

A PALE PUDDING

By

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EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - DAY

A bus pulls over to a stop, enabling HAZEL (20) to disembark and walk away, high heels CLICKING. She has pale skin.

Moments later, YORKE (50-55) also steps from the bus. His eyes fixed on Hazel's figure, by now several paces ahead.

He is burly with a stern countenance and a thick grey moustache. He wears a black suit and loafers.

Aided by a gold-handled WALKING STICK and wincing after every step, he hastens after her.

TAP, TAP, TAP...

Hazel remains oblivious of her pursuer until, at length, the CLICKING of her high heels becomes confused with the unusually high tempo TAPPING of a walking stick.

She turns onto another street but the TAPPING does not go away, her uneasiness grows.

A diffident, airy voice freezes her -

YORKE (O.S.)

Excuse me!

Hazel regards the speaker warily as he catches up to her. He ceremonially removes his hat.

YORKE

(cont.)

I planned on catching up but my
body betrayed me.

HAZEL

Sorry, are you lost or something?

YORKE

Yes, I'm trying to find the
library. Can you point me in the
right direction?

She points down the road in the direction they were going.

HAZEL

Go to the end of here and turn
left.

YORKE

Oh! It appears we're going the same
way.

(CONTINUED)

Yorke performs a chivalrous gesture with his arms - "After you".

Hazel's attention is momentarily held by his gold jewellery and clothes; he notices and a smile flits across his face.

Hazel phlegmatically subdues her pace, allowing him to hobble beside her.

TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP

CLICK, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK

YORKE

You are coming home from work?

HAZEL

Yep.

YORKE

Where?

HAZEL

A travel agents.

YORKE

It's been a year since I did a day's work.

This piques her interest.

HAZEL

What happened?

YORKE

Somebody bought my business. Now my main occupation is finding things with which to wile away the hours.

Colouring, he directs a timid glance at her.

YORKE

(cont.)

I live in Wetherby.

HAZEL

Doesn't Wetherby have a library?

YORKE

It does but not a very good one. The council assume everyone living there has their own library.

HAZEL

Do you?

YORKE

No, I don't like paying for things
I can get for free.

Indifferently staring at the walking stick, she halts the party at an intersection.

HAZEL

I'm off down here.

YORKE

(spoken to her shoes)

I'd hate to leave our *next* meeting
to chance. Would you permit me to
meet you again?

Hazel reddens, uncomfortable.

YORKE

(cont.)

Take my number and call me if you
have a change of heart; all hours
and days are the same to me now.

"Greensleeves" CHIMES from an ice cream van in the distance.

Yorke hastily scrawls a number onto his bus ticket and gives it to her. She notices his diamond ring.

They part.

Hazel walks on.

She enters a house. Oblivious to CUSH YEAMANS who observes her from across the street.

Cush leaves not an inch of his skin visible. His face is painted white, he wears a long, white coat, gloves, and a beanie hat.

His fierce gaze lingers on the house.

INT. HAZEL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Hazel opens an envelope and gloomily reads the letter contained within.

She places the letter on a pile of others, all evidently bills.

(CONTINUED)

KITCHEN

Hazel takes out the milk to put in her coffee and realizes there is only a few drops left.

Rifling through her purse, she finds only a few coppers and SIGHS.

Yorke's bus ticket attracts her attention.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Hazel sits on a bench.

Cush, in his ice cream man (ICM) attire, stops in his tracks when he descries her through some trees.

He is preparing to approach when a TAPPING from behind checks him.

Cush watches as Yorke crosses to Hazel and offers her a bouquet of flowers.

She rises and they walk away together, her arm in his.

INT. CUSH'S ICE CREAM VAN

Enclosed space. Cush holds a small lamp to a photograph.

His makeup has a vertical smudge downwards from each eye, signifying that he has been crying.

The photograph he studies is a CLASS PHOTOGRAPH, the children are approximately ten.

He focuses on a GIRL and a BOY standing next to each other, evidently Hazel and Cush.

