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Three members of his family had already committed suicide, so no one was ^{that} surprised ~~that~~ ^{when} William Wentworth ~~had~~ hanged himself.

The fact that he selected a silk scarf and a chippendale four poster bed to carry out the deed, simply reminded people of his noble lineage. Had he chosen any other day his premature death would have made the front page of The Times. But not ~~to-day~~ ^{to-morrow}. ~~Another page of news,~~ ^{A series of news,} ~~also~~ ^{would} ~~suicide~~ ^{prevent} that, and ~~the~~ ^{the} first seven pages of The Times. But ~~that was~~ ^{that} ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~typical of with timing.~~ ^{typical} His body was discovered by his sister, ~~Annabella~~ ^{Annabella} at 10.55 am.

Anna Bezdeeva flicked on her bedside clock ^{it glowed} 5.56 am. In four minutes it would have normally woken her with the early morning news. But not to-day. Her mind had been ^{all through the night} raining, only ^{allowing} herself intermittent patches of sleep.

She flicked the automatic alarm off, and headed straight for the bathroom. She ~~reminded~~ ^{reminded} a little larger than usual under the cold shower, hoping it would ^{fully} wake her up. Her last love - heaven knows how long ago that had been - thought it amusing that she always shivered before going out as her ~~body~~ ^{body} ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~mening~~ ^{mening} men.

Once she had dried herself ^{Anna} ~~she~~ ^{she} slipped on a white singlet ~~and~~ ^{and} blue shorts, ~~and a black sock top~~ ^{and a black sock top} ~~she~~ ^{she} Although the sun had not risen, she didn't need to open her bedroom window to know it was going to be a clear crisp day. She pulled on her ~~Penn~~ ^{Penn} track suit top, with the faded P, where the bold mauve letter had been ~~unshaken~~. She didn't want to advertise the fact that she had been a member of the ^{Penn} ~~team~~ ^{team}, after all it was ten years ago.

Anna ~~she~~ ^{she} finally pulled on her Nike shoes, and tied the laces very tight. Nothing annoyed her more than having to stop and re-tie her laces.

The only other thing that left her apartment ^{that morning} ~~was~~ ^{was}

~~was~~ front door key that hung round her neck ~~from~~ a piece of string. She slammed the apartment door closed, walked around the corner and summoned the lift. While she waited for it to reach eleventh floor, ~~she~~ ^{Anne} began a series of exercises, that would be completed before the lift reached the ground floor.

As she ~~was~~ stepped out into the lobby ~~she~~ ^{Anne} was greeted by her favorite janitor, who rushed to the door and held it open, so her progress would not be impeded.

Good morning Miss Anna he said with a Jamaican lilt accompanied by a brisk grin.

Good morning ~~B~~ Duane she replied as she jogged ~~forward~~ out onto fifty fourth street.

On weekdays she took the three mile circuit, that only serious runners bothered with. At the weekends she would take in the longer run around the tunnel when it didn't matter if she was a few minutes late. But not to-day.

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Bryce Fenton has also risen before six o'clock, as he too had an ^{early} appointment. As he showed ~~up~~ ^{he} listened to the ~~early~~ morning news. Deaths in Palestine and the Lebanon didn't cause him to turn ^{up} the volume ~~up~~, as they ~~had~~ ^{had become} ~~as~~ ^{matter of fact} the weather forecast or the stock exchange. A clear cold day was predicted, and the chirpy girl recommended scarfs and ear muffers for those who had to walk more than one block. A more serious voice ^{replied} ~~informed~~ him that Tokyo was up three points, and Hong Kong down one. London's F.T. ^{it seemed} couldn't make up its mind. He concluded that Fenton Finance shares were unlikely to move either way as only three people were aware of his little cup. He was having breakfast with one of them at seven o'clock and would talk the other at eight.

