



An Afternoon With PRÜF

The day is clear, with a warm sun lighting the shopfronts on the opposite side of the street. In the comfortable shade on the lower side, Anne walks casually down the sidewalk, enjoying a light breeze as she enters a small street-front gallery. Her eye is attracted to a contemporary scene rendered in deeply textured oils, and her glasses paint the small PRÜF enabled QR code on the frame's corner a fluorescent green. As she briefly stares at the dotted symbol, an image of the artist's bio superimposes itself onto the lower right quarter of the frame along with a brief video of him coyly discussing the inspiration for his work. Mildly annoyed, Anne silences the video with a gesture so other information about the piece dominates the viewport. The painting is for sale (*Big surprise there, she muses*) and the price is listed at 700. *Impasto*. That's the word she was looking for. That kind of painting is 'impasto'.

Being a little over her budget for retro-art paintings, Anne browses around a bit more before lazily drifting back out to the street. *Looks like that wall above the sofa is staying blank for now.* Walking further down, she happens upon an open-air exhibition with some pleasant but unoriginal work—more of the same-old-same, even a still life of fruit (*Who would buy that?*) on display.

Anne does a doubletake to look at a tranquil mandarin-style river scene, comfortably unremarkable yet possessing a certain serenity that she enjoys. She is pleasantly surprised when a very reasonable price appears along with no annoying video. She imagines this canvas seats

the thousandth iteration of this scene by the faceless artist, each identical yet lovingly original. Exactly what she was looking for, a mood but not a conversation piece.

Quickly purchasing the item with a swipe of her hand, Anne passes the delivery information to the merchant with her electronic payment, pending delivery. She watches as the price is replaced in the AR view with “PURCHASED, DELIVERY WITH ESCROW.” A small sound and buzz emanate from the seller’s pocket, and he takes an ancient iPhone out and reviews the purchase. Her eyes warm, savoring the picturesque scene of the wrinkled man squinting at the screen in his hand. He smiles (pleasant if slightly practiced) at Anne and dips his head, reaching over to the brown paper roll as he begins to package the painting for travel. She smiles back, wondering if he doesn’t speak Portuguese. *Or maybe he just pretends not to*—something she could relate to if she were in his shoes. Later this afternoon, Anne will receive the painting at her flat. When she does, she will confirm the receipt and the escrow funds will be released to the seller. She wonders if she should put an outrageous price on the painting now, just in case someone really wants it... but no. Too tacky. She hates when she goes to someone’s house and everything is for sale.

Almost tripping on her waistcoat, Anne bumps gently into an adorable magenta scooter parked along the street. *Oh, wow, it’s a Tespa!* She has seen these new ones around quite a bit these days, but hasn’t taken the time to see one up close and personal yet. With a battery that would last her a week of daily use and an advanced maneuvering assistant, these cute little vehicles are all the hotness for style, economy, and safety in a commuter bike. Curious, she focuses briefly on the umlaut in the center of the ID sticker, but only the words “PRIVATELY-OWNED” are displayed. With a subtle flicking gesture, a context menu of “FOR SALE NEAR YOU” zooms into view hovering over the sticker. There are two Tespas within a kilometer, but looking at the prices, Anne sighs and selects “NOTIFY ME OF NEW LISTINGS UNDER 6235,” a preset she uses that provides her with notifications for 75% or less of the relevant price.

Making her way toward her favorite spot at the park near the street vendor with the empanadas from heaven (*Or is it heaven? With all its wicked temptation?*) and bending to sit at her favorite bench, Anne muses about whether or not she should put a reward on her “phone” as she feels the coldness of the bench soaking up through her coat. She “lost” it yesterday, but is starting to think maybe it was lifted from her pocket. Not that she needs it anyway, but being kind of old fashioned (*But definitely not a hipster* she tells herself reassuringly), she still carries one. *There is something just a little more real about looking at words on a screen instead of reading them floating in mid-air.*

Anne thinks maybe she should let that habit go anyway. No one from her generation (or her mother’s) *Or really, hardly anyone except wrinkled old men and anachronists* – uses phones. But she decides to set 19.9997 as the reward instead. That would cover the network fees to an even

20. She enters the myStuff app (she still used MyStuff, even though the interface is a little dated, and there are much more modern PRÜF wallets) and selects her phone with a subtle pinching motion, flicking it up onto the center of her view. She quickly changes the status of the sleek rectangle to “LOST” and enables a “REWARD IF RETURNED” flag. Chastising herself for being careless, she cringes over her embarrassment in thinking someone has taken it. *No one does that anymore, except out of pure malice. What would you do with a stolen thing anyway? No one will buy it unless you can somehow change the serial numbers - and even then, an unlisted, used item? Pretty suspicious. I guess you might be able to sell the parts, but at that point, who would bother?*

Birds chirp overhead (*Probably real birds*) as Anne watches two children playing what seems to be a game of tag around a grassy mound. Wistfully drifting between thoughts, she is startled when a voice comes from just beside her. *It’s Martim*. He is a little late, of course, but she expected that.

“Oh, hi, I was just wondering where you were!” Anne says. (She wasn’t, but she wants him to think she was.)

“You owe me 20.” smiles Martim.

“What?”

“Just kidding. You left this relic at my house yesterday, I thought you might want it…”

With a sudden recollection, a playfully feigned puzzlement is written across Anne’s brow. Martim continues:

“I saw you put a reward on it… you’re a Luddite, you know that?”

“Oh thanks..” she says, mildly amused at herself and rising to her feet—*Martim isn’t wrong, really*.

As they walk together toward the river, a tourist gondola slides silently by on the other side. They pause near the riverbank, at the faux-ruststained railing. Taking in the scene, a moment of silence ensues as the boat passes, a sun-worn older gentleman adjusting his glasses at the bow of the narrow craft. As if on cue, they turn toward each other as the beautifully painted transom of the boat comes into view. Looking away to the river, Martim says with a hint of a smile,

“Forget the twenty, you can buy us a pizza.”