

A Simple Statement of Fact  
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I met him on the stairs outside my apartment building. Our shoulders bumped for a second as I passed him, and continued up to the second floor. Something told me that I didn't want to go into the building quite yet- something interesting was about to happen. I stayed at the top of the landing where I could just see the man at the bottom of the stairs, but he couldn't see me. I could see the bottom panel of the wooden door as it suddenly swung open.

A tall, leggy woman walked out of the bottom floor of the shabby apartment building, which was painted in a color that went out of style three decades ago. She was wearing a red skirt and high heels- not what you'd expect for November in Minnesota.

She had a searching look in her eyes- scanning him for some indication that he had exactly what she was looking for. He did. Tucked in his leather attaché was a manila envelope. Inside that envelope I assumed there was a stack of photos. He took out the envelope and handed it to her, but then didn't let go. He said "You have to pay the rest of my bill before you can get these."

She reached into her small red purse and pulled out a check, neatly folded in half, writing to the inside. She handed it to the man, and said, "I hope you got what I wanted."

"Oh, I did. Just remember- I'm just the guy you hired to take the photos- I'm not the one in them." He unfolded the check, then glanced at it. "Hey, this is a little light."

“Just give them to me already.” She ripped the envelope out of his hands.

“I’ll get the rest of my money out of you later.”

The man skulked away into the shadows of the alley next to the stairs. The woman stood there, transfixed for a moment on some distant memory. She clutched the envelope to her breast, and she began to tremble. I could tell she was debating whether or not to open the envelope. She didn’t open it, she just waked back into the building, slamming the door behind her.

I entered the second floor, and went to my apartment. The next time I saw her, she was dead. She was lying on the ground next to the dumpster. I never really saw her face, but I knew it was her- I saw her shoes. Not what you’d expect for November in Minnesota.