

Things to work on: Slow pace and transitioning, Abrupt ending with too many loose threads leaving the reader unsatisfied. Either add scenes or drop more hints for the readers imagination.

"I think you could flesh out the characters with just expansion on the scenes you have." - Vesurel

Ronan's karaktär byggdes upp snyggt via dialogerna, kanske mer om relationen mellan han och Bunty behöver klargöras

Sand and Habits [1934]

The dead man laid splayed on the concrete ground with sand covering both eyes. Police officers walked around the corpse, taking notes of the deceased. The cold blue light from the police cars in the moonless night made the man's dark skin take a paler hue, reminding of metal rust. The officers pointed to the chest that contained several gruesome stab wounds and lacerations across the whole section.

The men in uniforms were busy closing off the perimeters when a scruffy man with unkempt red hair and unshaven chin walked up to the body. Brisk steps made the lower part of his beige trench coat flutter. His dark green eyes never broke contact with the corpse as if nothing else mattered in the whole world.

Several constables looked at the strange man and then switched to look for guidance from their sergeant with raised eyebrows. The sergeant, a lanky man with greying hair sighed and went to greet the trespasser. "Ronan, not this shit again."

"Nice to see you too, Bunty," Ronan replied, stopping in front of the dead and giving a quick scan of the surroundings. "Sand covering both eyes, seems like it's the increasingly popular Sandman, am I right?"

Sergeant Bunty nodded. "This makes the fifth victim in two months."

"So what did the passerby say this time?" asked Ronan as he knelt down to get a better look at the open wounds.

The sergeant hesitated to answer, his eyebrows scrunched up in confusion.

"Come on, Bunty," said Ronan with disapproval in his tone. He picked up a small notebook from inside his coat and began to scribble. "The other four had bystanders, it's obvious this one would follow the same pattern."

"You and your patterns," muttered Bunty while scratching his head. He motioned for the other constables to go away. Then he knelt down next to Ronan and said with a lower voice, "You know, we're kinda stuck in this case..."

"No shit."

"I was thinking you might want to interrogate this woman?" said Bunty with closed eyes and clenched teeth. He already regretted this suggestion.

"The police is asking me for help?" said Ronan fanning himself with the notebook in exaggerated movements. "My, what has the world come to?"

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Mrs Tate was an older woman with chalk white hair, pale blue eyes and acted like someone who had a sinful confession in mind. She sat on a park bench talking with an officer while holding a small black dog in her arms who looked oblivious to the whole situation. Bunty gave orders to the officer who quickly left and Ronan proceeded to sit down next to the woman and stare into her eyes.

"Mrs Tate, was it?" asked Ronan, he leaned forward almost touching nose with the older woman who responded by leaning back with a shocked expression.

"Your eyes are scary," said the older woman with a quivering voice. Bunty hurriedly came to aid.

"This is private detective Ronan Haislip," explained Bunty. "He's helped the city police with many cases and we are once again seeking his consultation. He has some questions and it would help us immensely if you could answer them."

Ronan winked at Bunty and then returned to Mrs Tate. "Exactly what Bunty said, it would help us...immensely." He took out his notebook once again. "Now, walk us through everything. From the beginning."

Mrs Tate nodded. She fidgeted with the black dog's fur for a moment and then took a deep breath.

"I was out walking with my dog Winston when I noticed some sounds in the alley," she said. "Winston started to bark really loudly and he doesn't do that unless he feels that we are threatened. I was thinking of whether to look inside the alley or not when this huge man ran out, really fast. I looked in and..."

Her voice cracked, she took a deep breath again. "...and I saw this man laying on the ground. There was a pool of blood underneath him. I called for help and rang the emergency number, I remember the man looking at me with his green eyes just like you..."

"Wait," interrupted Ronan. "He was alive?"

Mrs Tate nodded, swallowing before continuing. "Yes, he was still alive. He looked at me saying something I couldn't hear and then...he just...stopped." The quivers returned to her voice. ***"I had to get out of the alley, I called the emergency again and again, until I saw the police cars arrive. When we went together the man's eyes were covered in sand. It wasn't me, I swear!" [Read comment about calling emergency]***

Ronan looked at Bunty who shrugged.

"Describe this huge man that ran away," said Ronan.

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"He wore a yellow raincoat, one of those screammy ones, and he seemed to be about two meters tall. Broad shouldered. Couldn't see his face because he had the coat up. Dark blue jeans and black boots."

Ronan continued to write in silence after the older woman finished telling her story. She squirmed and looked at the sergeant who responded with a nod and smile. They continued to wait in the dark until Ronan put away his tools.

"Thank you, Mrs Tate."

"Got any clues from that?" asked Bunty after they said goodbye to Mrs Tate and exchanged contact information. They were in Bunty's car, who had offered to give Ronan a ride home.

"This whole case is bullshit," said Ronan. He looked irritated as if the whole world had insulted him. "Five witnesses with five different testimonials on the potential murderer. Either the murderer is a chameleon or some of them are lying."

