

ONE SOUL AT A TIME

PORTRAITS FROM THE STREETS BY FELICITY DON



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UNION GOSPEL MISSION GRACIOUSLY THANKS YOU FOR YOUR
GENEROUS CONTRIBUTION. PLEASE ACCEPT THIS BOOK AS A TOKEN
OF OUR GRATITUDE FOR HELPING US HELP THOSE IN NEED.

PRESENTED TO





ABOUT UNION GOSPEL MISSION

UNION GOSPEL MISSION HAS BEEN PROVIDING HOPE FOR THE HUNGRY, HURTING AND HOMELESS SINCE 1940.

Relying on a broad base of loyal staff, volunteers and donors, Union Gospel Mission provides meals, shelter, education, counselling, housing and more to hundreds of men, women, and children each day. The heart of the mission is to demonstrate God's transforming love, ease the burden of the most vulnerable, rebuild the lives of the broken and offer dignity to those who feel cast aside. With 11 facilities placed between downtown Vancouver and the city of Mission, UGM is ideally positioned to help those who need it the most. UGM is a proud member of the Canadian Council of Christian Charities.

ARTIST PROFILE: FELICITY DON

When Felicity Don was approached by the Union Gospel Mission to produce drawings of their community her reaction was, “Fascinating, absolutely fascinating, but tough, very tough.”

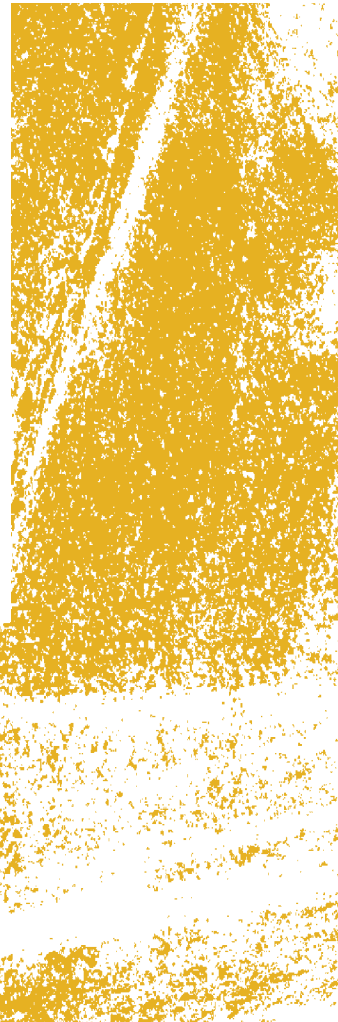
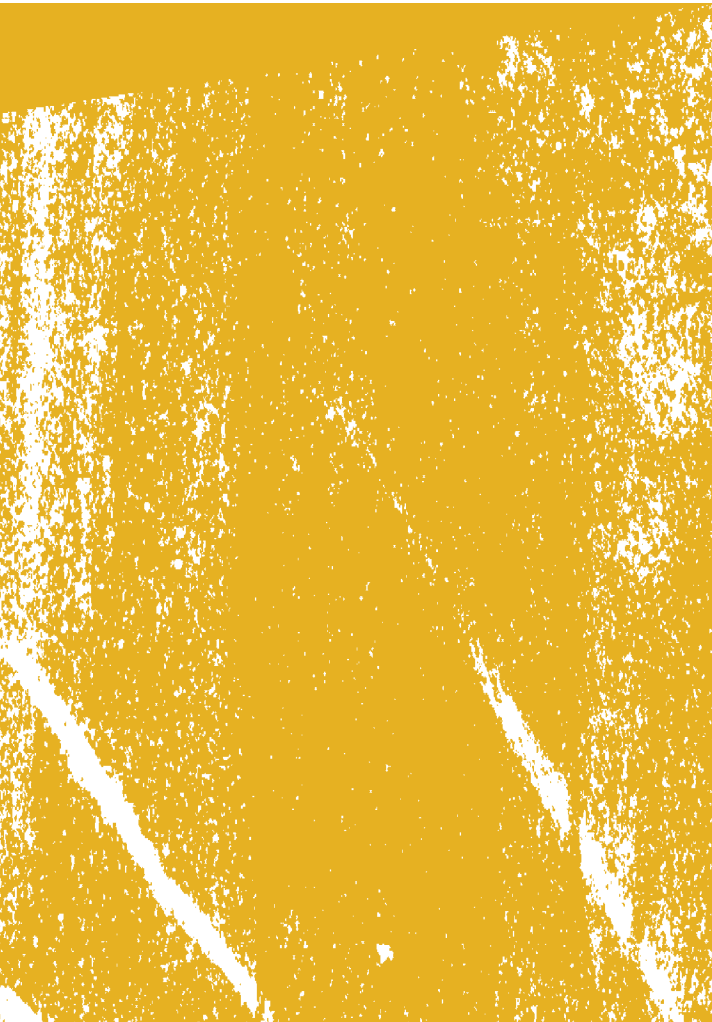
Felicity Don draws from life and saw the difficulty in tackling drawings of 15 minute street line-ups and night shelter scenes. Nevertheless she took on the project with vigour and in 2 months produced a large number of drawings on site, her subjects sharing their life stories with her as she drew.

