

THE QUARRY

The Morbid Paintings

Mat Groom

1. INT. OPULENT INNER CITY APARTMENT, HALLWAY. NIGHT

ELIZABETH (mid 40s, immaculately presented) walks down a hallway, decorated with only a small table with a minimalist vase on it, and a cross hanging on the wall above. She has a basket of clothes in her arms.

RICHARD

(o/s)

Liz! Come to bed, honey!

ELIZABETH

Just a minute! I just need to find Virginia's uniform so I can throw it in the wash!

2. INT. OPULENT INNER CITY APARTMENT, VIRGINIA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

Elizabeth turns into Virginia's room, which is quite dark, lit up only by the soft lights of the city coming in through the bedroom window. VIRGINIA (mid-to-late teens) is sleeping in her bed, snoring loudly. Elizabeth moves quietly to Virginia's bag, and starts carefully pulling out the contents. Virginia rolls over suddenly, startling Elizabeth, but promptly starts snoring again. Elizabeth returns to the bag, and quickly comes to a cardboard tube.

Elizabeth hesitates for a moment, then pulls the tube out of the bag and moves out of the room -

3. INT. OPULENT INNER CITY APARTMENT, HALLWAY. NIGHT

- and back into the light of the hallway. She opens up the tube and pulls out several large, rolled up paintings and lays them out on the floor.

Elizabeth stands over the paintings, looking at them with both interest and apprehension.

They are water-colour paintings, slightly abstract in nature, swirls of dark reds, purples and blacks, depicting various scenes of death, despair and dread. One of the paintings depicts a tall, cloaked figure choking the life out of a small girl, another features small children being crushed under the weight of an immense slab of stone.

RICHARD enters the hallway from the master bedroom. He is in his pajamas, and is looking weary.

RICHARD
Everything okay, dear...?

Elizabeth jumps, startled, and then spins to face him, putting herself between Richard and the paintings, attempting to obstruct his view.

RICHARD
What is...

ELIZABETH
Nothing. Nothing. Just some - from - uh. Elizabeth's school stuff. Go back to bed, I'll be there -

Richard has gone from weary to alert, and he stares Elizabeth down.

RICHARD
Move aside.

ELIZABETH
Go to back to bed, Richard.

Richard simply reaches out and slowly but firmly pushes Elizabeth to the side. Her moment of defiance is over, and she steps out of the way, sullen.

Richard gazes down at the paintings on the floor and his eyes go wide.

CUT TO TITLE: THE MORBID PAINTINGS

5. INT. OPULENT INNER CITY APARTMENT, MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Richard storms into the bedroom, raging, and Elizabeth follows him in.

RICHARD
(furious)
I knew it!! I knew that class would - we're withdrawing her from that art class! Tomorrow! She'll go back to real classes, she

can pick-up another economics class! This isn't how we raised her, this - she - THIS IS A CHRISTIAN HOUSEHOLD.

ELIZABETH

I know, Richard, I know, but don't you think -

RICHARD

What?

ELIZABETH

They're very striking! The composition - it's impressive work, Richard! I mean, they're very dark, I'll grant you, but she's just -

RICHARD

No. No. This stuff, this culture...

Richard waves his hands about, trying to articulate his perceived ridiculousness and moral bankruptcy of teen culture, but succeeding only in making uninterpretable, frenzied gesticulations.

RICHARD

(CONT.)

- you have to stamp it out immediately, pull it out at the roots. I will not lose our little girl to this darkness!

ELIZABETH

I know why you might think this is worrying, but it's artistic expression, Richard, it doesn't mean anything sinister.

RICHARD

We're pulling her out of the class, Liz. Straight away. I'll hear no more of it.

ELIZABETH

She loves that class, it's all she talks about now. I haven't seen her this happy in so long...

RICHARD

Nothing that produces this -

Richard points a finger at the paintings, accusingly.

RICHARD

(cont.)

- this rot... can be beneficial for our girl. And since I pay
for the classes -

ELIZABETH

Fine, fine. I'll talk to her when she gets home from school
tomorrow.

RICHARD

I will do that.

Elizabeth looks at Richard with a piercing stare, as Richard he
gets into the bed.

ELIZABETH

No! If you're going to insist on taking this away from her, then
you're going to have to - at very least! - let me be the one to
break it to her.

Richard pauses for a moment, considering.

RICHARD

Very well. But you better handle this, Elizabeth, or I will.

And with that, Richard claps his hands firmly and loudly
together, and the lamp goes out, plunging the room immediately
into total darkness and putting an end to the conversation, and
leaving Elizabeth to find her way to the bed in total darkness.

6. INT. Opulent inner city APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM. DAY

Elizabeth sits on the living room couch, still and silent. Lost
in thought. After a few beats, she rises, and moves purposefully
over to the cupboard under the stairs. She opens the cupboard,
and begins to pull out the contents. The first thing she pulls
out is a large canvas with colourful hand prints all over it.

7. EXT. GARDEN. DAY

Elizabeth and YOUNG VIRGINIA (six years old), hands covered in paint, are making the hand prints on the canvas, which is laid out on the grass. Elizabeth beckons to Richard, who is standing nearby, to come over and join in. Richard shakes his head.

