

THE QUARRY

Satyajeet Marar

The Ballad of Stanley Peters

Her eyes were murderous.

Satin sheets lay upturned as wind-whispered lamentations crept through the insidious fog into the master bedroom. For a moment there was only silence, her own breathing flowed in intermittent bursts. A stillness transfixed three bodies in their place.

Murderous.

The love of her life lay before her, pants down to his ankles. Completely defenceless. His bedfellow was a thin silhouette clutching the satin sheets to her full breasts. Some doe-eyed, shaven-pubed wench.

She gripped the ~~pistol~~ axe tighter, its sharpened edge glistened in the Monday moonlight. His eyes offered neither explanation nor remorse – only horror. The pure, crystallised ~~42% proof~~ horror that comes to those who've always known deep down they would end up in their present predicament. Their deaths would not be quick. The police would not arrive in time to stop her. The paramedics would be too late to breathe life into their broken bodies.

She brought down the axe with all of a scorned woman's strength. His skull lay caved in as sinewy brain tissue splattered across the Queen-size bed. His whore's gasp was fearful yet futile as his blood-soaked right eye flew over her shoulders. She would be next. The-

Timothy Coombs had read enough to get the gist of where this was going.

'I'd like to talk to you about something.'

'What do you want to know?'

He gently placed his glasses on his desk and massaged the lines streaked across his forehead, beneath the hairline that had receded in the wake of his last divorce. He had been the principal at Clearwater High for seven years.

'Is everything ok at home?'

'Yeah, everything's fine.'

'Are you sure? Nothing going on in your life you'd like to talk about?'

Stanley shook his head. A flake of dandruff landed gracefully on the desk in front of him, falling off dark curls.

'I don't understand why I'm here.'

'Your teachers and I are a little concerned.'

'Why, because I write dope stories? Have you seen what the muppets in Standard English write? I'd rather contract venereal disease from a dingo than read that shit.'

'Stanley, no swearing. This is my office.'

'Fucking bullshit, man.' He sank into his chair and crossed his legs. 'This school sucks.'

'Fantasies of murder are not appropriate for a high school creative writing class.'

'Do you think I'm going to shoot up the school?'

'Excuse me?'

'You know what this is?' he picked up the handwritten notebook papers his principal had just thumbed through. 'This is reality, man, what real people live every day. Not this Pythagoras theorem crap, genuine human tragedy. Karma, retribution – all that good stuff you pretend doesn't exist.'

'Do not raise your voice.'

'What are you going to do, cane me? Cane me daddy, I've been a naughty boy!' He massaged his nipples through a crumpled school shirt. 'Cane me, you fat fuck.'

'That's it, I'm calling your parents.'

‘You want them to join in too?’

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‘Oye, spare a ciggy?’ Moey grunted.

The detention room was tepid and reeked of boredom and boy-sweat. Stanley stared at the clock on the wall – 4 pm. His parents would arrive soon and he’d be called back into the principal’s office to be hung, drawn and quartered.

‘Nah, man. I only smoke weed.’ Stanley replied.

The ditzy substitute teacher ‘supervising’ them had wafted out the door ten minutes before. He didn’t know what was more depressing – sitting in that room with his fellow riff-raff despondents or the thought that someone would put themselves through four years of university to become the person doing her job. He wouldn’t blame her for having a cheeky ‘smoko-and-cry’ sesh in the staff toilet.

‘That shit’s haram, bro.’

‘Moey’ shook his head disapprovingly as he lit a cigarette passed to him by one of his mates. He was a burly teen of ‘middle eastern and/or Mediterranean appearance’. Peach-fuzz chest hair poked through the undone buttons of his shirt, due to grow into a majestic rug over the next few years. The faint, bassy undertones of a Tupac Shakur song about keeping bitches in line seeped through the earphone stuck in his left ear.

He passed the cigarette packet back to his compadré. It had a large-print warning about the risks of smoking accompanied by a picture of a deformed human foetus resembling a scrambled peach. Stan realised that he hadn’t eaten since 12.

‘Stanley Peters, report to Principal Coombs office immediately.’ Blared the speakers.

‘Well, gentlemen. It has been a pleasure. Unfortunately, I must be off to see the lynch mob.’

‘.....’

‘....Bro, who da fuck is Lynch?’

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‘Hi Dad, Hi Rosie.’

They sat crossly and glared at the 17-year-old encumbrance that just walked into the principal’s office.

‘Sit down. Your parents and I are going to have a very serious conversation with you.’

‘Orgy cancelled already?’

‘Stanley, shut up.’

His father’s nostrils flared so hard, he thought steam would pour out.

‘Sorry, just thought I’d cut through the ice a little bit.’

‘Stanley...’

‘Yeah?’

‘What is this story supposed to be about?’

He pondered the question for a moment. He had been fairly baked when he wrote it and couldn’t remember exactly what had inspired him.

‘It’s actually about feminism.’

‘Feminism?’

‘Yeah. The protagonist is a strong, independent woman. She’s taking her life into her own hands.’

‘By killing people with an axe?’

‘Yeah. She’s smashing the patriarchy.’

Principal Coombs shook his head.

‘...Shaven-pubed wench’ Does that sound like feminism to you?’

‘Patriarchal beauty standards, man.’

‘I don’t think you quite understand what feminism means.’

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‘What does feminism mean to you?’

Of all his attempts to think of a chat-up line, this was probably the worst.

A week ago, Stanley found himself next to a particularly gorgeous blonde from another school with those little dimples that light up the face when a smile strikes.

