

This short, humorous piece draws the parallels between circuit life and the ballroom scene of the 19th century.

Troy

Troy had an almost perfect physique: muscular but not oppressively so. He was broad-shouldered, and had a lean waist, tight butt, lickable pectorals, succulent biceps, and taut abs. The only thing you could fault him on would be his legs, which were ... well ... skinny (due to not working his legs at the gym).

His skin was perfectly smooth and light brown (he had some ancestors from Brazil), apart from a few old acne scars on his back that dated from the time he was doing steroids. He had very boyish features, a broad face with a strong jaw, a button nose, and a huge smile revealing perfect white teeth.

Alice

Alice was generally thought to have a good figure, and a fine carriage. She was tall for a woman, and handsome, though not a great beauty; her complexion was unmatched, but her nose could be said to be a trifle on the thin side.

Her greatest charm was that if you were swept in by the brilliance of her eyes, you'd feel that nobody else existed for the few moments she was murmuring to you in a droll fashion, flashing the tops of her extremely white teeth. A shabby man might say indeed that her teeth were over large, but a gentleman would respond that Alice kept the higher reaches demurely hidden behind provocative nay sensuous lips.

Troy

Cory was in the gym religiously five days a week (except for the day after a circuit party). He watched Battlestar Galactica, 24, Desperate Housewives, and was addicted to any show about home renovation. It fed his fantasy of settling down someday in a house with a genuine white picket fence.

Alice

Alice excelled at piano, singing, and watercolor. Her crochet, however, was average. She had a beautiful singing voice, soft and lilting, and accompanied her performances with ever so subtle and graceful movements of her head and hands.

Troy

Moving from Oklahoma to LA at the age of twenty-one after having been kicked out of the house by his parents, Troy had the misfortune of being not only exceptionally good-

looking, but also being quite aware of it. As such, he hadn't been long in West Hollywood before he faced his biggest test: he was swept into the orbit of Jeffrey Sankar, the force behind the White Party in Palm Springs and other major club events, and, before long, he was a hired go-go boy.

His bookish room-mate Brandon kept telling him that he was taking on airs, and was in danger of being swallowed up by the culture of circuit parties and beautiful guys; sooner than later he'd be doing porn. He'd be living off his looks, which have a short half-life, and in that world, unless he was very strong, he'd finally end up succumbing to the lust of crystal, and fall into a bottomless pit. In his heart of hearts, Troy was a farm boy, and he pictured a home, snuggling with his cute, handsome boyfriend, and, he hoped to meet someone during his time at the White Party, when he wasn't working.

Alice

Her parents had died when she was very young, and she was under the governorship of her aunt, Lady Stayathome, who was very severe on our heroine, and generally disapproved of dancing; but since Alice was a headstrong young woman, Lady Stayathome couldn't absolutely forbid her to go out in society: and after all, seeing as it was necessary for her to find a husband - and since Alice had no fortune of her own this made it doubly urgent, it would be better that she found a man of good station while under the supervision of Lady Stayathome in a ballroom.

Troy

After a March cruise with Atlantis down the Mexico Riviera, it was time for Troy to get ready for the summer season, which was traditionally thought to begin with the White Party, Palm Springs. He'd performed at the t-dance the year before and had loved the infectious energy. Not for him the S&M debauchery of the Black Party in New York.

Alice

After two weeks at Matching Priory, the country estate of Plantagenet Palliser, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and his wife, Lady Glendora, it was time for Alice to get ready for the London season starting in autumn, starting with the grand ball at the London home of the Duke of Omnium on Grosvenor Place.

Alice had, to her shock (and secret delight), been invited to the Halloween masked ball at Le Comte de Allegrie in Paris, an affair populated by only the wildest, most louche and hedonistic of London aristocrats. But of course, she'd declined that invitation.

Troy

His pre-circuit-party regimen was always the same: a facial and body scrub at a West Hollywood spa; a prolonged visit to the salon where, in addition to having his hair cut and highlighted, he had his eyebrows tweezed, and the skin around his eyes darkened to emphasize them. The final touch was body waxing, and an air-brush spray-tan to emphasize his musculature.

Alice

Alice had little to do to prepare for the ball, with the exception of course of her dress, jewelry and hair. Her complexion was like porcelain, since she was never without her green parasol in summer. Her hair she would make ready the very evening of the ball at the hands of her own maid, and her jewelry was long ago selected.

Troy

Although Troy was chronically short of cash, he treated himself, using some recent tips from dancing, to a sexy new pair of G-Star jeans at LASC on Santa Monica Boulevard, and briefly even considered buying a pair of D&G dog-tags. In the end, however, good sense won out, and he bought generic dog-tags at the army surplus store.

Alice

Two weeks before the ball, four yards of taffeta in the most flattering shade of pale blue, along with two yards of white lace, arrived, and her dressmaker was set to work.

Troy

Finally, the long wait was over, and it was time for the White Party. Cory had a great time performing on Friday and Saturday night, and made so much money in tips that he drove out of town to the D&G outlet and bought himself the necklace. On Sunday afternoon, he arrived at the t-dance, with his roommate Brandon in tow, when it was already in full swing: everybody knew that the really hot guys didn't arrive until late. The first person they came across was Lee, a rather shrewish looking, pasty white guy who he tolerated because he always had access to party favors. Troy had no idea why Brandon came along to these things, because all he did was sit on the side complaint that the music was just "duh, duh, duh", and you had to be drugged out of your mind to enjoy it.