INT. YORKE'S LOUNGE

Innumerable tall white candles adorn the room and CLASSICAL MUSIC plays, giving it a nineteenth century feel.

Yorke has Hazel's hands in his. They are posed like figures in a painting.

Hazel meets Yorke's adoring gaze with a polite smile.

(CONTINUED)

YORKE

I've never danced with anyone
before.

They dance, slowly and without rhythm. Yorke WINCES but soldiers on.

Eventually, he gives up and collapses into a chair.

Hazel joins and comforts him.

Yorke lurches to his feet and stands before Hazel.

He WINCES as he leans on his knee and presents her with a RING.

She accepts.

INT. YORKE'S LOUNGE - DAY

In front of Yorke on the table is a small pile of romantic fiction novels.

Yorke desultorily picks up a few of the books to read their titles.

YORKE

Vapid and depraved nonsense. They
provide toilet paper free of charge
you know.

Yorke slides an antique copy of "Great Expectations" across the table.

YORKE

(cont.)

Take Dickens instead.

Hazel turns over the leaves of the brown volume with disrelish.

INT. DANCE VENUE - NIGHT

The dance studio consists of forty seats and a stage; a simple, rustic arrangement which emphasizes tradition.

The crowd waits with bated breath; their eyes fixed on the MALE PERFORMER on the stage.

The Performer, hands on hips, TAPS his feet one after the other in short stabs in which his foot barely leaves the floor.

(CONTINUED)

The tempo of the MUSIC steadily builds. The intensity and energy of the Performer's dance increases proportionally with the music. He twirls, steps, and lunges; the TAPPING which signifies his steps becomes frantic.

The Performer twirls and TAPS passionately with adroit movements. He expends the last of his energy on an electrified and vigorous dance in which he twirls and TAPS furiously. He whips his head back and forth.

He suddenly strikes a majestic pose to a final, emphatic note. He breathes heavily.

The audience erupts into applause. Yorke and Hazel sit in the front row.

The Performer notices Hazel and smiles cheekily at her. She blushes. Yorke squirms as he looks between them.

The Performer looks back at her once more as he exits the stage. Yorke's countenance is stern. Audience members take pictures of the stage.

EXT. YORKE'S GROUNDS. DRIVEWAY - DAY

The O.S. CHIMING of Cush's ice cream van gets progressively louder and then ceases. The van door SLAMS O.S.

Cush, in ICM attire, crosses into the frame and stands to admire the grand house.

He BRRRs at the crisp, frosty air and walks on until he reaches a tall hedge bordering the garden, where he halts-

HAZEL (O.S.)

What are you getting so worked up about? It'll only be for a few hours.

YORKE (O.S.)

Zel, I'm begging you. See her some other time, have dinner here with me tonight.

Cush treads lightly and moves closer to the hedge. He finds a gap through which to watch the couple.

GARDEN

Yorke lounges in a chair with a black coffee before him on the table. Hazel paces the garden as she speaks. Both wear heavy winter coats.

(CONTINUED)

HAZEL

I've stayed in with you for the last six nights.

Yorke's face becomes doleful.

YORKE

I didn't realize my company was so dull.

HAZEL

Don't put words into my mouth Yorke.

YORKE

I'm not. You're keeping a tally of the nights we spend together. That says it all.

HAZEL

I don't keep a tally.

YORKE

Can't this friend come to dine here?

Hazel stops pacing when she reaches the table, she towers over Yorke.

HAZEL

I've told you, I'm going out tonight. I've invited you, what more can I do? It's not my fault you don't like leaving the house!

Yorke speaks to Hazel's shoes.

YORKE

Please, go any night you like but just not tonight.

HAZEL

Why?

Yorke's eyes meet hers sheepishly.

YORKE

Today's my birthday.

Cush enters the garden through a gap in the hedge. Husband and wife turn to regard him.

Cush approaches them as if they were strangers. Hazel stares at him coolly.

