

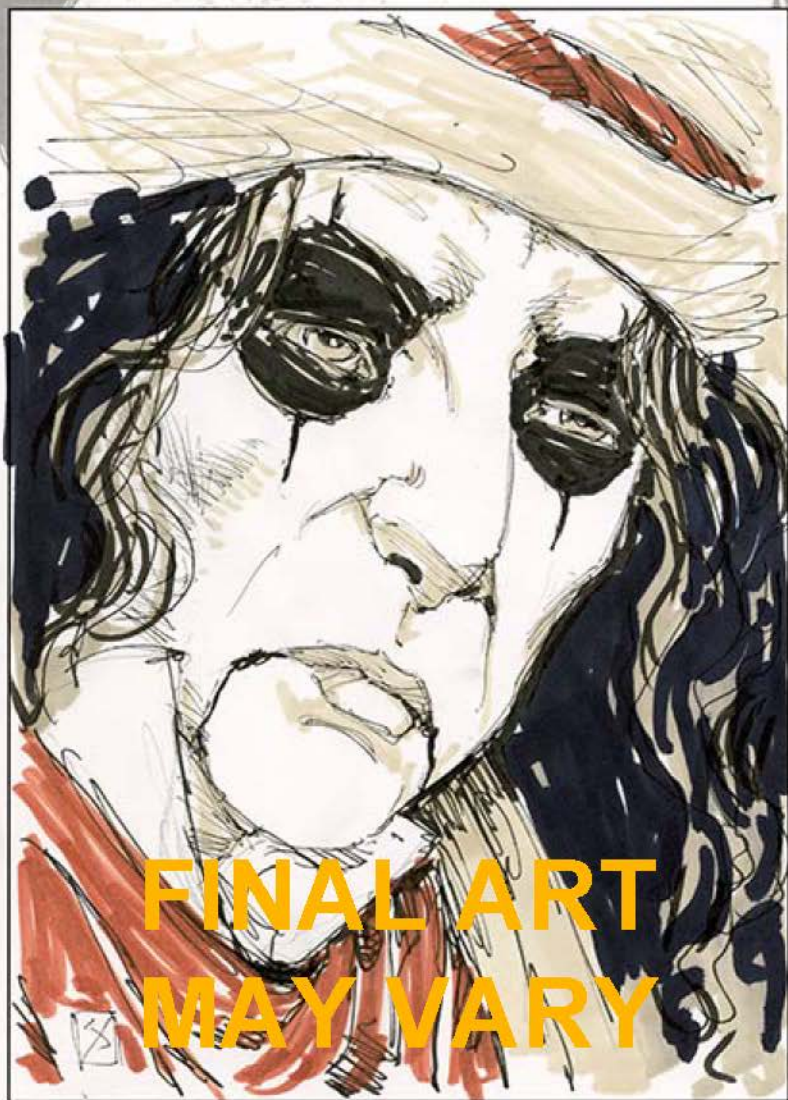
This 20th anniversary copy of
THE LAST TEMPTATION
is signed by Neil Gaiman and Michael Zulli, and is remarked by Michael Zulli.

Neil Gaiman

Neil Gaiman

Michael Zulli

Michael Zulli



ACT ONE: BAD PLACE ALONE



AUTUMN LEAVES, YELLOW AND ORANGE AND RED, TUMBLE DOWN THE EMPTY STREET, BLOWN BY A SUDDEN CHILL GUST OF OCTOBER WIND.



MIST GATHERS IN THE SIDE STREETS, BLURRING THE LIGHT FROM THE SODIUM STREET-LAMPS AS ONE AFTER ANOTHER THEY FLICKER ON, DISTURBING THE TWILIGHT.



A BURST OF COLOR AND NOISE INTRUDES, NOW.



AND HE GOES AWAY. THEN SHE HEARS SOMETHING THAT MIGHT BE A SCREAM.

AND SHE DOESN'T HEAR ANYTHING ELSE. EXCEPT PRETTY SOON THERE'S THIS WEIRD NOISE ON THE ROOF OF THE CAR. LIKE, DRIP, DRIP, DRIP.



BUT SHE STAYS PUT, EVEN THOUGH SHE'S, LIKE, REALLY SCARED.

THIS IS GOING TO BE GROSS, ISN'T IT?



STEVEN, DON'T BE A WEENIE.

I'M NOT A WEENIE.

'COURSE YOU'RE NOT A WEENIE. YOU'RE A WUSS. CARRY ON, JACOB.



BOYS AMBLE DOWN MAIN STREET IN LOUD, BRIGHT COLORS, AN ASSORTMENT OF SWEATERS, FOOTBALL SHIRTS, JEANS, AND RAINCOATS, OF BAGS OF BOOKS AND NEON SNEAKERS.

LISTEN TO THEM:



...OKAY, SO, LIKE, HER **BOYFRIEND** SAYS TO HER TO LOCK THE DOORS AFTER HIM, BECAUSE, LIKE, HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT'S OUT THERE.

AND **SHE** REMINDS HIM OF WHAT THEY HEARD ON THE RADIO-- ABOUT THE ESCAPED KILLER ON THE LOOSE--



--BUT HE JUST LAUGHS, POINTS OUT THAT IF HE DOESN'T GET SOME GAS IN THE CAR AND GET HER HOME BY MIDNIGHT, THEN HER DAD REALLY **WILL** KILL HIM.