Alice

At last it was the night of the ball. Alice and Lady Stayathome reached Grosvenor Place at midnight so that she'd be sure to be noticed as a late arrival. She was immediately thrust into conversation with Mrs Peabody, an American woman who went everywhere,

and was accepted in society, despite her common background, because she was an heiress to a shoe-factory fortune, and had an uncommon wit which proved very useful at the dining table.

Troy

Troy was disappointed in his hopes of finding husband material at the t-dance; he did cruise and get cruised by lots of hot guys, and even danced with a few of them, but none of them fitted the image inside his head of the strong, blue-eyed, earthy man he wanted to settle down with. Still there was always the closing party, where Tony Moran was spinning. It was always harder to meet guys at the closing party, because the lighting was so dark, but he thought he'd spend a lot of time loitering in the lobby, and outside on the patio, and make himself visible.

Alice

She'd promised a dance to her cousin Edward, and the second half of her dance card was soon filled up - somewhat against Alice's wishes - with members of the Duke of Nottingham's set, for it was Lady Stayathome's dearest wish that Alice would marry Nottingham himself, even though that gentleman was a stout, decrepit man of at least sixty-five. However, Alice's heart wasn't truly set a flutter until she was approached by Lord Chiltern, the eldest - and unfortunately disinherited - son of the Duke of St. Bungay. At once, Lady Stayathome rose from her seat and swiftly moved across the room, taking Alice by the hand.

"Come, my dear, it's time for you to take some air."

As they walked through to the balcony, Lady Stayathome began, "I know all about that man. He's quite dangerous and unpredictable, and they say he drinks. He may be the son of a Duke, and the second cousin of an Earl, but he hasn't a penny."

Troy

Tony Moran didn't come on until 4.00 a.m., and the party, which had seemed to be thinning out, regained its energy as a bunch of the hottest guys arrived, predictably late. It was getting hotter and hotter in the ballroom as the air-conditioning struggled to cope with hundreds of sweating, muscular gay men. By 6.00 a.m., a touch of dawn could be seen stealing across the sky and into the doors as they opened out from the lobby into the patio. Troy was feeling tired and a little down. He'd half decided to cut his losses and leave, but he decided to take one last stroll in the patio. There, groups of men stood or sat in easy companionship, seemingly ignoring the sex act taking place openly at one table.

Alice

It was five in the morning, and many people had already left (author's note: balls in the 1800s really did go until the early morning hours!) Everywhere, women sat reclining on sofas, their cheeks flushed, mopping their brows. Gentleman stood around the room, waiting for a final dance with a flashing eyed young beauty. Lady Stayathome and Alice sat in silence, and, truth be told, Alice was aware that her endlessly long-suffering governess was on the verge of sleep. After she perceived unladylike snores emanating from Lady Stayathome, Alice took her chance, and quickly strolled onto the verandah, where she'd last seen Chiltern.

Troy

Troy still retained some remnant of his Mid-Western values, and he thought the sight of the two guys having sex was repulsive. (Although, he thought, maybe he wouldn't have minded so much if they'd been cute.) Time to go, he thought.

He turned and ran full tilt into a tall, stocky, sandy-haired man in his late thirties, with twinkling, soulful blue eyes.

"Woah, not so fast, where you running off to?"

He had a deep voice, with a silky smooth Southern accent. Troy grinned and offered the taller man his hand, introducing himself. The other man was called Jim, and was from Atlanta. Troy felt a tingling in his loins; he knew immediately that he wouldn't be spending the slim remainder of the night alone. But something more than that: Jim looked uncannily like the man he'd pictured in his dreams.

Alice

The lanterns on the verandah had been extinguished, no doubt in an effort to encourage lingering guests to leave. In the hidden, shadowy depths at the far end of the verandah, she could make out a top-hatted figure and the occasional glow of a lighted cigar. Not knowing whether or not it was Chiltern, she moved to the edge of the verandah, and put her hands on the rail, looking out at the splendid gardens beneath her, now illuminated in soft moonlight.

"You dance magnificently."

She jumped, and turned round to find Lord Chiltern directly behind her.

"If I'd been Lady Stayathome, I'd have kept you tethered to a stake in my cellar. You're far too dangerous to be let out in society."

Alice was beginning to see why people called Chiltern reckless and unpredictable. But she had a stout heart of her own.

"If you were Lady Stayathome you'd be looking rather ridiculous in your top hat and tails."

It wasn't much of a rejoinder, but it gave her time to start breathing again. She was aware that her heart was thudding, but with excitement, not nervousness.

She never did dance with Chiltern that night, but they talked until the sun came up whereupon Lady Stayathome came scurrying out, her hair in some disarray, fresh from her long nap. Despite strenuous efforts, Lady Stayathome was unable to stop Chiltern from leading Alice out to their carriage, and, most scandalously, kissing Alice's gloved hand.

Troy

The White Party turned out to be the last circuit event in which Troy danced as a go-go boy. He severed his links with Jeffrey Sankar, and, as of this writing, is spending every night snuggled in the arms of his new boyfriend.

Alice

In the following week, Chiltern made no less than three visits to Lady Stayathome's London villa on Queen Anne Street, and before long, Lady Stayathome was frantically making plans to take Alice for a prolonged stay at Wittlefield Abbey in Suffolk, home to her sister's family. But Alice resisted all efforts to remove from London, and, by degrees, Lady Stayathome resigned herself to the attendance of the wild, young lord. It was with great wonderment then that she was informed by a wide-eyes Alice one morning that the Duke, approving of the match, had restored his son's fortune, and Chiltern had proposed.

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