(CONTINUED)

CUSH

Sorry to disturb you. My van's got a flat tire and my phone's got no battery. I was wondering if I could use your phone?

Yorke uses the walking stick to get to his feet and approaches Cush with a stern expression. Putting himself deliberately between Hazel and the intruder.

YORKE

What kind of van requires its driver to wear that kind of costume?

HAZEL

Actually, I'd say it was more of a disguise.

Cush smiles feebly.

CUSH

It's for my customers, kids. I'm an ice cream man.

Yorke GRUNTS incredulously.

YORKE

You expect me to believe that! Look at her, (motions at Hazel) she's shivering.

Cush points at the hedge.

CUSH

My van's just out there, have a look if you don't believe me.

YORKE

(to Hazel)

Yell if he does anything suspicious.

Yorke keeps his eyes on Cush as he limps out of the garden.

Momentarily alone, Cush nods his head mournfully at Hazel. Both sets of eyes glued to each other.

Yorke returns, satisfied.

YORKE

Sorry. I'm wary of unannounced visitors, plenty of thieving con artists around here.

(CONTINUED)

The men shake hands.

CUSH

You own a lot of valuable things, I understand.

YORKE

We must make the understanding mutual before I can help you ice cream man. It's the coldest August on record, they're saying it might snow. Why are you selling ice cream in this intense cold? Have you lost your mind?

CUSH

Children always want ice cream. The only reason I stop in September is because they go back to school.

YORKE

When I was your age I relished taking risks in business matters. I started out as a door to door salesman.

He hobbles towards the hedge again.

YORKE

(cont.)

I bet under that face paint is a complexion not too dissimilar to my own when I was your age. Correct me if I'm wrong but do I detect in your eyes that unmistakably Irish glimmer?

CUSH

No unfortunately.

YORKE

(cont.)

I'll get someone sent over to help you, excuse me a moment.

CUSH

Thank you sir.

Yorke leaves the garden.

Hazel's facade gives way.

(CONTINUED)

HAZEL

What are you doing here?

CUSH

I came to see you.

HAZEL

No, you're here to torment me.

Cush shakes his head in sober remembrance.

CUSH

I've thought of nothing else but you for months. I came back to Leeds to find you but you'd moved house. Then, I saw you.

HAZEL

A stroke of luck.

CUSH

No such thing, I was bound to find you eventually. If you didn't care for me you would have declared you knew me just then.

HAZEL

I followed your lead. That doesn't mean I still have feelings for you.

CUSH

You married in revenge, that much is clear.

Hazel SCOFFS.

CUSH

I felt the blow.

Cush edges closer. Hazel derisively shakes her head.

HAZEL

Ahhh. Same old Cush.

CUSH

Not as old as he is.

Hazel peers into Cush's face.

HAZEL

Even if I wasn't married you'd have no right to come and see me. I was yours but you lost me.

CUSH

And without you I'm lost. This part
I've been condemned to play is too
far from myself.

Cush steals from the garden as Hazel looks on mournfully.

INT. CUSH'S ICE CREAM VAN - NIGHT

Cush wipes off his white makeup at a mirror.

He contemplates his bare face, ill-defined in the gloomy
light.

INT. YORKE'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

Hazel is dressed glamorously in high heels. She CLICKS her
way to the door.

TAP, TAP, TAP,

Yorke emerges, following her to the door.

She reluctantly kisses him goodbye and exits. Yorke looks
forlorn.

INT. YORKE'S LOUNGE - LATER

Yorke contemplates a photograph with a forlorn countenance.

The doorbell RINGS.

He rises and hastens from the room, making his shambolic
gait pronounced to an unprecedented degree.

INT./EXT. YORKE'S HALLWAY/GROUNDS

Yorke is disappointed to behold Cush upon opening the door.

Cush's drastically altered appearance renders him
unrecognisable to Yorke.

He dresses in smart clothing; gold jewellery adorns his neck
and wrists; his face is unpainted. His speech is slightly
more eloquent and affected by a Northern Irish accent.