By 6:45 he was shaved and dressed. Although he had been born to a peasant ~~farmer~~ in Yugoslavia anyone who gave him a second glance, as he stepped out of his brownstone home on 60th Street and into his chauffeured limousine would have assumed that he was part of the establishment. That was ~~the~~ ^{the} impression he wished to leave, and he succeeded with 99% of onlookers, it was the one percent of bankers who remained unconvinced.

The Marrott was all he said before Furling's button ~~that~~ ^{which} raised a black glass that cut off ~~any~~ ^{any} ~~further conversation with~~ ^{the driver}. ~~He~~ ^{He} picked up The New York Times that lay on the seat beside him. He flipped ~~the~~ through the pages to see if any particular headline grabbed his attention. Mayor Giuliani seemed to have lost the plot, he had installed his mistress in Grace Marrott's ^{leaving} ~~the~~ first lady ~~seemed~~ only too happy to voice her opinion on the subject. Bryce had had three wives, one he had left in Yugoslavia, and two more who had to be paid off. He had reached the obituary, by the time his door came to a halt outside The Marrott, ~~just a few yards from his office.~~

I have an appointment in Wall Street at nine o'clock he reminded his driver, before striding off in the direction of The Marrott. The door slid open a pulse before he reached them and he continued his unimpeded journey up the escalator ^{fourth floor} ~~the restaurant~~ ~~at the first floor~~. The Maître D spotted Mr Fenton at thirty paces, smiled broadly slightly and escorted him to his usual ~~table~~ ^{corner} table in the overlooking the Hudson river. On one occasion he had found ~~his~~ ^{the} table occupied. He ^{then} turned round and walked straight back out. ^{Since then} ~~The table~~ ^{has} remained unoccupied every morning, just in case.

Fenton was not surprised to find his car

Carl Leapman waiting for him. ^{Leapman} ~~He~~ (had never once been late in the twelve years they had worked together. In fact Bentin wondered how many minutes he'd been sitting there just to ensure ^{that} his boss never arrived before him.

Even before he had taken his seat Bentin began speaking. We only have two matters to discuss. Forfeiting on the Wentworth estate, and what we plan to do about Anna Berdskova. Leapman opened ~~the~~ ^a file in front of him.

~~She~~ ^{Annabella} closed the door quietly behind her. ~~She~~ ^{Annabella} had always wondered how she would react in a crisis, and was pleased to find that although her heartbeat doubled, she remained remarkably calm.

~~Annabella~~ ^{She} had tried not to look at her brother's hanging body. ~~She~~ ^{Annabella} first removed her high heeled shoes before climbing up onto the bed. She was thankful that although William was tall, he was also lean, from hours of riding around the estate. With an effort that can only be called upay when one is under real pressure, she raised her brother's body, removed the silk scarf from around his neck, ~~before~~ ^{and} collapsed onto the bed. Once she had reclined she rested his head upon the pillow, ~~she~~ ^{she} remained still while she caught her breath. ^{marks around my neck} once again around the thick purple rope.

She was about to call the family doctor, when her eyes rested on ~~the~~ ^{an} envelope, that had been placed next to the phone. "To whom it may concern" was scrawled in her brother's familiar weak hand.

Annabella remained poised on the end of the bed, with William's body still behind her. She slit open the envelope without hesitation. After all, as she later explained to the investigating ^{police} office, it certainly concerned her.

* * * * *

Anna jogged west along 54th street heading in the direction of Sixth Avenue. She barely glanced at the familiar landmarks of Carnegie Hall or even the massive sculpture that dominated the corner of 55th St. Most of her energy and concentration was taken up with trying to avoid the early morning commuters who were ~~either~~ hurrying towards, or slowly returning from work. She didn't touch ~~her~~ stop watch on her left hand until she passed under Artzans Gate and entered Central Park.