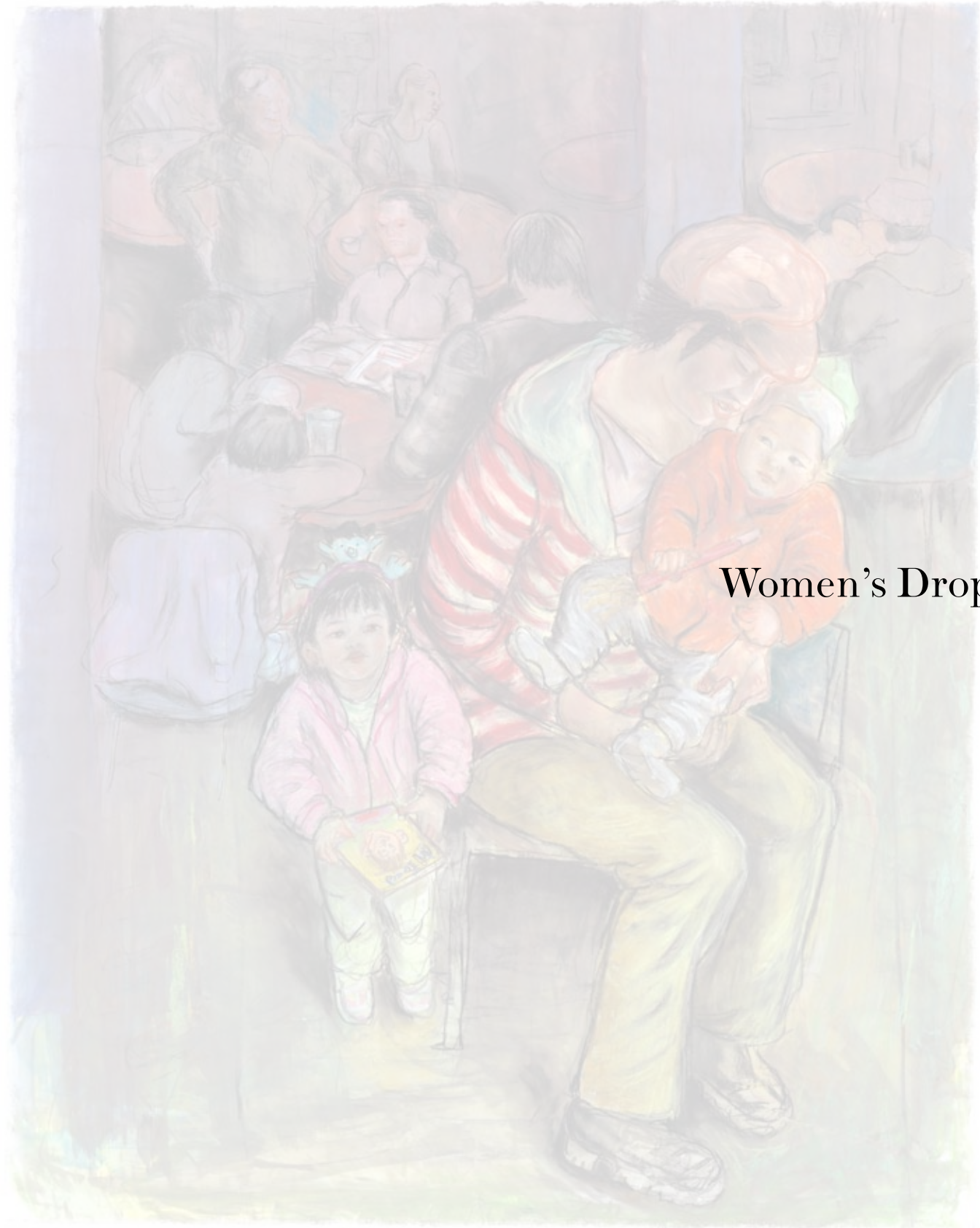
The UGM commission suited Felicity in that she invariably draws in public places and in that sense is always on stage while working. Aside from her work as a portrait artist, Felicity Don is one of Canada’s most prominent courtroom artists. She has worked on many high profile stories, from the cases of former BC Premiers Glen Clark and Bill Vander Zalm, to the Air India and Robert Pickton trials. Her court drawings have appeared on Global,

CBC, CNN and BBC television and have been splashed across the front pages of many newspapers across the nation, from The Globe & Mail to The Vancouver Sun.

