



Rogue Sketches

Blindness

by Thomas Ryan

He stood in the basement of the house amidst the debris of his shattered life. The creditors would not know for another hour, but the servants were already sneaking out the back door with anything of value.


His had been a meteoric climb. Several cutthroat deals with some unsavory characters to increase his wealth; turning those same characters over to the law to increase his social status. Marriage to a minor noble family to increase his position with manufactured scandal to make sure he was the aggrieved and would not have to return any of the family connections.

Throwing the family out of their city home, and taking what little they had to conceal the scandal; until it was advantageous to him. He could not imagine how it had gone wrong, but he knew the quote scratched in the wall. “If they are too blind to see the monster, and too weak to stop it, then they deserve to die.” He had said that very thing to the stranger who had come from the family. It had been too soon to refuse any entreaties from the family, and he had not been sure if they did not have some concealed wealth or objects he might still milk out of them. The visitor had looked more like a traveling merchant than an emissary. The tramp had simply asked that everything be returned to the family and the scandal erased. He had the servants throw the tramp out of the house and beat him from the door. Was that the tramp's coat on the floor in the corner?

His next visitor had been the madam of a renowned brothel in town. He knew it intimately, but her only by sight. She came asking for a loan to increase her business. He knew a golden opportunity when he saw one. The loan had made a dent in his cash reserves. Was that the hat she wore hanging on the wall?

The next day an invitation to an exclusive club had been tendered by a respected Alderman of the city. His cash reserves were beginning to show the strain after the club fees were paid to the Alderman. He borrowed from his investors accounts to cover some of his bills. He enjoyed his evenings at the club and saw the potential for advancement and money. Was that the Alderman's coat next to the madam's hat?

The next week had seen an offer placed before him by the Alderman to join the Trade Commission for a 'little' bribe to one of the undersecretaries. The Commission would put him in a position to milk the merchants of the city for bribes and favors so they could compete with





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their peers. Everything was coming his way. All was going according to plan. Was that the undersecretary's coat on the floor?

He had to raid the funds of his investors and borrow from one of his shadier acquaintances to raise the money, but he knew it would be coming back a hundred fold. The commission never came. He waited a week and sent an inquiry to the Trade Commission but was rebuffed.

He went to confront the damn undersecretary but was informed the undersecretary had died last winter. Yes, they had not removed his name from the roster of officials, but they would do so immediately. He went to his Club to relax, but was turned away at the door. They said his patron had removed his name from his guest list. He insisted he had a membership, but they had no records of him being anything but a guest. He was humiliated. He stormed over to the Alderman's office. He would get to the bottom of this. He was informed the Alderman was summering at his manor in the country. He had been gone for two months and would return next week.

Now he was confused. He checked with his sources. They confirmed what he had been told of the Alderman and the undersecretary. These same sources stated that he had funding problems. His creditors were nervous.

He needed money, so he went to the Madam to recoup his loan. She made it clear that she had her own powerful patrons, and would never have approached him for funds. He was seen being ejected from the brothel while raging at its matron. He had been humiliated in public not once but three times in the same day, and now there were rumors of his financial stress.

At home he found a note pinned to his door announcing that his loan with Egor the Bear was due tonight, and the Bear would collect it, himself. He knew that if Egor was coming then it was common knowledge he was broke.

He dismissed the servants, they would know soon if not already, and went to his study. He racked his brain for a way out and remembered the scandal which might be turned to his advantage now. He unlocked his safe, but found no papers, no cash; only a note telling him to go to the basement.

Angry at the villain doing this, he went to the basement. Armed with his sword, he wished to confront the fool who sought to steal his life. Among the scattered contents of the





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basement he saw no one, but noticed the quote scratched into the wall.

Someone had set him up. He saw the path he had so gladly run down to his own destruction. Scattered about the basement where the people that had led him to first dispose of his fortune and then his reputation.

“I like a man who writes his own epitaph,” Omnes stated as he stepped from the shadows.

“Why?”

“The family were friends, and I asked,” Omnes replied as he pried the family ring from the stunned man’s hand.



“Omnes” created by Peter Damian Muhich in [Rogue Sketches: A Challenge for Omnes \(A Prologue\)](#).

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