Once Anna had settled into her regular rhythm she tried to concentrate on the meeting that was scheduled with the ~~the~~ Chairman at eight o'clock. She couldn't pretend to like Bryce Fenton, but she was grateful that he had offered her a job at the bank only days after she had been passed over for the number two slot in the Impressionist Dept at Sotheby's.

They appointed a man only two years older than Anna, so she realized her progress in that particular organization was limited. David Fairfax didn't have her academic qualifications, or sedulous scholarship, however those years spent at first Smith and then Yale ensured that he could open doors that might otherwise be closed to her.

Bryce Fenton was a regular attendee at Impressionist auctions, and ~~must~~ ^{must} have spotted Anna standing by the side of the auctioneer's podium, taking notes ~~and~~ ^{while} also acting as a spotter. She resented any suggestion that her striking good looks was another reason Sotheby's placed her at the front, ~~of the room~~ ^{rather} than at the side.

Anna checked her watch as she passed Playmate Arch 2:16 seconds. She liked ~~the~~ ^{to complete} the three miles course in under twenty minutes. It wasn't fast, but it still annoyed her whenever she was overtaken, and made her ~~hate~~ ^{particularly when} it was a woman. ~~She~~ ^{Anna} had come 9th in last year's New York marathon, so she was rarely overtaken by anything on two legs. It quickly became clear to anyone ^{working} in the art world:

Auction houses, galleries, ~~dealers~~ ^{or dealers} that Fenton was
amazing one of the great impressionist collections, because
he along with Steve Wynn and ~~X~~ ^{was} were regularly
among the bidders for any major item. However rumors
about Fenton's tactics ~~was~~ ^{and} once he identified a major collection
were not always flattering. However, one of the lessons
Anna had learned soon after arriving at Sotheby's was that
old money was more likely to be the seller, and new money
the buyer, which is how she came to meet William Wentworth
7th Marquis of Wentworth, very old money.

Fenton offered her a salary that only confirmed
how serious he was about ~~adding to~~ ^{adding to} his collection, and
within days of joining the bank he quickly tested her
expertise and inside knowledge. Most of the questions he
asked at their first meeting in his office were about the
Hudson river concerned her knowledge of any major collections
still in the hands of titled European families. After seven
years at Sotheby's there was barely a major work that
~~she~~ ^{he} hadn't passed through her hands, or been added to
her database.

She was ~~fascinated~~ ^{puzzled} by Fenton's fascination
with other major collections, until she discovered that it
was the bank's policy to advance large loans against
them as security. Few banks are willing to consider
'Art' in almost any form as collateral. Property, shares,
bonds, land even jewelry, but rarely Art. Bankers do not
understand the market, and have no desire to retain ~~the~~
^{such} assets. Fenton finance was one of the rare exceptions to
the rule. But it was sometime before Anna found out why.

Among Anna's first assignments, after joining the
bank was a trip to England to value the estate of William
Wentworth 7th Marquis of Cambridge. It turned out to be a
typical English collection, built up by an aristocrat
with taste and a good eye. From his own countrymen he chose

Romney, Yates Constable Moorland and a magnificent
after Turner, 'Sunset over Plympton'. The fourth marquise, ~~extended~~
to the collection, having ~~come from~~ the grand bar of Europe.
He arrived ~~back~~ at Wentworth two years later with a

The fourth fifth and sixth marquise showed little interest
in adding to the collection, but it was seventh marquise
~~who~~ acquired from Dr Drexler a painting that many
collected throughout the world ^{had} become obsessed with. Anna
had warned Fenton that Van Gogh attributions were
more dubious than wall street bankers. A smile Fenton
did not care for. She added that there were probably as
many as two hundred fakes in ~~the~~ private collections, and
three in major museums. Not least the metropolitan.

However after Anna had studied the paperwork
that went with "Van Gogh's poppies", which included
a reference to the Marquis in one of Drexler's letters, and
a certificate of authenticity from Mme Tellebaud at the
Van Gogh museum, not to mention a receipt for 200F
she was able to advise Fenton, that the large oil canvas
of red poppies in a Flanders field was unquestionable the
hand of the master.