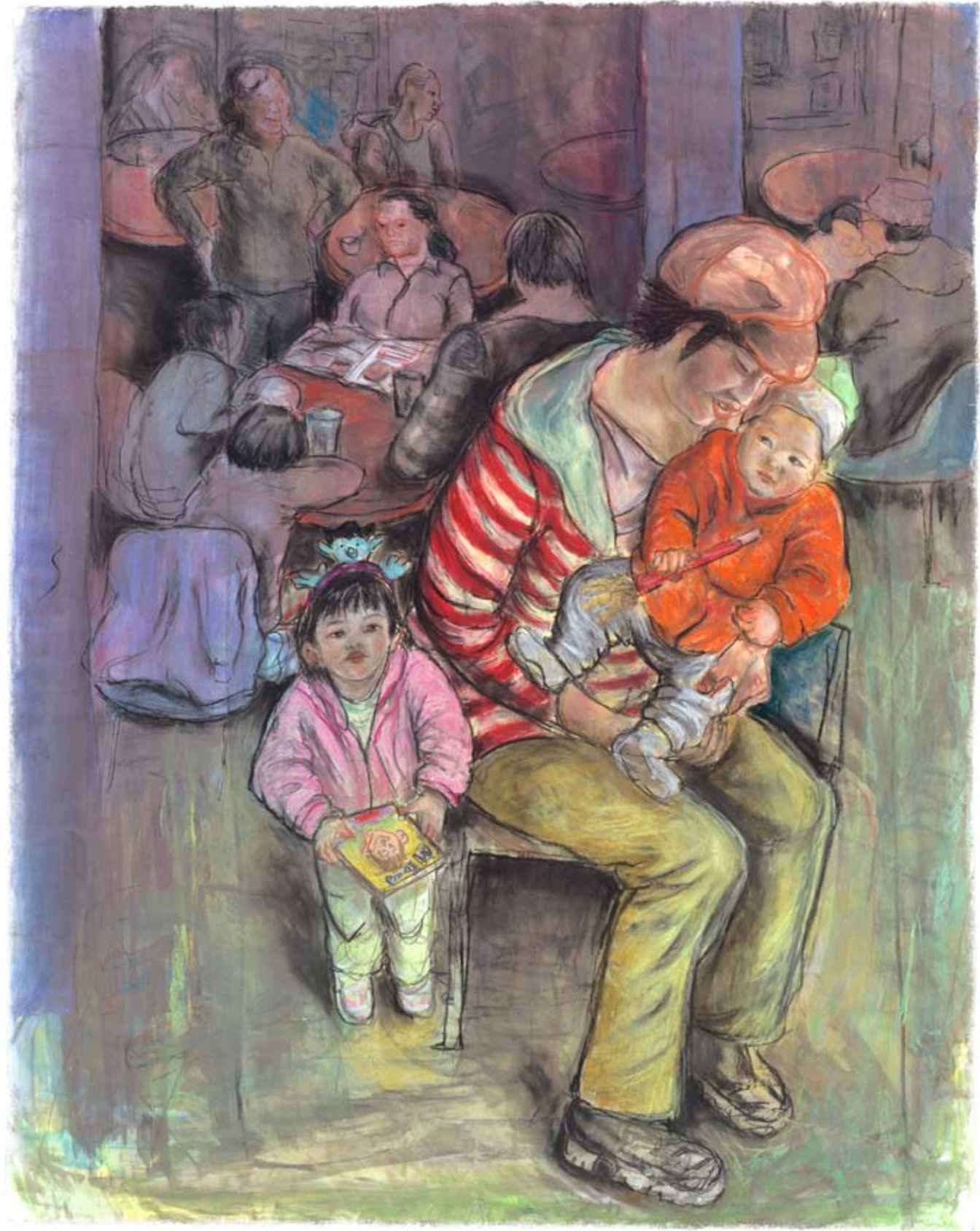
Born in London, England she completed her fine arts degree in Montreal and now resides in Vancouver. Although Felicity depicts a cross section of society from movie stars to the homeless, it is her “unrelenting drive for compelling images that keeps her drawing the colourful characters living in the Downtown Eastside.”* Dharm Makwana of 24 hrs.

Felicity’s UGM portraits are filled with both heartache and hope. She sees a rawness in her subjects’ expressions, a result of their battle to survive. “I feel for them, for us, for humanity.”





Women's Drop-In 1



WOMEN'S DROP-IN

The sweet little girl in pink was very cooperative in posing for me, looking up at me and staying still, sneaking glances occasionally at the progress of the drawing.

“Do you speak English?” I asked. Dead silence.

I tried again: “You’re wearing pink; I bet that’s your favourite colour.” Silence.

“Listen baby,” I said, “can you just move back a bit for me?”

“I’m NOT a baby!” she responded in a loud voice. “I’m a girl!”

The mother is very grateful for the meals they receive, as well as for the bags of diapers and children’s clothes. She is very loving with her children. Unfortunately her husband earns minimum wage and her family – like many families at the Women’s Drop-in – needs help to make ends meet.



Pastor René 2



PASTOR RENÉ

René is a pastor at UGM, who is originally from Mexico. I found him to be an amazingly compassionate man, who really put his heart into helping the suffering people of the streets. I drew only his face, large and reddish like a heart, in order convey the fullness of his caring. I used bright colours and incorporated the symbols of a dove and a heart — hidden in the coloured background — alluding to a traditional Mexican style of painting.



