A Gramme is Better than a Damn

by vestigialwords

Summary

What’ll it be Bernard, ol’ chap, eternity or soma?

Notes

It was written my junior year of high school for my British Literature class. School-Sanctioned Fanfic. Best. Assignment. Ever.

May Contain Suicide Triggers, just to be on the safe side.

Fuck it.

Bernard Marx leapt from his chair and stormed unceremoniously across the office to the balcony. As he passed through the threshold, his hand caught the silken drapery and ripped the fabric violently from the wall. The room’s other occupants barely flinched at the disruption. The Savage took a sip of dilute strawberry-flavored soma-water, while across from him, Helmholtz Watson leaned eagerly over his desk to ask a question. Miserable and entirely uninterested, Bernard turned to slam the door behind him. In the split second before the door met the frame, the word "Shakespeare" flitted through the crack and escaped into the crisp night air.

Bernard’s spirits plummeted while is distaste for the uncivilized mongrel sitting in the office soared. He was still a social reject while the Savage he had rescued sat in his friend’s office sipping soma-water and discussing poetry. True, the Savage had saved his job by greatly embarrassing the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning. True, for a time, Bernard enjoyed popularity and fame as he never had before experienced, but his success was fleeting. The fall from greatness is lamentable, but the fall from megalomania is tragedy.
That arrogant little ingrate had a lot of nerve. He would still be living in the filth and squalor of the Reservation if it were not for Bernard. The Savage would be among disease, poverty, the elderly, and the unthinkable smut—mothers and fathers. Bernard felt bile rise in his throat at the mere thought.

And this is how the Savage repays him—cruel abandonment just as Bernard needed him the most. Instead of swallowing his pride for one party that could have saved Bernard’s reputation for weeks to come, the Savage had cowered in his chambers.

Bernard kicked a balcony rail in disgust and frustration. Wood creaked around and the rail dislodged itself from the floorboard. Bernard curiously nudged the ring further with his foot, causing wood to groan beneath him. He withdrew quickly and clutched the handrail for fear that the balcony would give way. When nothing happened, Bernard returned to fiddling with the displaced rail.

Suddenly, the nail holding the rung failed and Bernard stumbled, his foot falling through the gap in the railing. Instinctively, Bernard drew back, scuttling across the balcony to get as far from the railing as possible. Once the initial shock wore off, he approached the guardrail and peered down into the street below.

The footpath below seemed so close that it was almost tempting to take the step off necessary to retrieve the fallen rung. In fact, for five whole minutes, Bernard stood mesmerized, even hypnotized by the pavement below him. A scornful whisper hissed in his ear: "What’ll it be Bernard, ol’ chap, eternity or soma?"

Snapping back to the world, Bernard shook himself and smirked. Reaching into his pocket he produced a bulging pack of soma. He placed a gramme on his tongue and endured the fleeting, bitter outer layer before it surrendered to the sickly saccharine inner tablet. His worries dissolved away with the pill on his tongue as an invisible blanket shielded him from the chilly autumnal breeze. After a mere five seconds, the drug gave him courage to return to the room where he previously embarrassed himself with a shameful display of emotion.

"Imagine! Mothers and fathers! And that Tybalt—what a waste of phosphorous!" Helmholtz’s hysterical laughter flooded from the room as soon as the door cracked open. The Savage looked thoroughly insulted as he hugged a moth-bitten book to his chest. Bernard smiled.

That was more like it.

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