YORKE

Yes?

(CONTINUED)

CUSH

Good evening sir, please forgive my calling at this late hour. I have been delayed on my journey from London.

YORKE

(dubiously)

London?

Cush pauses to scan a sheet of paper.

CUSH

Is this the address of... Mrs Hazel Cole?

YORKE

Why? What is it regarding?

CUSH

Well... is this or isn't this Mrs Cole's address?

YORKE

Yes, yes. Listen - tell me what you want.

CUSH

I'm here on behalf of Tetley Tea, your... daughter... sorry wife is it? ... Your wife, entered our prize draw a few months ago.

Cush presents him with a piece of paper.

CUSH

(cont.)

I'm delighted to announce that Mrs Cole has won the top prize of one million pounds.

Yorke reacts as if Cush has told him he has a terminal illness.

YORKE

Well, come in.

INT. YORKE'S LOUNGE

Yorke and Cush sit at table with papers spread before them.

CUSH
Will your wife be much longer?

YORKE
I haven't a clue. ... I can't quite
place your accent, Mr. Aubrey

CUSH
Derry. ... (Looking at his watch)
It's getting on a bit.

YORKE
I'm from Hollywood. ... Would you
like a cup of tea? We have Tetley.

CUSH
No thank you. ... I've only heard
it pronounced Hollywood, although
I've never met a native until now.

Cush YAWNS.

YORKE
Look, my wife might not be home for
hours yet, perhaps you should just
leave the cheque with me.

CUSH
I was told to put it directly into
her hands. ... Do you go back much?

YORKE
I haven't been back since I was a
boy. Listen, I'm her husband,
surely I'm reliable enough to look
after it until she gets home?

Cush appears tempted, he smiles bashfully.

LATER

Cush is gone. Yorke studies the cheque contemptuously.

INT. PUB - NIGHT

Dingy and practically empty (it being twenty minutes until closing time). Yorke and DALE sit, facing one another, at a table.

On the table before Yorke are a dozen checkers pieces, indiscriminately black and white.

Dale is a gentle giant, he is often called an 'oaf' because of his tendency to drool and stumble.

Yorke shakes three dice in his hand and rolls them onto a flat ashtray on the table.

The dice yield a 6 and two 5s.

Yorke celebrates wildly as he retrieves the two checkers next to the ashtray and adds them to his pile.

Dale doozily surveys the bar. Cush sits unseen close by - back in ICM attire - and quietly observes the men.

YORKE

Today must be my lucky day, pay me
when you can.

Cush coolly approaches the table and stands over the two men. He regards Yorke with a determined expression.

Yorke scrutinizes Cush, evidently he remembers him.

CUSH

You finished gambling tonight?

When Cush speaks Dale registers his presence for the first time and MURMURS in fear. He looks at Yorke with a wide-eyed expression of panic.

Yorke ignores him and looks up at Cush with interest.

YORKE

Look who it is, are you in costume
permanently?

DALE

(to Yorke)
You know him?

Yorke SNIGGERS and lazily gathers together all the checkers and divides them into two piles. Dale watches on fearfully.

(CONTINUED)

YORKE

Of course, he's the ice cream man.
Stand aside Dale!

Yorke gestures for Dale to move. Dale moves to a seat from which he can spectate.

YORKE

(cont.)

Sit...

Yorke gestures for Cush to sit down. Cush sits down in the seat Dale vacated.

YORKE

Are you sure you want to do this?
I'm a grand an half up tonight ice
cream man. You'll be lucky to leave
here with your van!

CUSH

I don't believe in luck.

YORKE

A man in your pecuniary position
wants to gamble with a millionaire?
What are you staking then ice cream
man, tens, twenties, ...
ninety-nines?

Cush retains his composure.

CUSH

How's ten thousand per roll?

Cush places a checker next to the ashtray. Yorke is taken aback but in a few moments he rashly follows suit.

There is deliberation as he withdraws his arm and picks up the dice. Cush's expression is unchanged.

