

## Withdrawal Symptoms

Laura finished her tea and then got down to the Murder Mark ghostwriting. Her file was called Murder Mark Autbio. It didn't have a title yet. That was yet to arrive from Murder Mark, or Roger Pennington.

She found an email from [rpennington@hotmail.com](mailto:rpennington@hotmail.com) in which his attitude to other local bands was downright communitarian, which was completely at odds with his stage and interview persona during his glory or notoriety days. He praised a self-consciously experimental local band called The Scientists for at least trying to do something different. He excoriated one of his former band mates in The Scholars for heckling The Scientists. Ignorant behavior indeed, according to Murder Mark.

The other members of The Scholars didn't seem to be available for interview or comments. The Scholars' guitarist was dead...drug overdose in the late eighties. The bass player had reportedly become an accountant and the drummer had discovered religion and taken jazz lessons. Both were apparently seriously ashamed of their punk histories.

There was a knock on the door and it was Dan Stratton.

'Morning, Laura. Sorry to bother you'.

"It's okay Dan. What's up?"

Dan cleared his throat. "Well, I have to start cleaning out Scott's apartment. What to do with specifically his book collection and his paintings?"

She nodded. She imagined everything else was standard...the clothes could go to Value Village and the bed sheets could be washed and recycled and so forth.

The shelves could remain for the next tenant. After of course being emptied and cleaned.

"Laura, how did it go with Scott's brother?"

"Not well", she tensed. "He had nothing to say about the handwriting and he doesn't want me bugging him again."

Dan nodded. "But I'll have to contact him and see what Scott's estate says about the paintings and the books. Unfortunately, he was completely severed from that gallery."

"Yes. Taylor and Townshend."

"Hey, Laura. I am wondering. I'm assuming Scott had a doctor or therapist. But I looked up Imipramine and it's an almost obsolete antidepressant."

She nodded. "It was a weird old fashioned drug indeed."

'Did Scott ever use illicit drugs?'

"Not that I know of, Dan. Not that I ever saw evidence of."

Her laptop rang. Laura registered an email from an old friend she hadn't heard from for quite some time.

"Dan, it's quite possible that Scott didn't have a prescription for Imipramine. That somebody else did."

"Oh, you mean 'the murderer'?"

She bristled. "Well, if you want to use that word...".

Dan bit his tongue and then informed Laura that he would contact Neil Puryear and inquire about the estate, only in relation to Scott's possessions.

:Talk to you later, Laura.”

She ignored the new email message and returned to writing about Murder Mark and The Scholars. A first draft was expected soon, from that sleazy small publisher. Well, she had taken an advance so she had better deliver.

Dan brewed coffee and cleared extraneous papers from his computer table. Then he composed himself and contacted Neil Puryear.

[Neil.Puryear@gmail.com](mailto:Neil.Puryear@gmail.com)  
Scott's Possessions.

Hello Neil Puryear,

I hope this finds you relatively well.

I am writing you to ask your advice on what to do with your late brother's possessions...

primarily his paintings and his book collection. I need to get moving with this situation soon as there are possible new tenants for the apartment complex for which I am superintendent.

I know that Scott had severed his relationship with the art gallery owned by Eric Taylor and Dennis Townshend. Do you know of another gallery or dealer who might be interested in hosting these paintings? Or, for that matter, a family friend?

Scott's book collection is also significant. I feel that these are not books that one just donates to the Salvation Army or Value Village. The latter might be fine for the clothes but not the books.

Please let me know if you have any suggestions here. I am willing to do some grunt work if necessary.

Yours sincerely,

Dan Stratton

Dan then contacted a woman named Emily Venables who he knew was interested in the now vacant apartment. He had to explain to Emily that the unit was not yet ready for viewing but that hopefully it would be soon.

He relaxed with what he considered easy listening music...Stereolab. He remembered Scott listening to a lot of Harold Budd and Brian Eno, which for him was beyond easy listening. He read the day's newspaper which, in addition to mandatory COVID pandemic coverage, was reporting on a report concerning the serial killer who had run rampant through the city's gay community for years and who could have been hauled in much earlier than he finally was. Lives could have been saved. The report seemed to restate the obvious...that the police didn't give a shit about the lives of queer and mostly racialized men. So, what was to be done then? Special police training? Having a chief of police who doesn't deny the presence of a serial killer when such a presence is obvious?

Dan finished his coffee and prepared another cup. His computer indicated that he had mail.

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

## Scott's possessions

Hello Dan,

I wish I could be more helpful with regards to my late brother's possessions. With the weather finally warming up perhaps you could have a sort of yard sale with the books, or perhaps take them a public library as some of these books are no doubt scholarly? And I really don't know about the paintings? Did Scott not have artist friends who might want to own at least one of his paintings as a memorial or a memento?

I appreciate that you have to clear out the apartment as soon as possible as you could use the revenue from a new tenant, but I don't really know the literary or visual art communities. Sorry I can't be more helpful,

Neil A. Puryear

Neil watered his plants. He supposed he had to be grateful that Dan Stratton was willing to do some grunt work with regards to Scott's possessions. What a crock of bullshit. What the hell grunt work was he talking about? Just pack up the books put them in boxes, try to hand them out to neighbours or pedestrians, or why not take them to Value Village? Oh right, so many of Scott's books were academic in character. Why the hell hadn't Scott returned to university and got himself at least a Masters of Art so that he could then teach and make a more stable income. Because when that rich woman Caroline Burton died his flaky art dealers were helpless. They couldn't find another rich patron with dubious taste who liked to buy art and then write it off as expenses for his or her taxes.

And, yes, Scott's paintings. Why didn't Dan The Landlord just mount them on the tenants' walls in his apartments? Dan could do that if properly motivated and use the paintings to jack everybody's rent up, perhaps? Neil always thought Scott's paintings were wallpaper and his death did nothing to change that evaluation.

Neil felt that his email to Dan had made it clear he considered the matter of Scott's possessions to be of no further interest. He hoped Dan understood this...Dan and that woman Laura. The pair of them should mind their own business and get on with their lives, if they actually had lives.