Rose Hat 3

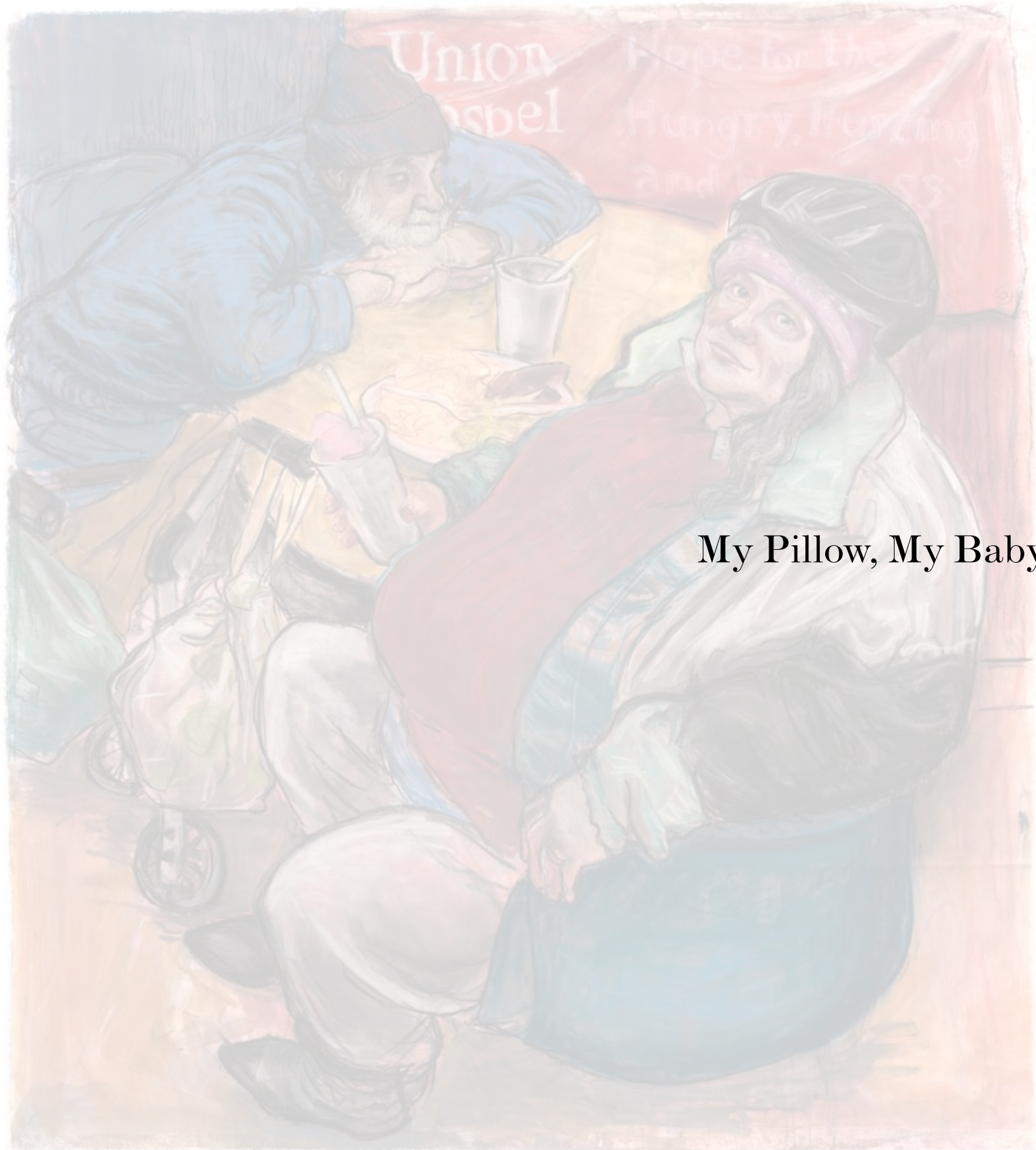




ROSE HAT

At the Women's Drop-in Centre one afternoon, I was drawn to this woman because she had such a lovely shaped face in her rose hat. A First Nations woman with a shy demeanor, her days are filled with worry over various family members, some who have gone astray and others who are heading down the same path.

She shared a little of her story. She had been abused by her partner, had immediately left him and pressed charges. She rooms somewhere in Gastown and depends on UGM for her meals and for the emotional support offered at the drop-in.



