

Withdrawal Symptoms

Laura woke from her nap, made tea and then lit a cigarette. She only smoked when she was nervous.

She entered 'Neil.Puryear@gmail.com' and then paused before composing.

lsinclair4@gmail.com subject handwriting

[Cc. danstrat@gmail.com](mailto:Cc.danstrat@gmail.com)

Hello Neil,

I hope this finds you well. We talked at your brother Scott's funeral, or actually after the funeral. I pointed out the disparity between the handwriting on his note and the handwriting on his personal memos.

Laura sipped at her tea and smoked her cigarette. Her laptop rang and it was Neil Puryear responding.

Neil.Puryear@gmail.com

Hello Laura,

Yes, I recall our brief conversation. I am puzzled by it. I don't think there's anything incomprehensible about the handwriting of a drugged man on the verge of losing consciousness not matching his everyday handwriting. The police didn't take note of this little discrepancy so I'm baffled by your doing so.

In a week or so, there should be a toxicologist's report. It should confirm that Scott died from swallowing a nearly entire bottle of the antidepressant Imipramine and that should close the matter.

Thank you for your concern, Ms. Sinclair. But now I would prefer that you drop the subject as there is really nothing further to discuss.

Yours cordially,
Neil A. Puryear.

Well, that was that then. Except that it wasn't.

Laura wondered if Scott had a will or estate and, assuming so, then what would its contents be. What would become of Scott Puryear's paintings?

She decided not to pour herself another cup of tea. Laura wished she still had a cat. She had found another home for Buttons upon moving into this apartment complex. Dan was generally a good landlord but he was strict about pets. If no dogs, then also no cats.

She washed her teacup and then opened up a MUBI file. Movies were one of the time-honoured ways to kill time during this pandemic. Tonight's movie was a documentary about Cubans in Havana living on the roofs of their houses. When housing becomes endangered, go vertical.

The documentary was engaging while relaxing. Laura did wish she could travel. She was still living on the advance she had been given for ghostwriting the autobiography of a local punk hero

who was dying from pancreatic cancer. The punk music world seemed so ancient now, although that didn't stop old punks from posting their photos and handbills on a Face Book page.

She had interviewed the dying punk who had been eager, almost too eager. The punk, whose stage name was Murder Mark but whose real name was Roger Pennington, had also been given an advance. He probably needed every penny of it for his meds and painkillers.

Laura felt too tired to resume working on the punk bio. She would listen to wallpaper music and then make dinner.

What on earth might be anybody's motive to kill Scott Puryear? Just maybe Neil Puryear was right...his brother's death was a clear cut suicide.