

Withdrawal Symptoms

Dan Stratton was appreciating the quiet in his apartment complex. Ryan the Ageing Raver was either asleep or outside somewhere, even though with COVID-19 restrictions his outside options were limited. Nobody was playing their sound system too loud so Dan relaxed with Bjork's Vulnicura.

Perhaps relaxed wasn't quite the right verb. Vulnicura was one of the most intense records Dan had ever purchased and enjoyed listening to. He usually tuned out extraneous biographical information but knowing that Vulnicura was motivated by Bjork's breakup with the artist and filmmaker Matthew Barney gave it an additional sense of urgency.

Yes, the biographical and the autobiographical. Dan felt sorry for poor Laura, who was struggling with her job ghostwriting the autobiography of a man who sounded utterly detestable and dispensable. But Laura Sinclair was a struggling writer who barely made her rent therefore such assignments went with the territory.

He knew so little about his tenants. He could tell that Ryan ingested substances but he really knew nothing else about the man.

And Scott Puryear had always seemed mysterious to him. A quiet hardworking artist and then what else? Scott never seemed to have visitors. He had never socialized with other tenants except with Laura and then only to a slight degree. He listened to music but quietly, while painting and while thinking about whatever he thought about. And what did he really think about?

Dan knew Scott had been gay but there had never been any boyfriends, at least not in this building. Dan had never overheard anything resembling sexual activity coming from Scott's apartment. Did Scott do hook-ups? Did Scott go to bathhouses? He never seemed to keep late hours but that didn't necessarily rule out either hook-ups or bathhouses. He knew that many older men preferred the late afternoon for playtime.

Scott was often quite audible on his computer. He typed on the electronic keyboard as if it were typewriter. Dan had once asked him if he had a typewriter and Scott had taken a few beats to understand Dan's question.

Scott's passwords were not open to anybody who might choose to search his computer. Did Scott do social media? Or heaven forbid Second Life?

Did Scott Puryear have an alter ego? Dan had a former friend who was taciturn to the extreme but who had an online alter ego who was beyond garrulous.

Was Scott Puryear like that? Would anybody know now that the man had taken his life?

Dan streamed the television news. A small item at the end of the newscast confirmed a toxicologist's report that Scott Puryear's death had been due to a massive overdose of Inipramine.

Well, this was not a revelation. He knew Laura would say yes that is how he died but did Scott take the pills willingly?

Another news item stated that two men had been arrested in New York for the abduction of Dennis Townshend, who was coincidentally Scott Puryear's former art dealer. Drugs appeared to have been involved, and that was all the news item stated.

Yes, drugs. Dan was glad he's only dabbled so long ago. He understood weed and edibles but nothing else. Cocaine made people jittery and who needed that shit. Heroin made people feel smooth so they kept taking more, and more, and more. Everybody knew these facts about drugs decades ago, so why did people still manage to become addicted?

Vulnicura was finishing up. What to listen to next.....Bjork, Kate Bush...maybe a male voice for a change? Or maybe something instrumental.

Something not autobiographical.