

Pastries

Danny was tired. Physically, mentally, spiritually, monumentally, astronomically, yeah, all of those. Some more too if she cared enough to think up some more. She didn't. If she had to stitch one more cross-stitch, she thought she'd stitch herself right into one of her pieces by accident. It's come close before in the 3am grind to finish before a deadline.

Her life was decidedly boring and uneventful to most in the eternal pursuit of a degree in fashion design. It had sounded exciting and fun in the months and weeks before she flew to New York City—and for the first few months it was. Now, she'd give anything just to set it all aside for about two millennia and become a neurosurgeon or something similar far away from any sort of creativity or old farts who hermed and hummed over student pieces frantically thrown together to meet cruel and unusual deadlines. She's sure there's been significant loss of life as a result. Mentally. Well, there was Arnold. But we don't talk about Arnold. Not after the leather incident.

Her piece was half-way finished, crappy-looking. Shoddy embodied in a piece of clothing. She wanted to take it out of its misery, the poor thing. The arm stuck out too high on the vest. The fabric was hell to work with. She imagined ripping it into fuzzy, little leather bits.

It lay haphazard on the tiny dorm desk, surrounded by fellow sewing casualties.

Her roommate was asleep, so her desk lamp rather than the painful overhead was on.

She tried not to be jealous of her, her luxurious freedom to sleep. Magnanimous. Delectable. Simply scandalous. What she wouldn't give to just close her eyes for a few glorious hours. But not yet. It wasn't finished. And artists don't stop halfway through. Well, the ones that get paid, anyway.

She groaned and rubbed at her eyes, the way she did every few minutes to attempt gathering some semblance of energy in the nooks and crannies of her soul. The brain cells fled from her like cockroaches when the light turns on. She came up empty.

Doesn't matter, just a little longer. She lifted the piece to begin painstakingly hand stitching the inlay of the seam again, not even halfway done yet.

She needed a break. When did she graduate? Three years. Good Lord. She'd probably take the Arnold route if it kept going like this. Her stomach growled mournfully. It was the wee hours of the morning and the last time she ate was dinner. And that felt like it took place in another era.

She thought about the pastries across the street.

Big mistake.

Their gooey red filling, not to mention the pastries' delicate sweetness filled her imagination. What she wouldn't give.

Get it together, woman!

If she didn't graduate she wouldn't get a job that would allow her to buy those flaky, predatorily pricey treats. And that would be a true tragedy indeed.

It was decided, she would just have to finish the piece that night. Whatever it took. Whatever the cost.

This may come to surprise you, but she had already been using this same exact thought to motivate her through the endless long bell-bottom jean nights and early frill-dress mornings.

It had yet to fail.

She breathed in deep and stared at the half-done statement jacket teetering dangerously on the ledge between bold and ugly. It was a good place to be in the fashion industry she reminded herself. Half the time pieces that took a deep dive into ugly were the professor's favorites. Though, the later, or earlier it got the more she began to wonder if the statement her jacket was trying to make was a plea for help.

When she had seen the roll of fabric it had seemed like a dashing, bold combination of browns and greens, yellow. Fashionable, chic even. Now it was just what you'd find flicking through hangers at a thrift store and stare at for a second just for how astoundingly ugly it was, and then snap a pic to send to your friend to laugh about. Truly a sight.

But, it would be good enough to make the grade. If she finished. It didn't matter if her professor would stare at it with a look of thinly veiled disinterest that bordered on indecent. It would pass, and then she would be one step closer to flaky croissants whenever she felt like it. Who cares if she wasn't the next Coco Chanel or Valentino Giovanni.

Cheesy danishes, cheesecake, cherry-filled delicacies. Every day, as a must. Several even. No, that'd be indulgence gone too far. Two. Two would suffice. One in the afternoon, with tea, the other in the evening after dinner.

But if she didn't get this wretched degree she wouldn't be able to afford them, spendy little things. Much less afford to keep living in New York. She'd have to move back home, but none of the pastries there came within a mile of the quality at that tiny little hole in the wall place. The bagels were really good too, the everything bagel—God. Maybe she'd get one tomorrow morning, yes to reward herself!

Okay, keep going, just keep going. Come on Danny, be a big girl get it done. And in the morning, pastry-time baby.