

Nora sat smoking in the window of her Gastown loft, her view of the ~~busy~~ street below cloaked by night and the rain streaking down the glass.

Was he out there watching? ~~her now?~~ The man who'd drawn his finger across his throat in silent threat.

~~Living a stone's throw from Vancouver's seedy downtown eastside, she'd~~ She'd seen a lot from her window seat, but never a murder. And he had seen her, too.

His face, craggy and worn, ~~(blah)~~ stared up at her from the sketch pad in her lap. The detectives had said there wasn't a forensic artist available until morning, and she hadn't trusted her memory. She'd picked up her charcoal as soon as her hands had stopped shaking.

The sketch was good. She'd captured the shadow of stubble on the killer's blunt jaw. The wide eyes and nose. The way one shoulder hitched up higher than the other. ~~(more evocative details)~~ Most of all the twisted expression of rage as he'd fired the gun.

It was the truest thing she'd done in weeks.

Unlike the painting of the Point Reyes shipwreck she'd been working on earlier, which mocked her from the easel, her palette of oils dry and hard beside it. She'd tried to exorcise her smoldering anger at Scott by painting scenes from their trip to California six weeks before he died, the last time she remembered him happy. Her technique was fine, but as with all her work lately, her execution was flat, as lifeless as the body she watched fall to the sidewalk earlier.

For years, she'd painted just to spite her husband. Fueled by determination to prove him wrong about her lack of talent, to hold on to one thing for herself. Now John was gone and her drive with him, along, it seemed most days, with her talent and passion too. His final revenge. ~~(Cut or drastically trim this section – too many names, focus on the main characters)~~

But today, she had created something true and beautiful out of ugliness.

The door buzzer invaded the quiet, making her heart trip in her chest. She stubbed out the cigarette and opened her phone app to see who was outside.

"It's Detective Cooper, Ms. Royland, from the VPD." He held his ID up to the security camera.

She buzzed him in. Jackson, his name was Jackson. ~~(Lot of names going on)~~ He'd said it when he questioned her earlier. She'd been rolling it and his beautiful face around in her mind ever since.

"I hope it's not too late.," ~~he said, as she let him in,~~ His tall frame filled ~~ing~~ the doorway. "I was punching out when your call came in and thought I'd stop on my way home."

"No, not too late." Something told her his timing was just right. ~~(blah)~~

"You've got a sketch for us?"

She retrieved her pad and handed it to him, tucked her flowered silk robe ~~a little~~ tighter around herself. He studied it ~~for a long time.~~

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"Do you recognize him?"

"No, but it's a ~~damn~~ good sketch." He laid it on the table, under the light and snapped a photo ~~of it with his cell phone~~. Typed a message and sent it off to someone. "We've already got a BOLO out, but this will help a lot."

"No sign of him, then?"

"Not yet, but we've stepped up patrols ~~in the area~~ and your neighbours have strict instructions not to buzz anyone in without ID."

"But you have leads, ~~right?~~"

"A few." He smiled, stepped close enough she could feel the warmth radiating off his body. "Don't worry, we'll get him."

"Look close to home."

"~~Meaning? What do you mean?~~"

"~~His~~ Look at his face." She pointed to the sketch. "So much rage, but pain too. Whoever the victim was he hurt this man somehow. ~~L~~ it was personal."

"~~Miss aybe you missed~~ your calling."

"~~Maybe. And There's~~ something else."

"Go on, Detective," he said, ~~with a playful smirk~~. [~~lame~~]

"I don't think he'd ~~killed done anything like that~~ before or at least not ~~very~~ often. Horror followed the rage, and when he ~~looked up and~~ saw me watching, ~~I saw~~ shame." She shrugged at his inquisitive look. "I notice things, I'm an artist."

He inched closer. "I notice things too. Like how pale you are. These dark circles under your eyes," he said, smudging a thumb there. "How loose your jeans were earlier. I bet you haven't eaten."

"~~Ne~~, not since breakfast." She was trembling again, but not because of fear. Because of him. "I sometimes forget to eat when I'm working . . . or witnessing murder," ~~she added with a shaky laugh~~.

"I'm not a bad cook. I could fix us something."

There were any number of restaurants on her street. But she wasn't about to suggest going out ~~if he didn't~~. She liked him here, filling up her lonely loft.

"Not much in the fridge," she said. "There's wine." There was always wine these days. [~~maybe reverse previous two sentences?~~]

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He handed her the bottle and she got glasses while he rummaged around. He found an ancient pie crust in the freezer, some eggs, milk...good lord, the man was making a quiche.

She watched him cube cheese, whisk ~~the~~ eggs with those fine, strong hands. When he was done, he slid the pan in the oven and picked up his glass. Walked around the **long one room space**, looking at her paintings. He gestured to a stack leaning against the **brick** wall. "Do you mind?"

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"Be my guest." ~~She watched him~~ ~~He turned~~ them around, **paused his flipping at eock his head to one side as he studied** one she'd done of the waterfront, gritty industrial against the backdrop of gorgeous mountains.

"You're good."

"I used to be."

"You said you were a widow earlier. What happened to your husband?"

"He choked on his lunch, while he was berating the server who'd brought it." So ignominious, so fitting. She changed the subject, **she didn't want Scott here** ~~[delete, remove name?]~~. "Do you always come by personally to pick up sketches or things from witnesses?"

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~~He~~ not always." The look in his eyes told her the rest of what she wanted to know. He'd come because he wanted to see her. "Did you ask for me specifically when you called in to say it was ready."

"Yes."

He didn't ask ~~her~~ why either. ~~The attraction~~ **Attraction** sizzled between them. ~~[cliché, unnecessary?]~~ He stood close enough to touch her but didn't. "I can't get involved with a witness in the middle of a **case...however much I might want to.**" ~~[bit cheesy]~~

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Her **mind raced** for a flirty retort, but that wasn't her. She settled on honesty. "I'm not in a hurry."

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One side of his delicious-looking mouth curved up in a smile so sexy it stole her breath ~~[make better]~~. "Well, all right, then."

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She returned his smile and it felt strange. How long since she'd felt happy? How long since she'd had something to look forward to?

"~~It's been quite~~ **Quite** the day, huh?" His trailed fingers lightly down her arm, took her fingers loosely in his.

"Yes, quite the day."

Someone had died today. ~~B,~~ but she had taken one step closer back to life.

Review character interaction. Too much too soon? Should he not touch her yet? Better, more telling, details re: attraction without cheese factor.