DALE

(hushed, to Yorke)

Look at him, why does he wear the
face paint? He's hiding something.
They say he made a bargain with the
devil for... God knows what!

YORKE

Shut up and be quiet!

Yorke rolls the dice onto the ashtray, producing two 4s and a 6. He seems relieved.

(CONTINUED)

Cush calmly does the same and the dice read: 4, 5, and 6. Yorke gasps in frustration as Cush mechanically collects the checkers.

They each place another checker next to the ashtray. Cush rolls, the dice read: 2, 1, and 3.

Yorke seems satisfied and rolls confidently, only to yield a pair of 2s and a 1. Yorke pounds the table in frustration as Cush collects his winnings.

YORKE

You've tampered with the dice!

CUSH

How? They're yours...

DALE

He's put a spell on it!

YORKE

Please, Dale - I've had enough.
He's not casting spells, a
revolution of the wheel of fortune
is coming, just you wait.

Yorke and Cush place their checkers beside the ashtray once more. Yorke rolls three 5s. Dale covers his eyes timidly.

Cush nonchalantly rolls two 5s and a 6. As Cush yet again collects the checkers. Yorke growls and glares vehemently at the dice, blaming them.

Yorke glares devilishly at Cush.

YORKE

(cont.)

Let's settle this once and for all.
How about we up the stakes? What's
the most you can afford to lose ice
cream man?

CUSH

(calmly)

A million.

YORKE

You're joking?

Cush shakes his head.

Yorke finishes his pint, in the hope that it will instill bravery where there is none.

YORKE

How did you come into such money?

CUSH

How did you come into yours? I worked hard.

Cush places a singular checker on the plate.

CUSH

(cont.)

One million pounds.

Yorke follows suit.

Dale is too agitated to watch and rises hurriedly. He plods out of the pub.

Yorke and Cush look at the "pot" with trepidation.

Cush picks up the dice and rolls two 3s and a 2.

Yorke appears confident upon seeing the dice, Cush, however, is unaffected. He hands the dice to Yorke.

YORKE

My fortunes seem to have turned at last!

Yorke throws the dice onto the ashtray so violently that one die flies under the table, out of sight. There are a pair of 3s in the ashtray.

YORKE

Anything more than a two and I've won! Help me look.

Yorke and Cush drop to their hands and knees and start to search under the tables.

In the distance, they distinguish the die, its number is unreadable. They rise. IVY approaches Yorke.

YORKE

Ivy, could you go over there and tell us what that die says? Be quick about it.

Yorke is visibly agitated by the delay and closes his eyes to pray.

(CONTINUED)

YORKE
Please God... please.... have
mercy.

Cush regards Yorke with a faint smile.

IVY (O.S.)
One!

Cush remains calm while Yorke puts his head in his hands.

CUSH
(derisive)
Praise the lord.

INT. YORKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hazel, eyes open and glassy, lays on her side looking out from the bed.

Yorke gets into the bed, sombre demeanour.

Thinking his wife asleep, he rolls over to embrace her from behind.

Hazel reacts to a sudden downward movement of Yorke's arm with a SHRIEK and tumbles out of the bed onto the floor.

Both regard the other with stupefied embarrassment.

EXT. PARK - DAY

A frosty morning. Cush dresses in ICM attire.

He puts his hand forward, confirming his supposition: it has started to rain.

TAP, TAP, TAP,

Yorke approaches with a small white envelope, forlorn.

Yorke hands the envelope to Cush, eyes vacant and downcast, avoiding meeting the ice cream man's mocking gaze.

Yorke finally looks Cush in the eye.

Cush takes the envelope and walks slowly away as Yorke watches on gloomily.

Cush's face paint is gradually being washed off by the rain, he smiles wryly and pauses to glance back at Yorke, presenting his almost bare face.

(CONTINUED)

Yorke is horrified by the revelation there presented.

Yorke's manner becomes even more constrained, his face rigid with fear. Cush disappears.

