

Dead End Short Story – Cory Gourley

Who do they think they are?

The dark and gloomy clouds hallowed over me, like a bad smell. All is silent. Until each strike of thunder caresses my body like a striking blaze of sun on a hot summer's day. The burning hits the back of my throat. I can't breathe. Suffocating me, the thick black fog, hovers over my head, as the sounds of careless whispers run through my spine. They are back again.

I know they are talking about me...

Their shadows burn my very eyes, as I witness a campfire, they roar with laughter in sync. I wish they would turn around; I wish I could see them. I was horrifyingly excited, month after month, I speculated who they were, what they were burning. Like an explosion, he would run out of the woods. For no reason. He was wearing a crushed velvet waistcoat with a silver lining; she was wearing a cherry, maxi dress with a ribbon in her hair. The picture of innocence. He was a Prince, and she was a Princess. The flames now above and over their head, get fiercer and fiercer, they know I am watching!

Who do they think they are?

They take in lodgers. People who come from the grim, somber northern borders and they take them into their six-bedroom home on the outskirts of Camden. The busy market and street-art along with the very busy nightlife, lets them slip under the radar. Her laugh sounds like a dog's bark; his is like a gorilla's cry. She is the evil one. He is the good one deep-down.

Her hair is thick and as black as a raven. He is bald. The unwelcoming sound of laughter floored me. There is no worse sound, people enjoying themselves, it doesn't seem right. They charge 60 pound a week, that 240 pound a month, they don't mind if they are late paying their rent, as –long- as they pay it. She cooks, casseroles, soups and on a Friday, she cooks steak with fries and peas, she has tofu, she is vegetarian. He takes them out for a drive in his 4-by-4, every Sunday, whilst she prepares the chicken, sometimes its lamb. She is a housewife, he is an electrician, in the navy, he works away Monday-Thursday, she is left alone. Crushed like an empty can, she decides to take a lodger in, company and a friend, all her friends live in Kensington or Berkshire, all her friends are Cambridge graduates, Lawyers, Doctors, not housewives.

Alone, depressed and full to the bone with jealousy, she kisses her lodger, before she knows it her favorite emerald frock is in tatters on the bedroom floor and his burgundy Ralph-Lauren, sweater and favorite navy jeans are beside it. She finally felt like a woman again. Her husband comes home early. He finds her body being caressed by another man. His heart melts like a cheap, bargain-basement candle. He falls to his knees. Like a house filled with gas, he explodes.

Who do you think you are?

He sees the giraffe ornament on the bed-side table. His hand has never jerked so fast. Before he knows it, he hits the lodger. The lodger is dead. He looks at her, we'll call her Sally, she looks at him, we'll call

him Nick, they both look at the lodger, we'll call him Peter, Nick's screams, leave tingles down the back of her neck. Sally knows what to do, she gets the bin bags from downstairs. Nick helps her. Each inch of his limp, lifeless, lost corpse is wrapped up in cheap plastic. With blood, sweat and Anguish, they carry him to the car, his body is dumped like a bag of rubbish in the boot of their magenta Nissan Juke. Sally drives. Shaking, Nick places his hand on Sally's Knee, she flinches, they arrive.

I hear their whispers; I know they are talking about me!

Nick starts the fire, Sally dumps the rubbish, but I know different, I know its Peter not the rubbish.

They drive off, the lights off their car blind me.

Each step I take, my stomach sinks a little deeper, my mind boggles a little more, I need to know what he looked like, Peter not Nick. Each image that comes into my head leaves me scared, the thought of Mangled skin and flesh, sinking into the earthy ashes. I am there. At the campfire, the one I have been carefully analyzing for the past 45 minutes, my head peaks over the dip in the ground, what I see before me is truly shocking...

Them disturbing thoughts, escape my head, like a prisoner on remand. For all I see is scraps of wood and metal. The silence captures my loneliness. This is what happens when you're a raven with an overreactive imagination, who lives in the middle of a dead-end. They played tricks on my mind.

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