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Work of Fiction

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This ebook is licensed for your personal enjoyment only; it may not be re-sold or given away to other people. If you would like to share this book with another person, please use the Kindle enabled lending program or purchase a separate additional copy on any other format. Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1)

Chapter 1

"I'm not a softy. I'm not a pushover. Those sad, brown eyes will not change my mind." Tori Radburn frowned at the bull moose standing in front of her easel and grabbed her palette. "I'm here to paint. I'm no longer willing to listen to Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) needy wild animals. I will not be a sucker for your sob story." She'd spent the last several years in the big city away from the animals in the hope Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) her talent would die. One honey of a moose wasn't going to wipe out her progress.

The moose simply batted his eyes Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) and stuck his nose on top of her easel.

Crap. The big pest wasn't listening. "Go away. I don't talk to wild animals anymore." Tori flapped her hands at him.

Instead of backing away or charging off like Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) any sane moose should Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) have done, the rascally beast knocked the easel over with his nose and stuck his head in her lap to make sure she saw the fishing line tangled in his antlers.

"You really have no sense of self-preservation, do you?" She sighed. "Following me around could get you killed. No one here at the Brightwood Artist Resort expects to see the likes of you Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) in my lap. They'll freak out and grab their guns. They don't understand that you're not a threat to them, and I can't protect you if they go crazy."

She glanced around the lush, mountain meadow to make sure no other humans were around. How in the hell Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) was she going to convince this persistent sweetheart to leave?

The moose whiffled and gazed up at her with his big soulful eyes. His begging gaze wormed Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) its way into her heart. Snipping the line wouldn't cause either one of them trouble.

"All right," she relented. "Here's the deal. I'll clip the fishing line out of your antlers this one time. Then you move away and go about your business eating while I paint."

The moose nodded.

Tori stood and tenderly touched its cheek with one hand. The animal knelt on one knee while

she slowly pulled out a knife from the pocket of her jeans. Carefully, so as not to spook the creature, she cut the line with the sharp blade, pulled Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) it free of his antlers, and stuffed the tangled mess in her pocket.

The moose nudged her shoulder in thanks and rose to its feet. She stroked its nose affectionately and smiled.

“Don’t thank me, you silly flirt. That was fun, but you need to go to your spot and graze.” She grinned at the persistent creature and wondered how Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) she’d managed to go years without a visit from her animal friends. The temptation to follow the friendly fellow to check out his favorite watering spot was nearly irresistible. She sighed and picked up her easel.

The moose snorted agreeably then moseyed over to an area of tall grass next to the stream.

Blowing out her breath, Tori shook her head. She’d been crazy to allow Crystal Martin to talk her into painting twelve landscapes for her brother’s hotel chain. One night when they’d had dinner together, her wily friend had tricked her into admitting she missed the animals. So, a Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) month later, here she was in the midst of the wilderness, testing out Crystal’s theory that no disaster would happen to her four-footed friends if she painted in their habitat. Helping the tenacious moose had been a success, but she might not be so lucky the next time an animal approached. And three weeks was a long time to dodge needy critters.

Obviously, Crystal had been somewhat correct that she’d enjoy being outdoors again. But she was still terrified her presence would cause some innocent animal harm, especially if any of the guests at the Resort imitated her interactions with the wildlife. Drawing greeting cards in isolation for a living was a lot simpler. She didn’t want a repeat of her last wilderness adventure.

A panicked film director had killed a magnificent lioness that had come to Tori for help. The Hollywood big shot thought he was playing the hero when he gunned down her animal friend. The loss of her favorite cat had crushed her, and she’d decided no more innocent animals would die because of her damned ability. She had broken with her parents and had walled herself up in the city. After a lifetime of being put on display by her parents to show off her freaky skill, she’d refused to participate in anymore of their safaris. It was the only way to protect her wild friends.

Now, after only a few hours in a new wilderness, the creatures had found her. If they followed her into the compound, the guests would panic and one of the guides would play the hero, kill the animal, and save the guest. The sad history would be Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) repeated. She had to toughen Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) up and not Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) give in to

the animal's pleading sob stories.