INT. YORKE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Hazel packs articles of clothing into a suitcase on the bed.

Her phone rings. She answers uncertainly.

HAZEL

Hello?

The MUFFLED WORDS of the caller render her speechless.

MOMENTS LATER

Hazel puts her packed suitcase under the bed.

EXT. YORKE'S GROUNDS - DAY

Hazel guides Yorke into the house - around his eyes is a white bandage.

Cush, unseen, loiters at an upper window and retreats.

INT. YORKE'S LOUNGE

Yorke is patting his way around the furniture in an attempt to get his bearings.

Hazel crosses to him and grabs his arm. He gently pushes her away.

YORKE

I can do it.

Yorke collides painfully with the table and pretends to have done it on purpose - groping it with his hands.

HAZEL

Oh Yorke...

Eventually, he finds the armchair and lowers himself into it.

HAZEL

(cont.)

How are we gonna cope?

(CONTINUED)

YORKE

It's only for a month.

Hazel moves from in front of the chair opposite to Yorke to the door and is about to leave the room.

Yorke addresses the chair where she had stood. She halts.

YORKE

Zel, will you make me a strong cup of tea? I'm feeling rather hazy all of a sudden.

HAZEL

Yep.

Yorke is surprised by his miscalculation. Hazel exits.

INT. YORKE'S HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Hazel walks from the kitchen to the living room door with a cup of tea.

INT. YORKE'S LOUNGE

Hazel enters warily with a cup of tea.

To her silent horror, she finds Cush lightly brushing the end of Yorke's nose with a blade of grass and withdrawing.

Yorke pats his nose absently, evidently attributing the disturbance to a wondering fly.

HAZEL

Here you are.

She puts the tea on the table.

HAZEL

(cont.)

It's in front of you on the table.

YORKE

Thank you.

Hazel gives Cush a look of reproach. He guffaws silently.

She goes to the door and vehemently beckons Cush to follow.

Cush nods. He treads lightly over to Yorke and touches his face affectionately.

(CONTINUED)

YORKE

I love you.

Yorke smiles affectionately and strokes Cush's hand.

Hazel moves over frantically and addresses Yorke next to Cush's face.

HAZEL

I'm going to the shop for some milk, won't be long.

She drags Cush away to the door.

YORKE

But it doesn't close until evening, what's the rush?

HAZEL

It is the evening...

Yorke's face becomes puzzled.

YORKE

It's dark outside?

HAZEL

Yeah, the shops are about to shut.

Yorke SIGHS discontentedly; he is disappointed in himself.

YORKE

Today has just flown by, I could have sworn... oh well, as you say.

The sighted ones leave.

EXT. YORKE'S GROUNDS - MOMENTS LATER

Hazel drags Cush into the garden. She speaks in a low voice.

HAZEL

What are you doing here?

CUSH

I heard about your husband's accident.

Cush looks at the house and then at Hazel.

(CONTINUED)

CUSH

(cont.)

To tell you the truth, I feel responsible.

HAZEL

Responsible how?

CUSH

I tricked the old man into handing over a million pounds. I guess his mind was all over the place when he got behind the wheel.

HAZEL

Stop playing games with me.

CUSH

I'm not.

He shows her the cheque, she turns it over in her hands.

CUSH

(cont.)

No more games.

He takes the cheque.

CUSH

This means nothing unless you agree to come away me, right now.

She looks at the house.

HAZEL

Please, keep your voice down. I'm staying. We're expecting a baby.

CUSH

A baby?

HAZEL

Yes, it'll be here by next summer.

CUSH

Next summer?

HAZEL

Stop repeating words you idiot.

Cush rips the cheque in half. They both start upon hearing--

(CONTINUED)

YORKE (O.S.)

Hazel? Who's that with you?

HAZEL

Nobody, get back in the house.

Cush hugs her quickly, mouths "Goodbye", and stealthily exits the garden.

The CAMERA PULLS IN and traps Hazel. She turns towards the house.

Yorke feels in front of him with his walking stick and approaches her.