Young Virginia runs over to Richard and pulls him by the sleeve, trying to get him to come over, but the paint on her little hands come off on the sleeve of his suit. He scowls, and walks off.

8. INT. OPULENT INNER CITY APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM. DAY

Elizabeth brings the hand print canvas out into the lounge room and places it against the wall. She next pulls out paddlepop stick model vaguely resembling a dinosaur.

9. INT. OPULENT INNER CITY APARTMENT, STUDY. DAY

Young Virginia (nine years old) is at a desk, trying to assemble the paddle-pop stick model, but is struggling, with glue going everywhere and the half-finished model barely clinging together. Richard and Elizabeth watch from the door. Elizabeth quietly pushes at Richard's back, nodding with her head towards the sad looking Elizabeth.

Richard hesitates for a moment, but then goes over to the desk to help his daughter.

10. INT. OPULENT INNER CITY APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM. DAY

Elizabeth places the paddle-pop stick model dinosaur on the coffee table.

Next, she retrieves from the cupboard a very strange small black sculpture, carved from onyx. It looks like it might be a person, but it's very abstract.

11. INT. OPULENT INNER CITY APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM. DAY

We're in the same lounge room now, but there a few more photos on the wall, the room is less barren. Young Virginia (twelve

years old) hands Elizabeth a wrapped gift, while Richard sits next to her.

Elizabeth unwraps the gift - it is the onyx sculpture. Elizabeth looks confused at first, and glances over to Richard, who shrugs and looks the figure disapprovingly. Virginia excitedly gesticulates at the sculpture, though, clearly enthusiastic about it, and Elizabeth smiles, and lifts the sculpture up to look at it closer, examining it from all angles, trying to figure it out.

12. INT. OPULENT INNER CITY APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM. DAY

Back in the present, Elizabeth looks over the sculpture, still a little confused by it, and places it on the coffee table.

Through a series of quick cuts, we see Elizabeth take more paintings done by young Virginia and blu-tack them to the walls, take out strange play-dough figures and paper-craft models and arrange them around the room, take out cheap looking and odd mother's day gifts and birthday presents, some with gift tags reading 'To Mum, Love Virginia' still attached. After this frenzy of movement has finished, the once spartan and monotone is transformed into a colourful mess.

Elizabeth is slowly walking around the room, inspecting the items and starting to tear up. She returns to the cupboard one final time and pulls out a box, and it's clear from the look on her face that she doesn't recognise it.

She opens the box, and it is filled with plain manila folders. She pulls the first one out of the box, and it says 'Accounts April 2012 - June 2012' on it, and opens it up.

It is filled with blank paper.

Confused, Elizabeth reaches deep into the box, and pulls out another. This one reads 'Accounts February 2004 - March 2004' and opens it up. She enraged by what she finds, and throws the folder down onto the coffee table, and the contents spill out. It's smut, photos of women pleasuring other women, older men

with suspiciously young looking girls, and group sex with a large number of participants. There folder has dozens and dozens of photos in it, and they cascade across the table and off the side of it.

13. INT. OPULENT INNER CITY APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

Elizabeth sits at the kitchen table, taking long, slow sips from a cup of coffee. She's looking tired.

There's a small thump as the front door (down the hallway) opens, which makes Elizabeth jump. Soon, Virginia is in the room, in her school uniform, school bag hanging over one of her shoulders. She moves through the room in a whirl, dumping her bag on the floor, moving to the fridge for a snack.

VIRGINIA

Hey, Mum. How's -

Virginia looks over at Elizabeth and comes to a sudden stop, sensing something is wrong and stopping mid-sentence.

VIRGINIA

...what's wrong?

ELIZABETH

Come sit down, Virginia.

VIRGINIA

Oh no. What - is Dad okay? What is it?

ELIZABETH

Just come sit down.

Virginia nods slowly and sits down opposite her mother at the kitchen table.

ELIZABETH

So, uh...

Elizabeth hesitates, but then, rather than speaking, simply pulls the rolled up paintings up from under the table and lets them unroll onto the top of the table.

Virginia's eyes go wide in terror.

VIRGINIA

I've been looking everywhere for those! You - I - you had no right! You can't -

Virginia hides her face in her hands.

VIRGINIA

Shit. SHIT! Does Dad know?

Elizabeth simply nods.

VIRGINIA

SHIT!

ELIZABETH

Language, Virginia!

There's silence between them for a few moments, and then Virginia raises her face from her hands, and we see that she is crying.

ELIZABETH

Your father wants you to drop the art class.

VIRGINIA

Please... no...

ELIZABETH

You've got to understand what seeing images like this makes us think.

VIRGINIA

They're just paintings...

Elizabeth puts on a strict tone, but she is clearly working to keep the disapproval in her voice going.

ELIZABETH

Paintings of some pretty despicable things, young lady!

Virginia's tears increase, and she struggles to speak.