My Pillow, My Baby 4

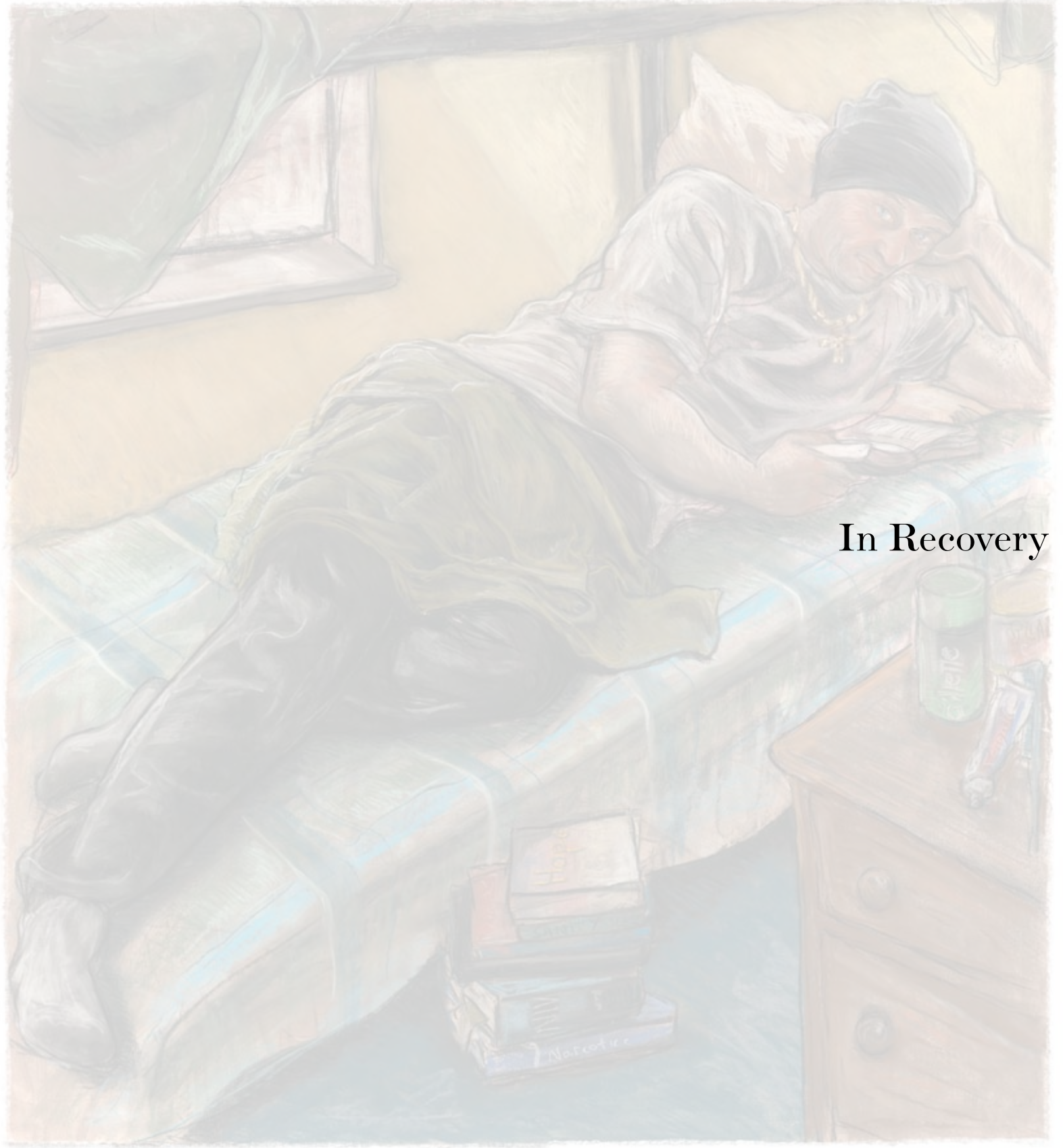




MY PILLOW, MY BABY

This was the first drawing I undertook for the *Hope Begins Here* project. This woman stuffs a pillow, along with other cherished objects, under her clothes, down her front, from stomach to neck. Although I've never witnessed it, people tell me she talks to the pillow as though it were a baby. She was so large and looked so eccentric in the wool hat & bicycle helmet that I couldn't resist drawing her. She was extremely cooperative as I drew her, crowing loudly to everyone about how she was going to be famous & was going to hang in an important gallery.

This lady can be seen daily at the Women's Drop-in Centre, receiving support from staff, and eating in the dining room at UGM. She is what I would call a grazer, going from meal to meal all day, perhaps terrified of going without.



In Recovery 5



IN RECOVERY

Ben* asked me if I would draw him almost the second he met me – he wanted to send the drawing to his mum. I drew him in his room at UGM, studying. Ben absolutely loves the drawing and tells everyone he is sure his picture will be chosen for page one in the book.

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Almost the first thing Ben mentioned was his mum, who lives by the ocean in Newfoundland. She has not heard from him in years and doesn't even know if he is still alive. Ben loves his mum so much and desperately wants to soothe her with the good news of his recovery.

He's been a troubled child since adolescence, when his parents split up, and did time in prison as a teen. Some day, once he has successfully completed the Alcohol & Drug Recovery Program, he wants to return to Newfoundland.

Before entering the Alcohol & Drug Recovery Program, he was sleeping outside UGM on the doorstep, escaping the winter snow. Pastor René saw him there, knew him from his other stays at UGM, and was crying over him. Ben was immensely touched to see someone care so deeply for him and this made him even more determined to turn his life around.

*Name has been changed to protect confidentiality



Dragon Kite 6



DRAGON KITE

This drawing reenacts Dexter* sleeping outdoors at one of his “camps.” I had been out with UGM’s Mobile Mission rescue vehicle and photographed one of his old sleeping haunts to use as the setting for this drawing.

There’s a story behind the shopping cart. I happened to be driving through an alley and saw a man passed out, face down on the asphalt. I pulled over and asked the man standing with a beer in his hand next to the prone man if they would like help, perhaps an ambulance. They declined. We chatted a bit, and I, having seen the transformational work happening at UGM, suggested they might try turning their lives around by going to UGM. I told them about a man who was an alcoholic and had been homeless who was changing before my eyes at the Mission. The man then asked if I knew their friend, the man on the ground’s “brother,” Dexter. “Well that’s who I’m talking about!” I said. The shopping cart with the dragon kite is drawn from Dexter’s friend that day, unbeknownst to Dexter. Funny part is that Dexter wasn’t impressed by the dragon in the cart. He said, “A real dumpster diver wouldn’t use something like that in his cart, only a collector! That’s dumb!” I couldn’t tell him that the kite was from his buddy’s cart, but I hope one day he’ll find out.

I have watched Dexter over the two months I’ve been working on this project. He started his recovery around the time I began the project and I drew him immediately, attracted artistically by his very “street rough” face. He was in a lot of pain, even standing for a few minutes, and he confided that he was ready to flee the Mission. But the other residents and staff watched over him assiduously and today he is still in the program, very proud of himself and full of cheer, mischief and optimism. He is also kind and well-intentioned under the rough look. “I wish the world could be made over again, eh, and there would be no wars and no killing and no pain. Yeah, eh?”

*Name has been changed to protect confidentiality



Soup's Served 7



SOUP'S SERVED

Mike was once homeless and addicted to alcohol and drugs. He's been sober for many years thanks to UGM's Alcohol & Drug Recovery Program, and now works as a cook at UGM. Many people who know Mike appreciate his jovial attitude and kind smile. He doesn't look too jovial here, but I've been told I've drawn him accurately, as people affectionately tell me that when he arrives at the kitchen, he doesn't crack a smile until he's had his second cup of coffee.

The man in the red hat is named John*. John talked as I drew. He has been homeless for nine years and had been living under The Second Narrows Bridge for many of them. His only possessions were a shopping cart, a guitar, and cardboard houses that were often torn down.

He was exhausted from being homeless. John had been waiting for two days for a space in UGM's Alcohol & Drug Recovery Program or some alternative. He told me he couldn't take any more of doing nothing, waiting. I encouraged him to hang on as Pastor René was looking out for him and trying to get him in, though no beds were available. "Really?" he said. He was so touched tears trickled down the large man's face.

John is originally from Winnipeg and made his way to Vancouver where he became addicted to drugs. Many years later, his family turned up from Winnipeg. Somehow they had tracked him down and found him under the bridge. They filmed him and showed him pictures of his brother's children, and then said goodbye. It affected him deeply.

He wants to get into recovery, turn his life around and show his family he did this because of their display of love and support.

