

All The Other Beautiful Rich People

(Excerpt from a fiction manuscript)

By Lesley-Anne Bourne

Five past five.

During those two weeks, Katie felt like she was hiding out at a spa or sanitarium-- her days consisted of a quick breakfast with her sister (and sometimes Celeste would manage to upright herself at that hour), and then the short walk down the decadent street of prohibitively expensive Victorian townhouses, all perfectly restored and presented, to PAINTED LADIES which was located at the other end which was zoned commercial. Not the kind of commercial most people might think of --- the territory held some of the most exclusive and tasteful shops imaginable.

PAINTED LADIES seemed to fit right in-- it was named after the type of exterior it had-- painted four colours at the suggestion of the architectural firm handling the remodelling and renovations to bring out the trim, the different types of shingles, the gingerbread work. Plum, green, mauve, and navy.

Celeste had it all worked out-- the navy was eyeshadow, green was the eyes, plum blush, and mauve lipstick-- and liked to describe herself as a lipstick dyke. Her six-foot height and slender build made herself a kind of Victorian row house. She stood out on the sidewalks even among all the other beautiful rich people.

Celeste's beauty made Katie a little uneasy, the same way that the handsomeness of the quarterback who'd dated Sophie-Anna in highschool had. Katie tried to tell herself she was judging her sister's lover by someone else's track record. Marshall had slept with six of the ten cheerleaders the year of Katie's graduation. Surely the same couldn't necessarily be said of Celeste? thought Katie over the years as she tried to feel more sure. Maybe it was that Celeste was always away and moved in such moneyed circles. Polo holidays, hidden accounts in Turks and Caicos. What did Sophie-Anna know of that? What if Celeste tired of her sister?

Katie found herself surprised at how much she wanted to protect her sister. They had never seemed all that close growing up-- maybe their

ages were too far apart, more than four years. It seemed to her that Sophie-Anna had become gay, if that's how it worked, when Katie was only virgin on a campus of forty-thousand students.

Katie had been so busy trying to deal with her own sexuality, or lack of it, that she'd been unaware of what her sister was thinking in the hometown. All she knew was that Sophie-Anna was dating the quarterback who seemed to have been a student for ten years either because he was dumb or because he loved football that much or maybe they were the same thing? The quarterback, in Sophie-Anna's few letters, hadn't seem her type. But Katie didn't really wonder what her sister's type was, she was busy with her own friends, Jarrett and Nick.

PAINTED LADIES was often quiet in the mornings, which was when Katie liked it best. In the afternoon, SUVs would screech to a halt just outside the big windows, right next to signs saying NO PARKING ANY TIME.

Women would rush in, tearing off their furs as they whipped past Sophie-Anna who would hang up the rug-like coats. Then she would begin pouring small amounts of paint into little trays.

If I don't pour it out for them, she'd told Katie on the first day, they'll use the whole bottle. And I keep telling them, try to use only two coats, but they insist on five or six, or even ten, and then wonder why I paint chips off their pieces so easily. It's like they know I only live with Celeste and that the money is all her family's and that therefore I don't know what I'm talking about. I could tell them about the College of Art and Design classes I went to, the workshops and the shows. But they don't have enough time-- they've got to get to the gym to meet their trainer, then they've got a massage, and their nails, and have to pick up their kids from some creative private school at two. What kind of school lets kids out at two? Didn't we always go until four?

Katie liked how her sister was such a mix of conservative and And Sophie-Anna's art was stunning-- she designed and carved seascapes