VIRGINIA

I know. I KNOW, ALRIGHT? I just - they make me feel better, they
- I don't know why. But they help.

ELIZABETH

They help with what?

VIRGINIA

With -

But instead of continuing, Virginia just burrows her head into her arms.

ELIZABETH

What is it, honey? You can talk to me.

Virginia's face emerges once again, now a mask of furious anger.

VIRGINIA

Can I?! That's not my understanding! That's not how this works.
How this works is, Dad makes the rules, and you just - you just
- I don't know, what do you even do?

ELIZABETH

That's not fair, I -

VIRGINIA

DO NOTHING! YOU DO NOTHING!!

The outburst stuns them both into silence. The incredible tension hangs in the air for a few moments, before Virginia breaks down.

VIRGINIA

I'm sorry, Mum. I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to -

ELIZABETH

No. You're right. The way your father treats you doesn't make you happy. And that's what is most important. Your happiness. I'm sorry I haven't supported you. It's time for that to change. Time for you to live a real life.

VIRGINIA

Does that mean -

ELIZABETH

Yeah. You can keep taking the art class.

VIRGINIA

Will Dad...?

ELIZABETH

Let me worry about that.

Virginia bolts out of her chair, around the table and embraces to her mother, resting her head on her mother's shoulder.

VIRGINIA

Thank you, Mum. Thank you so much.

14. INT. HIGHRISE CORPORATE CORNER OFFICE. EVENING

It's quiet in the office, no other sounds can be heard except for Richard tapping away at a very sleek, thin laptop at his non-descript desk.

The door to the office opens, and Elizabeth enters. She just stands there, barely into the office at all, as the door closes with a thump behind her, and the sound makes Richard finally look up from his computer.

RICHARD

Elizabeth! What are you doing here?

Elizabeth doesn't respond, just stares at him fiercely. Her eyes are red, she had been crying earlier, but not any more.

RICHARD

Things didn't go well with Virginia, I take it? I know it must
have been hard, but -

ELIZABETH

I told her she could keep the class.

Red hot anger flashes across Richard's face, and his right hand
starts to shake lightly as he visibly tries to control his rage.

RICHARD

You - you - I knew this would happen. This is why I wanted to
handle it. I knew you didn't have the strength.

Elizabeth moves closer to the desk.

ELIZABETH

It's not strength, Richard. This isn't making her happy. Our
girl deserves to be happy.

Richard sneers.

RICHARD

She *deserves* to be safe. You might think you're doing the right
thing, but these are sensitive years, if we don't protect -

ELIZABETH

You mean control.

Richard slams his hand down on the desk.

RICHARD

Call it what you want! She'll thank us in a few years, when our
guidance has paid off.

There's a slight pleading tone in Elizabeth's voice now.

ELIZABETH

She's miserable, Richard. It's not worth it. She needs her
freedom.

RICHARD

I'm sick of this argument already. I'm going to go tell her to drop out of the class, or I'll ring the school - in fact, I know the principle, I can give him a call RIGHT NOW -

Richard reaches for his mobile in his suit jacket pocket.

ELIZABETH

NO!

Any pleading or bargaining in her tone is gone now, and this loud roar of dissent from Elizabeth startles Richard, and this only enrages him further.

RICHARD

YOU DO NOT RUN THIS FAMILY! THIS IS NOT YOUR DECISION! I AM IN CONTROL HERE!

Elizabeth takes a moment to calm herself, then shakes her head, and smiles just a bit despite herself.

ELIZABETH

Such a goddamn hypocrite...

RICHARD

What are you -

ELIZABETH

I found your stash, you idiot.

RICHARD

Stash?

Richard starts to look worried.

ELIZABETH

The 'accounts' box in the living room cupboard.

RICHARD

Ah, fuck.

Richard's head drops.

ELIZABETH
Yeah, 'fuck'.

RICHARD
Look, okay, I probably shouldn't have that stuff -
Elizabeth shakes her head.

ELIZABETH
You know what? I don't even care about that, really. I don't give a fuck, you're not perfect. But the fact that you've been keeping that box and holding this strict 'Christian' code of conduct over our daughter's head - making her feel SO GUILTY - at the same time...

RICHARD
I just want to prote-

ELIZABETH
No. No more. I'm tired, I'm so tired of going over this with you, of you pretending you're some moral crusader. You just want to feel superior, you want control - you fucking disgust me.

The shock of those words hangs in the air for a moment, and it looks like they shocked Elizabeth as much as Richard.

ELIZABETH
This marriage - I know how your circle of 'friends' work - you need to preserve this marriage, for your sake, your business' sake - so you're going to start treating our daughter right.

Richard is meek now, barely audible.

RICHARD
Yeah. Okay. I'll work - I'll try harder.

There's another long, strained pause.

RICHARD
I lov-

ELIZABETH

NO! Don't even - just get out.

Richard reluctantly gets up from his desk, and leaves the room. Elizabeth moves over to the desk and sits in Richard's chair, and slumps on the desk, exhausted, her head resting on folded arms.

The night time cityscape buzzes behind her, but Elizabeth remains still, and quietly starts to cry.

END.