

Withdrawal Symptoms

Laura was working at her ghostwriting assignment and feeling that she had turned a corner. True, she wished she could have spoken to Murder Mark's band mates about how the band had quickly come to intensely dislike each other and how Murder's ego and the guitarist's addiction didn't exactly help matters. But she had managed to cover up the drugs issue without getting caught up in it.

She had dabbled in drugs when quite a bit younger but now she found the drug world pathetic. She didn't understand why people like Amy Winehouse and Kurt Cobain would blindly emulate their ancestors when their ancestors were such prototypical drug casualties. People think they can do addictive drugs and not get addicted. Well, they're not categorized as addictive drugs for nothing.

She moved on to a section-in-progress about audience confrontations at Murder Mark's performances. Murder would goad the audience to climb on stage and attack him. Or, he would pick some poor nerd out of the audience and lunge at him. Finally, Murder picked the wrong guy to tantalize. The performer had to be hospitalized, and after this convalescence Mr. Roger Pennington was far more restrained on stage. In fact, he almost made a complete one eighty degree turn, often sulking with his back to the audience. Plus his drinking got worse and worse and much worse. Drugs, alcohol.....same old shit.

She took a break and checked her news feed.

A dead body has been found in a West End condominium. The body has been identified as being that of Eric Taylor, an art dealer whose partner was recently kidnapped in New York City. An empty bottle of protriptyline was found beside his body on his bed, along with a note that said "This can't go on any longer".

Laura lit a cigarette and shook her head. What was it that couldn't go on any longer? Being separated from Dennis Townshend? Being broke? What couldn't go on any longer so it had to be stopped.

There was knocking on her door. It was Dan.

"You've just heard the news, Laura?"

"Yes, I just heard it. Like what the fuck is going on? Dennis gets kidnapped and Eric commits suicide? Or does he?"

"What do you mean?"

"Did Eric Taylor commit suicide?"

Dan made himself at home.

"What are you taking about, Laura? There's the empty bottle of an anti-depressant and the note? There wasn't any other paper with Eric Taylor's writing, if that's what you're inferring."

"I guess I just don't believe it, Dan". She puffed on her cigarette, exhaling away from Dan's face. "I mean, this news is more than slightly unbelievable on top of the kidnapping, which was a weird kidnapping. Why Dennis and not Eric? I don't think it's because Dennis Townshend was the partner with the money. I think something else is happening. But what?"

Protriptyline? Rhymes with Imipramine. Brand names. Anti-depressants.....arggh!

“ I’m sorry, Dan. Would you like some coffee?”

Dan shook his head. He had just wanted to make sure Laura knew of this latest twist. Obviously, she did.

Dan said he’s talk to Laura later and then left. Laura finished her cigarette and then ground it out angrily.

Where is Dennis Townshend? Where was he taken to? Was Dennis Townshend still alive?

She checked for incoming email messages. The most recent was from Michael Whitfield, a man she’s had a brief affair with years ago and whom she did not wish to respond to. She scrolled down and there were both the New Democratic Party and The Green Party asking for her support or for contributions. Laura had once been an NDP member so the hits just kept on coming. She voted NDP but did so more because they weren’t Liberals let alone Conservatives let alone anybody further right. Politics was big business..it was corrupt and inaccessible.

Here was Jessica Warren, finally.

jessannwar@sympatico.

Dead Eric

Well, Laura. This is completely out of the blue. Two men kidnap Dennis in New York while typing up Eric, and then somebody or bodies kills Eric in Toronto.

What the hell do you think is going on?

Jessica

lsinclair@gmail.com

Dear Jess,

I’m damned if I know what the hell is going on, Jess. But I’d love to see Eric’s suicide note and then compare the handwriting with Scott’s.

I had been thinking Dennis Townshend had been kidnapped and not Eric because Dennis was the money. But I think that has been blown right out the water. What would be anybody’s motive for killing Eric Taylor?

Jess, is there something you remember about Taylor and Townshend back in your final days?

You and Scott were cast out at the same time, or am I wrong here? Did you have any sense that the gallery was seriously losing money?

Thanks,

Laura.

She watched the news stream. There had been another march of anti-vaxxers and anti-maskers. These idiots had no idea his likely germs were being spread among their sizable contingent. But they were advocates of ‘free speech’. They also thought racists had the right to free speech.

Everybody has the right to free speech but not to germ-free air. To hell with these libertarian idiots.

jessannwar@sympatico.ca

Dear Laura,

Not really. I mean, neither Scott nor I were exactly wiping up the charts so we were both considered useless baggage. I wasn't aware of any artists having difficulty getting their percentages. Scott and I both got ours. I think there may have been other reasons for the gallery pulling the plug but not sure what.

Eric and Dennis' relationship seemed relatively stable. It was an open relationship and I'd heard they were fond of threesomes, but this is hardly unusual. I don't know if there was anybody else in their lives who they were paying off.

If I think of anything else I'll drop you a note.

Best,
Jess.