"Why would they lie?" questioned Bunty as he turned on the radio for some music.

"Because they're people," responded Ronan. He smacked away Bunty's hand from the radio. "People lie. Like you."

"What do you mean?" responded Bunty, retreating his hand back to the steering wheel.

"It will help us immensely," said Ronan, imitating Bunty's voice. "Bullshit, you knew that her story wouldn't give us any new leads."

"I said that to help the situation," inquired the sergeant. "You always approach people way too threatening, she was so scared."

"You. Lied," said Ronan enunciating each word. "You're no different than the others."

Bunty sighed. "Look, Ronan, I'm sorry about you getting fired. Let's talk about it over a drink when we're done with this case alright?"

Ronan didn't answer. He looked out the window into the deep night. "Did you guys check the stab wounds of the previous victims like I told you?"

"Yeah," said Bunty in a more relaxed tone. "There were many irregular stabs, the angles don't make sense, like..."

"Like it was made by several people?"

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Bunty nodded in silence. "Damn, you figured that out just by looking at the body?"

"I had a hunch when you briefed me over the phone," said Ronan. "The body merely confirmed it. I just need to know one more thing..."

The car came to a screeching halt. Ronan almost crashed into the car's interior. He looked up ready to complain when the eyes of Bunty made him backpedal.

"Not again Ronan," said Bunty between a hiss and a growl. His nose was flaring and the shoulder raised and lowered as the sergeant took deep breaths to control himself. "Don't you dare think of doing it again."

"Woah, Bunty, pal, wait..." tried Ronan. He wriggled himself as close to the window as possible, putting up his hands in capitulation.

"You already figured out who the murderer is, haven't you?" Bunty threw out an arm and grabbed a handful of Ronan's collar. The police sergeant then pulled the private detective closer with a surprising power. "But you want to figure out why they did it."

"Bunty, come on," the scruffy man continued. But the energy wasn't there and he cast down his eyes, avoiding to meet the gaze of the law enforcer.

"No, you come on, Ronan," spat Bunty out. "Tell me who the murderer is, don't do the same mistake that got you fired. Out with it."

"I don't know!" burst Ronan out and pushed the friend's hand away, freeing himself. The redhead folded his arms around himself and curled up in his seat.

Bunty's eyes widened for a moment, shocked by Ronan's answer. Then he looked away and said with a cold voice, "So that's how it is then."

"No seriously. I. Don't. Know," said Ronan, throwing his hands up in the air, exasperated. "How many times do I have to tell you?"

"Wait, you really don't know?"

"Yes," said Ronan with a defeated tone. "I. Don't. Know."

"Well..." said Bunty now trying to find words of comfort. "You've been away from work for a few months now, so of course you would be a bit rusty, it happens."

"Oh shut up and start the car."

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The police officer obliged and they were on the road again. Bunty gave several glances to the private detective but Ronan had closed his eyes and leaned back in his seat. They continued for a while until Ronan broke the silence.

"So why did they do this?"

"Does it matter, I mean can't it just be that the murderer is crazy?" responded Bunty as he relaxed, relieved his friend was no longer giving the silent treatment.

"Does it matter?!" said Ronan with an offended tone. He returned his seat back to normal position and stared at Bunty in disbelief. "Have you ever been listening to me all these years?"

"Too much, I'm afraid," muttered the older man under his breath.

"Every person follows a pattern, a routine whether it's actively or subconscious. Even murderers, it could be because they are bored, or tired, or maybe they don't like the tone of their voices. It could be anything. Normal people are easy to figure out their routines, but crazy people - it could be anything. That's what makes it so interesting!" said Ronan, his hands whirling around to match the energy of his voice. "The trigger could be anything!"

"Yes, yes," said Bunty meekly, he zoned out as Ronan continued with his explanation of human behaviour pattern until they arrived at their destination. The detective stepped out of the vehicle with light steps and was going to shut the door when Bunty interrupted.

"Promise to give me a call when you find out who the murderer is."

"Not if?" returned Ronan.

"I know you will just... give me a call before you act, okay?" said Bunty, he struck Ronan's shoulder with a light punch and they both exchanged smiles for the first time in months.

Ronan looked down at the concrete ground for a thoughtful moment before he nodded.

"Yeah, sure." He then closed the door and Bunty drove off.

The private detective stayed in place and waved his goodbyes until the car couldn't be seen anymore. Then he picked up his phone and gave a call.

"Mrs Tate, mind if we meet? There's this thing in your story that keeps nagging me..."

<You have reached the owner of the number... please leave a message after the tone.>

<Ronan, it's me. The forensics have returned with some reports and we might have a clue. I asked them to search for things the victims had in common, from hobbies and social life to

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physical attributes and... we got a match. Ronan, they all have green eyes. The Sandman targets people with green eyes. So whatever you do, don't go alone. I found the motive, so call me when you find the who. I know you will. Just don't be rash, give me a call.

Alright, bye. See you soon.>