

The pounding of my
feet on the ground.



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The mysterious power of art to move a person Mornings in Ireland were chilly; the frost bit through their and the wind was merciless. Undaunted, I ran through the small dirt trail in the woods, my heart beating in rhythm to the pounding of my feet on the ground. Within thirty minutes I finished my morning jog and was back in the warmth of my small cabin. I slipped into my morning routine, making myself a cup of hot chocolate and then stretched out on the front porch. Ireland was home to fauna and folklore, and sitting in my small secluded cabin I found no reason to disagree. I was in Ireland, on a purely business trip. I was a journalist and I was here to write about Duende. Duende was a world renowned artist, whose paintings had been the centre of talk since their launch.

What had made her paintings so unique and so different was the fact that they told a different tale to each person that looked at it. It showed you your soul's deepest secret. Or so I had been told. Duende had remained anonymous, and I was determined to get an interview out of her at her art gallery opening today.

*I was dressed in my finest, my tie slightly haphazard as I drove down to the art gallery. I had even attempted to trim my beard, to a somewhat pleasing appearance. I wasn't surprised to see the throngs of people that had turned up for it.

There had to be at least over two thousand people. Flashing my ID, I made my way to the front along with other media persons, the camera lights blinding me even this early into the evening. I had to get used to this someday.

The crowd roared as a car drove in and a girl walked in. She was younger than I thought she would be. Duende looked to be around her early thirties. To be honest, I had expected someone with a wrinkled face and white hair.

Duende walked slowly, smiled broadly and waved to the crowd almost shyly. As the camera clicked furiously and other people pointed their microphones at her and fired questions, I just watched. Her light grey eyes rested on me for a minute as she smiled and then she turned to her gallery. Cutting the ribbon that was tied across the open doorway she entered and then beckoned for the people to follow. *Almost three hours had passed when the gallery had cleared out and only very few people milled about. Duende had been mingling, and talking to people all evening and I had watched her, the way she was, her behaviour, her quirks and only now was I to look at her work. The gallery was large and had several panels along which hung works of art, framed in golden. It was as if I was pulled into a trance by her paintings, my feet carried me across the gallery to her final painting.

It was here, I stopped. Memories flitted through my mind and suddenly, as if a dam had broken they swam freely in my head. I saw my four year old sister laughing. She was making jokes about how she didn't need a seat belt and that she was stronger than me. My parents turned around to stop our squabbling. They were angry with me. That was the last thing I remembered and then with a shatter, my world went dark. My foolishness had cost three lives.

Three lives of people very dear to me. 'It wasn't your fault.' A voice broke through the fog and I blinked furiously, my hands swiping at the tears

that seem to rest on my cheeks.'What do you know about my life?' I asked my voice slightly hoarse as I turned to see Duende standing beside me.'I do not know about your life, but I know about guilt.'Duende said and walked away. It took me quite some time to come to peace with myself. After years, somehow, the art had helped ease my guilt.

I found myself next to Duende once again.'Thank you.' I whispered to her. She smiled at me and they reached her pretty grey eyes.

We stood in silence as we watched the people in the gallery. 'What is your inspiration?' I asked her almost hesitantly. She tapped her mind and then her heart.'Most people tell me nature.' I joked. She laughed heartily.

'Well, I am going to have to disappoint you there because I am blind Mr. Benedict.' She replied and then with a broad smile walked away. I stared at her retreating figure, stunned.

How did she know my name? Shwetha Rajal Viscom