Irritated that the moose had recognized her weakness, she repositioned her easel. She should pack up and leave, but the meadow was perfect. Deckered out in early June flowers, it offered color and interest. The beautiful little brook, with the rascally moose grazing off to the side, begged to be painted. The Brightwood Artist Resort was the perfect inspiration for the twelve commissioned paintings.

Squirting paint on her palette, she selected a thirty-six by twenty-four inch canvas. Pulling out her pencil, she sketched the barest outline of the moose in the foreground then filled in the meadow, the stream, and the mountains. As she reached for her paintbrush an icy sensation deadened her fingers. Surely she wasn't so nervous about painting her first commissioned work that her fingers froze. Her hand shouldn't feel like a popsicle.

She rubbed her palm to restore Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) her circulation, but her fingers remained numb. She panicked when no feeling returned.

This wasn't fair. She couldn't be having a stroke at the very moment she had a professional break. Besides, she was only thirty. Thirty-year-olds didn't have strokes. She opened her fingers and flicked her wrist to shake off the brush that seemed glued to her hand.

The paintbrush didn't fall to the ground. Puzzled, she rotated the implement with her left hand. It looked normal, except Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) for the smoke ring hovering around the handle. Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) Why hadn't she noticed the gray haze before?

When she tried to Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) snatch a new tool, the brush in her hand flew up, swatted her in the face with its bristles, Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) and landed back on her right hand with a smack.

All right, she got it now. The damn brush was possessed.

She gritted her teeth as she wiped the blob of brown paint off her cheek. Pulling out the amulet she wore under her comfortable gray sweatshirt, she waved the charm back and forth over her hand.

Her friends had warned her about Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) Crystal's crazy job offers. Crystal was the only person any of them knew who had conversations with ghosts. Spirits of one kind or another often showed up during her projects.

So, Tori had done a little research. And it was true. The website for the Brightwood Artist Resort advertised Arthur Brightwood's ghost. It was said that the ghost recognized artistic

talent and placed his seal of approval on deserving paintings, but there was no mention of the ghost seizing control of an artist's hand and painting for them.

She waited for the amulet to scare off the ghost.

The maniacal paintbrush taunted her by swirling her hand in a figure eight before it swooped toward the canvas and started stroking narrow strips of brown in the middle of her artwork. Obviously the twenty dollars she'd paid for the ghost-repelling trinket had been wasted.

"A stupid roll-top desk doesn't belong in the meadow, you dumb brush. Stop this nonsense immediately."

The smoke rings intensified, and the paintbrush slapped the canvas faster.

What a paranormal mess. It was just like her ghost-loving friend, Crystal, *Murder by Paint: A Humorous Romantic Suspense* (The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1) to believe a little supernatural magic could transform a job into a magical adventure.

"I don't want an adventure right now," Tori snarled at the smoke rings. Crystal just didn't understand her predicament. It would take all her genius to keep the wild animals at bay and protected.

Crystal's fun little ghost was nothing but a nuisance.

Tori glared at her hand and debated the best strategy to defeat the out-of-control paintbrush. Propping the palette on the easel, she tugged at the brush but couldn't pry it loose.

Nuts.

She leaned back on the stool and kicked the easel over. It popped right back up. The brush didn't even miss a stroke.

Perhaps a sneak attack would free her from the pesky spirit. After a deep calming breath, she lifted her little pinky off the brush, then her ring finger. Two fingers free. No stupid ghost would outwit her. Her plan was working. She'd be free in a few seconds.

"I want you to put your paintbrush down and slowly get up." A deep voice hummed in her ear.

At the velvety tone, she whipped around to encounter an attractive man dressed in a dark, blue suit that looked much too elegant to wear out in the woods even though he did have his red tie loosened. His tawny-colored hair and golden eyes reminded her of a cute cougar cub she'd befriended when she was ten, but she sensed that he meant to rescue her from the moose rather than from the obnoxious ghost controlling her hand.

"Unless you can run this ghost off, go away."

Thunderclouds rolled across his tanned face. "That moose is more of a problem than any ghost would be."

"Who are you?"

Murder By Paint A Humorous Romantic Suspense The Ghostly Magic Series Book 1

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