René arranges to get this gentleman into a detox program right away, in preparation for him entering UGM's program when a bed becomes available.

*Name has been changed to protect confidentiality



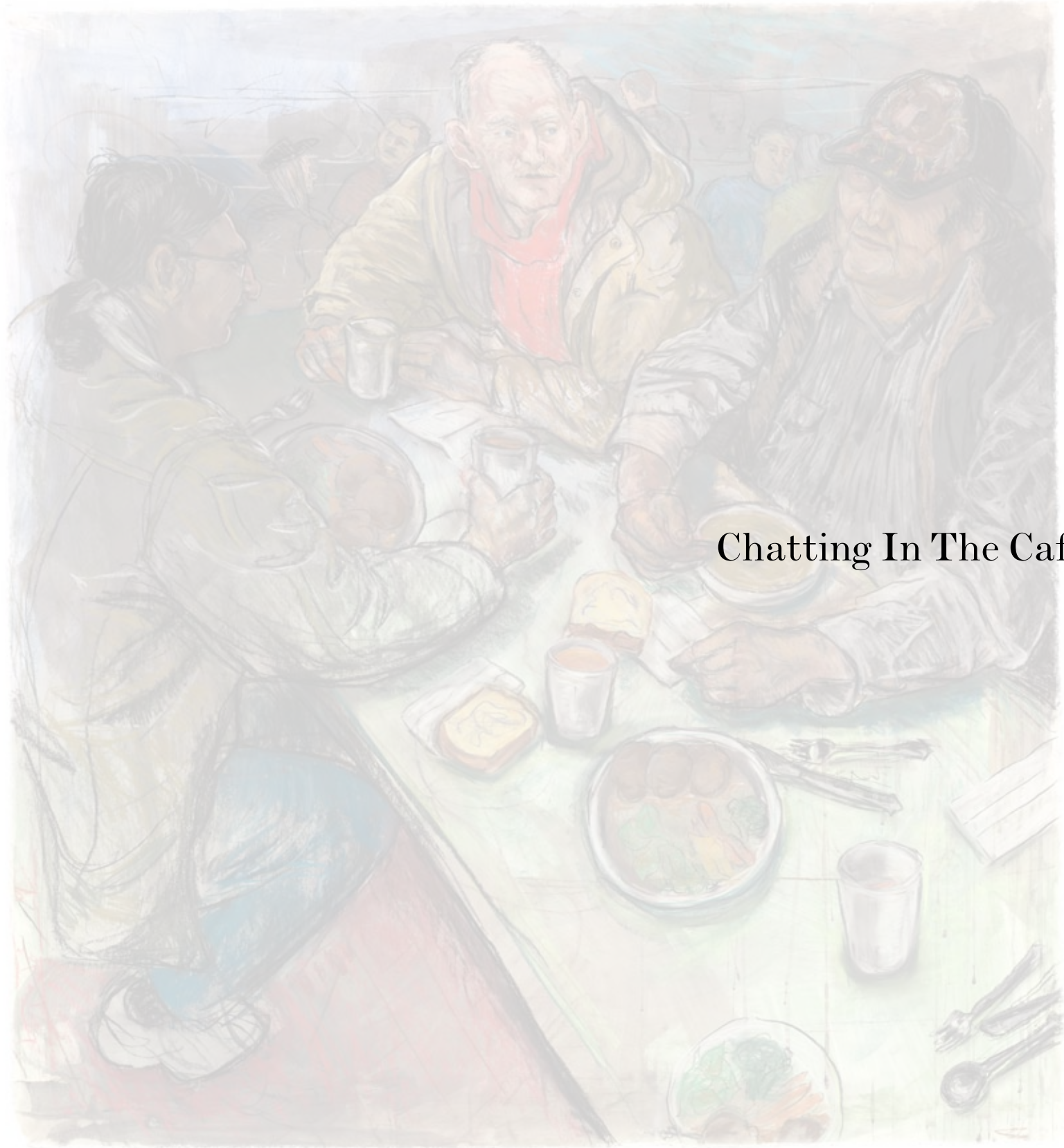
Jemal Prays For A Homeless Man 8





JEMAL PRAYS FOR A HOMELESS MAN

Jemal had been an alcoholic, sleeping between two dumpsters in the rough alley behind the Carnegie Centre. Being a Muslim, Jemal was concerned about entering the UGM Alcohol & Drug Recovery Program as he would have a problem with Christianity. Pastor René told him not to get held up on Christianity, rather to concentrate on recovery. Now he has not only recovered, but he has become a Christian and now works for UGM's Outreach team. He helps men and women with practical needs, like food and clothing, but also goes out to pray for and with the homeless on the street. The man he is praying over is homeless and comes to UGM for his meals regularly.