Anna spent a fortnight at Wentworth Hall valuing
the the ^{and concluded} fourth marquise collection, that it would more than
cover the ^{bank} twenty million dollars advance, should a sale
prove necessary. Anna had no interest in why William Wentworth
required such a large loan, but during his stay he never
stopped telling her about the newly formed doctum company
that was certain to double his money. Sadly William, an
amusing and charming companion, held in the eye of the
third marquise, or the sternness of the seventh, otherwise
he would have cashed in his shares, once he had shown a
handsome return, rather than remain committed. He would
probably his investment, if he had the 'balls' to hang in there.
was bound

He had the balls, at a time when brains would have been more useful. This was no more than Bryce Fenton had anticipated, and when the Dot com bubble burst, Fenton called in his loan, ~~and~~ ^{when} there wasn't much worth could do with his shares except from them.

Anna lengthened her pace as she passed by the Carousel. She checked her watch, off twelve seconds, she frowned, but at least no one had overtaken her. She began to consider the Wentworth collection, and the advice she would be offering Fenton that morning. Anna could recall every painting and sculpture in William's collection without ever having to refer to any paperwork. The one gift that had set her apart from her contemporaries at Penn was a photographic memory. Once she had seen a painting she would never forget its provenance or location. Every Sunday she would put her skill to the test, by visiting a new gallery or a room at the Metropolitan. She would then return to her apartment and write down the name of every artist on display, the size of the picture, and any known ~~history~~ ^{provenance}. Since leaving university she had added The Louvre, The Prado, The Museum of Art in Washington and St Petersburg to her memory bank. The Getty and the Phillips ~~Museum~~ ^{Museum}, along with thirty seven private were stored in the data base of her brain. An asset Fenton was willing to pay over the odds for.

Damn said Anna as she passed the statue of Hans Christian Andersen, and it was the great children's story teller that had annoyed her, but a slightly overweight young man who had smiled passed her. She had once tried to keep up with him, and even dipped into puffing conversation ~~with him~~, but let him get away when she ~~realised~~ ^{realised}, he still hadn't read Hans Christian Andersen. Her friend Kimberley, would have slept with him that night, discarded him by the next morning, and forgotten

~~his name~~ by the weekend. Anna sometimes wished she could ~~she could~~ be just as casual about sex, but having been brought up in Europe with a mother and father who were about to celebrate their forty-fifth wedding anniversary it hadn't proved quite that easy.

Once again she let the man get away as she continued to concentrate on the questions Fenton was likely to ask her.

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How much do you think the collection ~~will~~^{would} fetch at auction.

Without without the Van Gogh Leapman asked before venturing a reply.

Without said Fenton ~~after~~^{after} sipping his ~~cup~~^{cup} of coffee that morning.

Twenty, Twenty ~~five~~^{five} million, ~~perhaps even more~~ if we are to rely on Mil Bredova's ~~assessment~~^{current} valuation. And how much does Wentworth ~~owe~~^{owe} the bank.

Leapman opened ~~the~~ file in front of him. 24,272,254 dollars at close of business last night. Like so many men who are amused they are about to make a killing, ~~William Wainwright~~^{William Wainwright} ~~was~~^{had} bothered to read the small print.

And end up getting killed themselves

And the Van Gogh

we have it in the books at ~~ten~~^{ten} million, but but that would only be the opening bid.

There won't be an opening bid said Fenton, as he ~~spread~~^{spread} some marmalade on his butterless toast. He paused. It could take us years to sell the rest of the collection, after all we wouldn't want to flood the market, and by then the interest charges alone, will sadly not be ~~enough~~^{be enough to cover} ~~the~~ the Van Gogh.

Leapman didn't comment. For the past eleven years he had watched his market, shrewdly obtaining major works, one after another, from men who were

