on your shoulders?"

"Nah, I'm over that. Here, I have a picture of him being majestic from earlier today," he says as he shows me Gustov actually looking "majestic" for once.

"Oh shit... I've been doing this all wrong. Let me fix this for you," I say as I shift into a wolf, smack my paw right into the paint and get to work.

"What. The fuck... is happening?" Casimir asks as he leans over me to look.

"*You said you wanted me naked,*" I remind him as I drag my paw down to make the ear before going in for more. Gustov thinks this is hilarious and tries getting in on it by stepping *on* the painting and tracking his very own paw prints across it as I add a bunch of paw prints for the poof on his head by repeatedly pouncing out on the canvas.

Casimir is now grabbing Gustov to keep him from tracking paint around the room as I paw at my masterpiece before grabbing the brush in my mouth and adding the white dot on the eyes and stepping back. Casimir

is still wrestling Gustov down and hasn't gotten a chance to see it yet, so I hold my paw up and slide my masterpiece into the closet to hide it from him.

"Servant. Clean my toe beans and my snout," I demand since both are covered in paint.

"This is not quite what I had in mind when I wanted you naked," he says as he grabs the rag he'd used to clean Gustov's feet and starts cleaning my paws. I don't know why it's so ridiculously fun watching this vampire meticulously clean my paws and working hard at removing the paint from between my toes. Then he uses a clean washcloth for my face before stepping back to admire his work.

"Is that good?" he asks.

I inspect each paw and decide it's acceptable before shifting and holding the painting up for him to see. "Done."

He stares at it for a long moment before quickly grabbing it from me. "I love it." And of course he sounds so serious.

"You're ridiculous," I say as I can't help but grin. "I was just joking. I'll paint you a new one."

Casimir holds it away from me like he thinks I'm going to rip it from his hands and incinerate it. "Don't you dare. I love this so much. LOOK, Gustov! Look!"

Gustov is too busy chewing a bone as his "servant" trots off to the living room where he grabs a painting that looks like it cost a stupid amount of money and tosses it across the room like a frisbee.

"That looked expensive!" I say.

"It was!" he declares as he puts up the new paw painting. "It's beautiful."

I raise an eyebrow. “You cannot leave this painting up. It’s so ridiculous looking.”

“Holy mother of daisies, you’re naked!” Ezio announces as he busts into the house.

“Ezio, come here and lay your eyes upon my newest painting,” Casimir says, one hundred percent proud of this painting. Like... I could have painted it better with my eyes closed.

Ezio cocks his head. “It’s... something, alright.”

Casimir’s head turns. “Is that... doubt I hear in your voice?”

Ezio hesitates, clearly trying to think of the right thing to say. “I’m... did you paint it with your willy? Is that why Julian’s naked? You know, like those guys who play instruments with their willies?”

Casimir snatches Ezio up and starts carrying him toward the trash can.

“I painted it with my paws,” I explain, which is hopefully better than a penis painting.

Ezio honestly looks surprised by this information, or maybe it’s over the fact that his life is now in danger. “Oh snap... it’s beautiful! It’s the best thing I’ve ever seen! I can’t even paint that well with my hands. Oh my god, Casimir, don’t murder me! I love it! I declare love toward it! It’s the best thing ever.”

Casimir seems uncertain and decides that instead of putting him in the trash like he’d planned, he’d flip him upside down and dunk his head in Gustov’s water dish.

Desperately, Ezio grabs for Casimir. “STOP! No! Please! I was just jealous!”

That does seem to appease Casimir, who just dumps him onto the floor before returning to admire the painting. I head over to Ezio and glance

down at him.

“It was supposed to be a joke,” I explain.

“Well, he loves it... I do see your little paw prints... which does make it pretty cute,” Ezio says.

“RIGHT?” Casimir says. “And how did you get the eye shape?”

“I used just one paw pad but like... angled it... and for the nose I dunked my nose in the paint and smooshed it on...” I say. What the hell am I doing sounding proud of myself for this monstrosity?

Ezio wanders over to scrutinize it next to Casimir and even Gustov goes over to sit next to them, seemingly just to chill with them, but it kind of looks like he’s scrutinizing it too. “It’s... actually really good. Like abstract but he still got the colors and the shadows and blending down so well... how the hell did you do that?”

“It’s not... no! It was a joke.”

“If you wanted it to be a joke, you should have gone with the willy idea,” Casimir says. “This... this is a masterpiece.”

“I’m pretty sure I could just like throw some dirt at a canvas, put two ears on it, claim it’s Gustov, and you’d love it,” I say.

“I want another. More than a face this time. Full body. I want it to match. I’ll hang it beside it. Let’s go,” Casimir says as he grabs me.

“No! Please! No more,” I cry as I grab on to Ezio. “Ezio, save me.”

“Will you draw me naked?” he asks.

“Why? Why are these my two choices?” I whine as Casimir tugs on my legs, dragging me and Ezio—who I have my arms wrapped around—as the front door opens again.

“You told me not to knock. You told me just to walk in... but *why*?” Cyrus cries. “Why was I even invited? Why are you naked?”

“Cyrus! Save me!”

“And... did you paint that with your paws?” he asks as he pushes past my naked ass to look at the painting. “God, I can’t even draw a stick figure, and you did that without fingers...”

“Right?” Casimir says like he’s just so proud.

“Doesn’t dismiss the fact that you are still naked,” Cyrus says. “And isn’t this like a famous painting that your dog is now lounging on?”

“It’s fine,” Casimir responds as Cyrus shoos the dog off.

“I can have it, then? If I sell it, I might have enough money to move far away from all of you,” he says.

“Take me with you,” I whisper.

“Cyrus, I know it looks like I’ve found myself deep, *deep* in an orgy, and I know I look like a willing participant, but I want you well aware that I am also in this position against my will,” Ezio earnestly tells him.

“Is that... a penis on your chest?” Cyrus asks Casimir.

“It is. Exact replica of my very own,” Casimir says since the giant dick takes up his entire torso.

“It’s a rather concerning color as well,” Cyrus says.

“That’s what happens when you don’t get laid for five hundred years,” Ezio explains.

“Understandable. Now I arrived with the promise of someone paying for my movie and popcorn. But now I also need someone to pay for the trauma and therapy I will need in order to recover from Julian’s constantly naked ass. I suppose the painting will suffice.”

“Have it. I won’t have that filth in my house when there are much superior paintings,” Casimir says with a wave of his hand.

I sigh at how ridiculous this is. “Let me get dressed and we can go.”

Casimir grumbles about the lack of more paw paintings but I, for one, am glad that I can finally put some clothes on. I hurry off as Ezio and Cyrus

wait at the door for me. And when I come down the stairs, I glance over at Casimir still in the living room staring at that painting. I don't know why it makes me ridiculously happy. I mean... it's such a goofy thing.

I shake my head as I walk in to meet up with him.

"We're going to be late if you don't look away," I say.

He glances over at me and smiles. "I just love it."

"It's not... Casimir—"

"It's absolutely perfect. And what makes it even better is that you made it for me."

"You don't know how to hold hands but you can suavely say shit like this," I say. "I can't take it. My heart... just can't."

He grins as he leans into me and gives me a soft kiss. "Let's go. I suppose I can give you a small break before you paint for me again. A small movie-length break."

"How kind."

I'll have to cave and draw him with Gustov slung over his shoulders. He just always makes me feel so damn good, and maybe I'm greedy because I love every single reaction he has to my paintings. He makes me feel like I could do anything... even something ridiculous just to see him smile.