Chatting In The Caf 9



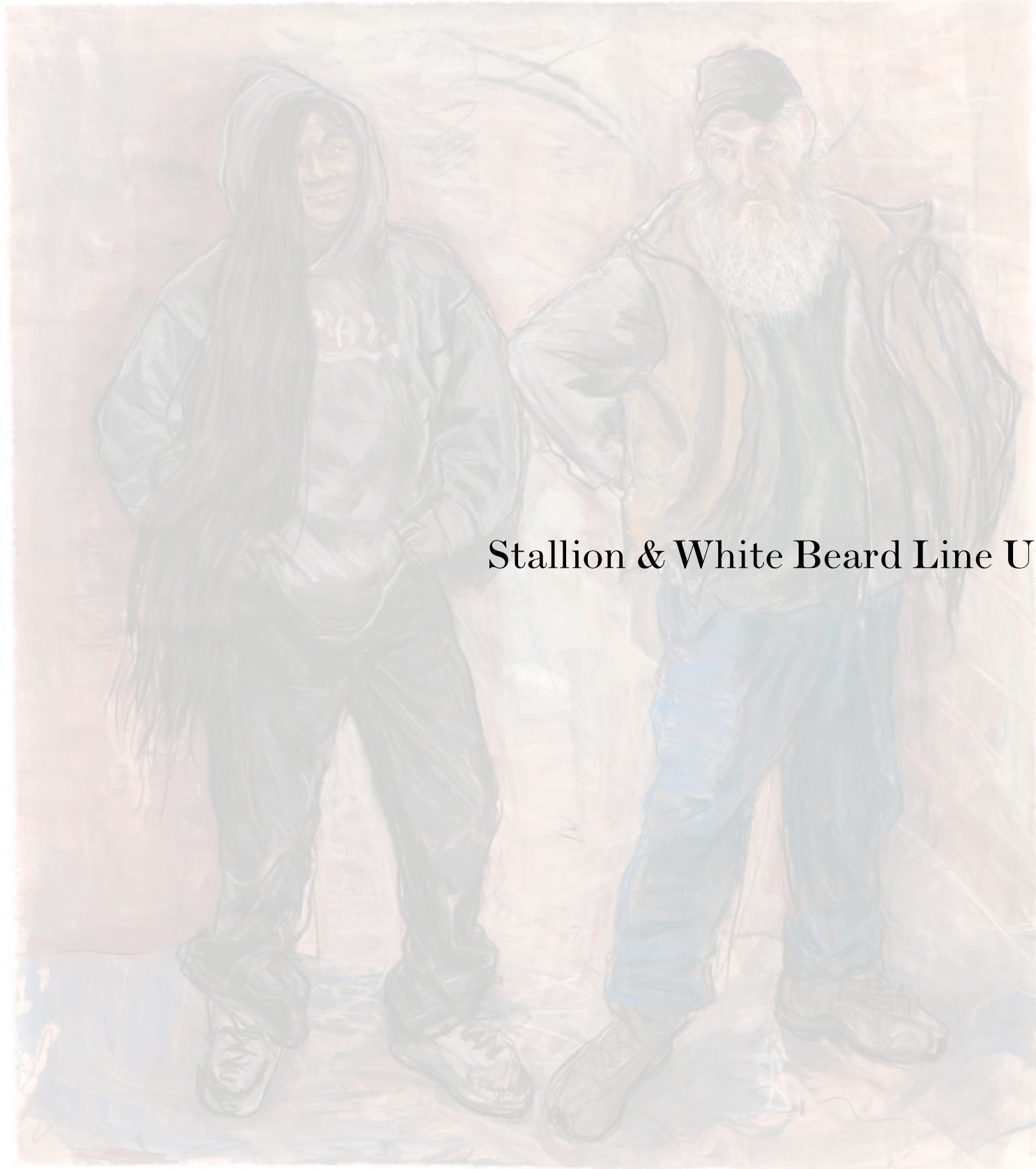
CHATTING IN THE CAF

The man in the middle is named Gary*. Gary was once in the Army and was injured in a drunk driving accident. His injury prevented him from returning to his work as a soldier and his life went downhill from there. Addicted to alcohol and struggling in life, he decided to make a change by entering UGM's Alcohol & Drug Recovery Program.

The fellow wearing the bear hat is also named Gary*. He's originally from a First Nations reserve in Northern BC. He's a cheerful guy, from an alcoholic family, and after he has completed the recovery program, he plans to return to his reserve.

Fred*, the man on the left, is a gentle Cree from the prairies, working through the recovery program. He was extremely shy at first, a very soft-spoken, lovely man. Slowly he has opened up, and is very well-liked by the other residents. He smiled and blushed fiercely when the residents unexpectedly sang Happy Birthday to him in UGM's dining room. As I write this, Fred is still in the program and cried tears of joy when he was recently recognized for having completed three-months of recovery.

*Names have been changed to protect confidentiality



Stallion & White Beard Line Up 10





STALLION & WHITE BEARD LINE UP

Stallion is a good-looking First Nations woman in her 40s with no teeth due to her drug addiction. She has a daughter who is out in the streets doing crack as well. Stallion arrived to the line-up for UGM's meal service with her Mexican boyfriend. I had to draw her because of her hair. Her name is actually Janet*, but I asked if I could call her 'Stallion' because her long hair reminded me of a stallion's tail. She beamed & accepted the name gladly. She said my drawing showed her accurately – "It rocks," she said – as it shows her street-tough, 'don't mess with me' look.

The bearded man is a polite fellow who is addicted to drugs and has been waiting to get into the Alcohol & Drug Recovery Program at UGM for quite a while. Throughout this time he has been sleeping in the UGM shelter.

*Names have been changed to protect confidentiality



Awake 11



AWAKE

The man in the lower right of this drawing is called Turtle. At 18 yrs. of age, his brother violently beat him, putting him in a coma, and though he has recovered somewhat, he is still physically and mentally compromised. Because of his physical disability I have been told he is an easy target on the street where he often gets roughed up.

I complimented Turtle on the beautiful colour of his skin. "I tan in the Moonlight," he told me. I thought this was such a poetic statement and told him so. He now allows me to call him 'Moonlight' instead of his street name, Turtle.