In the distance were the sights and sounds of the classic teenage house party. Broken glass, hip-hop and a mix of people chugging and people chundering. But none of that mattered because he had survived 10 minutes of conversation with a heavenly blessed angel whose beauty was divine and everlasting.

In that moment, they were the only two people in the universe. Stanley resisted the Goon-fuelled urge to make punnet squares in his head like he had in Biology class but it was futile.

Blonde was a recessive gene and everyone in his family had dark hair so their kids would probably have raven hair and blue eyes since blue eyes were recessive but they both had them. They'd also have a pet Poodle and a large palatial mansion in the North Shore where they could grow old together. She was so hot. Fuck.

'To me it's about being treated the same as anyone else. I don't want to be treated differently because I'm a woman. I want to be respected for who I am and what I'm capable of. We can be just as tough as men.'

'Interesting, interesting. So you think chicks should enlist in the army?'

'Well, yeah. The army isn't all biceps and bravado.'

'I'm sure you could provide that, you're a real GI Jane.'

She blushed. Holy shit Stanley, you smooth motherfucker.

'What do you do for fun, Stanley?'

Don't ruin it by talking about weed. Don't ruin it by talking about weed.

'Well, I enjoy a bit of cooking. I'm all about breaking these gender stereotypes.'

'Really? What do you cook?'

'Brownies.'

FUCK.

'What kind of brownies?'

'Chocolate.'

'Cool, they're my favorite.'

Whew.

'So I know you're a feminist and all but I'm sure you enjoy a bit of chivalry.'

'Yeah, sure. It's nice from time to time when someone opens the door for you.'

'Maybe they're doing it so they can look at your butt.'

What the fuck man that was fucking risky and random oh shit she isn't reacting shitshitshit

'...By the way, I think you've got a nice butt.'

..And she was laughing. She found it funny, maybe even a bit endearing. It worked.

'Thanks, I guess?'

'Just telling it like it is. So anyway, before the cops come shut this thing down, it has been a real pleasure meeting you. Let me take you out on a date some time?'

She smiled. Her dimples lit up the world around her as her golden locks swayed gently in the breeze. Those blue eyes gazed deeply into his own.

‘Aw, no. Thanks, though.’

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‘And all this violence and sex... we’ve warned you about this before. Why do you feel the need to include so much of it in your work?’

Stanley pulled out a crumpled set of English notes and brandished it in front of Principal Coombs, his father and Rosie.

‘See this? Area of study – ‘belonging’. What is belonging? Some vague, uniting concept that makes it super easy for people who got half the ATAR scores they expect us to get when they were our age to mark our papers. Wow, such a universal concept! Everyone just wants to belong to something! Well, suck me off if that isn’t sheer genius.’

‘So you give us these ‘texts’ we’re meant to read, right? Classics like ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’ or ‘Catcher in the Rye’. They’re great books, sure. But it’s a little hard to enjoy them when you’re too busy looking for the answers to those shitty little homework questions you chuck at us. And you wonder why so many kids stopped reading for fun after the last Harry Potter book came out. At least the girls with daddy issues have 50 Shades of Grey, Twilight and Bacardi cruisers.’

‘Ah but then, creative writing! The one chance we have of forming our own original thoughts. Not like we get a chance to do that in math class. Or history class – Write ‘Australia was settled’ and you get a free lecture on racial sensitivity from Mrs. Clarke, who happens to be whiter than Chandler Bing from Friends.’

‘Anyway, I’m digressing. So yeah, creative writing. It’s great. Except that instead of judging us for how well we write, we get marked on how we convey some generic, meaningless concept. Like corporate recruitment adverts flashing buzzwords like ‘Synergy’ and ‘Diversity’ that some blowjob from HR came up with. It’s a system designed to reward people with crew cuts who iron their underwear and dream of a cushy public service job where they can get paid to sniff their own farts. Our ability to use fully sick techniques like ‘imagery’ in smooth lines like ‘a lone tear cascaded down his cheek as he recognised his daddy’s face’ gets rewarded. Gee, thanks guys. Now I feel like the contents of my stomach belong in a barf bag. No one gives a fuck about that shit in real life.’

‘Stanley...’ Principal Coombs wearily interjected. ‘All this ranting is getting us nowhere. You have said nothing about why you use violence and sex.’

‘Huh?’

‘Violence. My question was about violence and sex.’

‘... Oh right, that. Violence is pretty cool and sex is edgy. It’s fun to write and keeps things gritty and exciting.’

‘..That’s it?’

‘I guess so.’

‘Alright. I’m going to suspend you for a period of two weeks. I’m also referring your parents to a child psychiatrist who might be of some assistance. I hope you learn from your mistakes today or I can tell you there will be no place for you in this school.’

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But there would be a place for him at the school.

After being diagnosed with ADHD, Stanley went on to become one of the most prolific Ritalin dealers in the whole Inner-west school district. Stanley matured in the years to come as he realised that getting in trouble might bring his ~~lucrative~~ dubious and unethical side-business to an end.

After school, Stanley went on to work as an investment banker and amassed a fortune through leveraged buyouts and laundering funds using a shell company set up in the People’s Republic of Hedonistan.[™] He employed a diverse and synergistic workforce of ~~child labour~~ strong, independent women.

All these experiences had taught Stanley a valuable lesson – the sense of belonging he had been yearning for had been within him all along and he had rebelled against it. None of this success would have been possible without the love and support of his family and teachers. A lone tear cascaded down his cheek.

The End.

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