



PICTURE PERFECT by Sarah J Lovett.

[This text is read aloud at the beginning of this video:]
Welcome to Stories for Lipreading. If you haven't used our website before, we suggest you look at our 'How to Use' page before you begin. We hope you enjoy this short story, which is called 'Picture Perfect' by Sarah J Lovett.

Picture Perfect by Sarah J Lovett.

Irritated, Crispin shook the rain from his umbrella. He had wanted this first date to be perfect. Now his knees were a little damp. He stood in the foyer of the theatre and waited for Jessica to arrive. He always liked to be exactly five minutes early. He checked his watch – yes, perfect. He hoped Jessica would not be late. He had met her two days ago at the art gallery where he was an assistant. Jessica was an artist desperate to sell her first pictures. He had taken one look at her and he was smitten. She looked like a Pre-Raphaelite painting with her long auburn curls and her delicate features.

Now he stood tapping his furred umbrella on the stone floor of the foyer. If she didn't come soon there would be no time for a drink before the play started. Should he order something for her now to save time? He would buy her a colourful cocktail, complete with a paper parasol. Any girl would love that, surely.

As he turned from the bar, umbrella dangling from his wrist and a cocktail in each hand, Jessica rushed towards him. Her hair hung in long wet strands across her face. Rain dripped off her calf-length skirt. The patchwork colours had run.

"No umbrella?" he greeted her.

"Don't hold with them," she said.

"But you're wet through."

She laughed carelessly. "I won't melt in the rain, you know."

Her eyes slid to the drinks in his hands. "What have you got there?"

He held one out to her "Cocktails."

"You've bought me a cocktail? Whatever is it? And what's that pink parasol thing for?"

Crispin's hand shook a little. "You don't want it?"

"No, it looks disgusting."

She stepped past him and leant across the bar. "A pint of bitter, please," she called to the barman.

Crispin stared at her with admiration. She was a real artist – unconventional and bold, dressed in her multi-coloured skirt and her velvet jacket embroidered with birds and flowers. The warning bell rang. The performance was about to start. She put her pint under her jacket.



“You’re not allowed to take glasses in,” he whispered to her back as she strode confidently past the usherette.

“He’s got the tickets,” she said to the woman, and sailed past her.

Crispin followed meekly.

In the interval, she bought a bag of sweets and crunched her way through them, distracting Crispin from the tragedy of Hamlet. It spoiled the mood entirely. When he walked her home he shared his umbrella so they both stayed dry but, just at the corner of her road, a huge puddle had formed. Jessica gave a cry of delight and jumped into it with both feet. Crispin’s new suit was totally soaked. He stared at it with dismay. He looked at her laughing face: no sign of guilt there, no apology either.

“See you around, Jessica,” he said, grasping his umbrella firmly and turning for home. Clearly she wasn’t perfect after all.