SO HE GETS OUT.

AND HE MAKES HER LOCK THE DOOR AND PROMISE NOT TO OPEN IT FOR **ANY-ONE**.

SO, LIKE, FINALLY SHE FALLS ASLEEP. AND SHE WAKES UP AND SOMEONE'S BANGING ON THE WINDOW. IT'S THE **POLICE**. SO SHE OPENS THE DOOR AND THEY SAY, **JUST** WALK TOWARDS US AND **DON'T** TURN AROUND.

SO SHE GETS OUT OF THE CAR. AND **THEN--** SHE TURNS AROUND!

SUSPENDED FROM THE RADIO AERIAL IS HER **BOYFRIEND'S** SEVERED HEAD.

AND THE DRIP DRIP DRIP SHE HEARD, THAT WAS HIS BLOOD, FALLING, FALLING, FALLING ONTO THE ROOF OF THE CAR.



GOD, JACOB. THAT'S GROSS.

SAID YOU WERE A WEENIE, STEVEN. A WEENIE AND A WUSS. YOU'RE SCA-A-ARED.

SAVE IT FOR TOMORROW, JACOB.



WHY SHOULD I WAIT FOR HALLOWE'EN? I GOT LOTS A GOOD ONES, WORSE THAN THAT. THERE WAS THIS BABYSITTER, RIGHT, AND SHE WAS--



HEY--
WHAT'S
THAT?

OVER THERE? THERE'S
NOTHING OVER
THERE.

TOWN HALL

I SAW
SOMETHING
DOWN THAT
ALLEY.



THERE ISN'T
AN ALLEY DOWN
THERE.

POX DRUGS



BUT IF THERE
IS NO ALLEY, THEN
THERE CAN BE NOTHING
IN THE ALLEY. AND IF
THERE IS NOTHING IN
THE ALLEY, THEN
THERE CAN BE
NO THEATRE...

AND
THERE
MUST
BE A
THEATRE.



MUSTN'T
THERE?

HUH?
WHO SAID
THAT?

WHO
SAID
WHAT?



"SOMETHING ABOUT
A THEATER."

"UH-OH. STEVEN'S LOSING IT.
PRETTY SOON DER MEN VIZ DER
VITE COATS VILL COME TO TAKE
HIM OFF VERE HE CANNOT
HURT HIMSELF..."



"SHUT UP, JAKE."





DAMN MY EYES. WHAT A FINE-LOOKING ASSEMBLAGE OF YOUNG MEN.

WHAT A SWEET LITTLE CONGREGATION OF THE FLESH.



YOU LOOK TO ME, YES INDEED, YOU LOOK TO ME LIKE YOUNG GENTLEMEN WHO WOULD APPRECIATE A LITTLE THEATRICAL ENTERTAINMENT.

UH. WE DON'T KNOW YOU, MISTER.

AH, BUT I KNOW YOU, JACOB CANDLEMAN. AND YOU, KYLE VAN FLECK. WOULD ONE OF YOU DESIRE TO COME AND SEE THE SHOW?



NO?



I'LL MAKE IT EASIER, I'LL MAKE IT LUSHER, I'LL MAKE IT A PERFECT STEAL: REGARD:

A TICKET TO TONIGHT'S ENTERTAINMENT.

SO, WHAT IS IT? LIKE SOME KIND OF STRIP-SHOW OR SOMETHING?



NOTHING SO CRASS. TO EVEN ATTEMPT TO DESCRIBE THIS PANOPLY OF PERIPATETIC PLEASURES, THIS EXHIBITION OF EXTRAORDINARY EXCITATION AND EXCESS, WOULD BEGGAR THE LIPS AND LEAVE ME FEEBLY MUMBLING.



IT IS THE ULTIMATE SIDE-SHOW. THE ONLY ENTERTAINMENT THAT GIVES YOU UNDILUTED WONDER.



SUCH A FEAST OF MARVELS YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD. SUCH A TERPSICHOEAN ARRAY OF SHEER AND UNUTTERABLE DELIGHT.



WELL, WHO'S TO BE THE LUCKY LADDIE?



WHAT'S THE MATTER, BOYS? YOU SCARED?



ONLY ONE OF YOU GETS TO COME IN, THOUGH. DON'T ALL SCREAM AT ONCE.





WHAT DO THEY CALL YOU, THEN, BOY?

STEVEN.

THAT'S A FINE NAME. A GOOD OLD NAME. IT MEANS A CROWN. DID YOU KNOW THAT?

NO, SIR.



COME IN, COME IN. WE'RE NEW IN TOWN, BUT YOU'LL HAVE NOTICED THAT YOURSELF.

NOW, IF YOU'RE GOING TO COME IN AND SEE THE SHOW, YOU'LL NEED A PROGRAM, WON'T YOU?

I DON'T KNOW. I'VE NEVER BEEN TO THE THEATER BEFORE.



NEVER? OH, YOU POOR DEPRIVED BOY.

HERE. IT'S YOUR TICKET.



WILL IT COST ME ANYTHING?



COST? OF COURSE NOT. IT'S FREE. EVERYTHING HERE'S FREE.