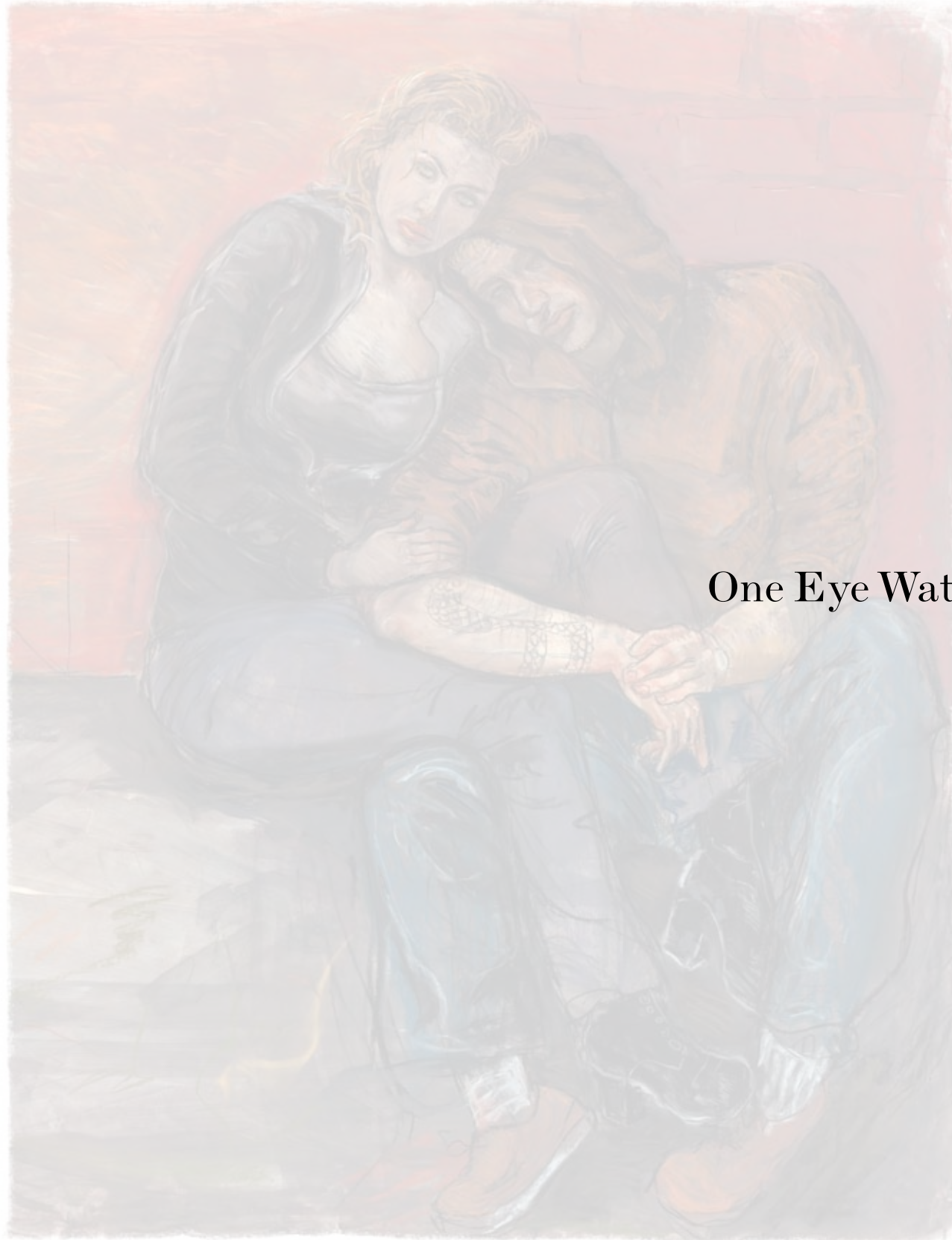
Today Turtle has a room, but has used the shelter in the past. He still needs to get food from services like UGM. He is a very gentle, sweet man and very much suits the name Moonlight.

Red, on the far left, is what they call an enforcer: a self-appointed overseer of good behavior in his neighbourhood. He has, in the past, used the shelter but currently has a place to live and no longer does drugs or alcohol.

John,* the same man I drew in the dining room line-up with the red hat, is very tired here, but happy to pose as I had first found him, sleeping with his hat over his eyes.

The fellow in the middle in the black hood suffers from schizophrenia and is prone to violence. After one particularly violent incident, he was cut off from his family. While I drew him, he spent much of the time telling me jokes he had made up, some of them quite funny.

*Name has been changed to protect confidentiality



One Eye Watching 12



ONE EYE WATCHING

I chose Angela* as a model when I saw her in the UGM dining room. She had such a strong yet vulnerable face, delicate yet somewhat coarse. She seemed pretty stoned, so I wasn't confident she would keep her word to come to get drawn, but she did turn up a few days later as arranged.

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Her boyfriend accompanied her and asked if he could be in the picture too. I had them snuggle up together & they promptly fell asleep. I drew their eyes in their more alert moments.

They both claimed to be on the Methadone program, but I suspect they were combining Meth with other drugs. They slept all day and all night, they said, to pass the time. They found different shelters for sleeping in but would only sleep in shelters where they could be together.

They both claimed to love each other so much, they could never be apart. She had worked in an escort service and met Brian* while buying drugs from him. They immediately fell in love, the story goes, and Brian went to the extreme of smashing her escort service chauffeur with a pipe to get rid of him. Angela and Brian have been together ever since.

“We want to move to my home in Nova Scotia.” Brian says to me. “I come from a fishing family with money. I can get a fishing job, we'll get a house and Angela can stay home and just keep house. We want a baby.”

“You love me, Baby, don't you?” she would say.

“You know I do,” he'd reply.

My heart was touched by the seeming futility of it all – such lovely impossible dreams.

Locals say they often see her standing on the street corners in her high heeled boots.

*Names have been changed to protect confidentiality

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