

## Drang

The moment that his hands reached down to her shoulders, her mind set off for the Philadelphia Museum of Art, November 1997. By the time her head hit the wall, she was bored and self-conscious – bored because the guide was on to the fifth picture of some duke, and self-conscious because she was 14 and wasn't alone.

This was unusual. Usually, when he got angry, her mind didn't wander; it just faded. He reached for a fourth beer – her vision clouded. His eyelids and footsteps grew heavier – her hearing faded. By the time he hit her, she was comfortably wrapped up in static.

It was the radio that did it. Usually, he had it tuned to the Top 40, but the rain tonight kept messing with the signal, so she had switched over to some bland piano music. As his yelling started, the piano stopped, and a voice came on. It was a real *radio* voice – not the brash twang of the shock jocks that he liked, but a Public Radio voice, the kind that echoed and had no accent. He would call it an “East Coast liberal know-it-all voice.” But she was from the East Coast, and she had never heard a voice like that. Not in real life – except just the once.

“This is a canonical example of the interplay between shadow and propulsion that typified the proto-Romantic Storm and Drang movement.” He only got her attention because this painting was of the ocean, and she had never seen the ocean. A couple of her friends had been to Atlantic City, but the furthest she had gotten was Ephrata. This painting didn't exactly look like a postcard destination, but she thought she'd rather be in the middle of that shipwreck than stuck at her Gran's house for another summer. She

didn't quite understand what he'd said, but she heard herself asking "I can see the storm, but where's the drang at?"

If she'd said that to her mom, it would be "sass" and she'd be chastised. To her surprise, the guide didn't look annoyed - his scripted monologue was broken up by a genuine chuckle, and to her even greater surprise, he actually answered her question.

"Drang... drang... usually, I believe, it's translated as "stress" or "strife" - probably because 'storm and strife' works rather well in English. It conveys a sense of drama or urgency. And yet... my German is a bit rusty, but... I think there is also a connotation of longing, or desire. Can you see that in the painting?"

When she came to on the kitchen floor, she could see the Storm all around her. In the toppled chairs, in his eyes, in her bleeding elbow. In the years that she had assured herself you couldn't have passion without a bit of strife thrown in. She stood up and walked to the door and out into the rain.

"Where the hell do you think you're going?"

"I'm going to look for the Drang."