

The Pulling of the Rope

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Those stories we wish were true.

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The Pulling of the Rope

It hadnâ€™t been a great day
as Iâ€™d spent most of it hunting.
But now it was over and my kill â€”
a two-pack of processed Cornish pasties
and a bottle of red.
I was a 21st century hunter gatherer
and my hunting ground was a local super market
manned by a short-sighted security guard.
It was a surprisingly warm November night in 2001
and I lived in a stand-alone house
next to an industrial estate.
After 5.00 p.m. there wasnâ€™t a soul around for miles.
Iâ€™d sit up all night writing and drinking
and then sleep until midday.
I was doing just that
when there was a knock at the door.
Nobody ever knocked at my door,
which was the point of living there.
I stood up, leaned forward, and stuck my head out of the window
to see who was there.
â€” Hey.â€”
â€” Hey.â€”
It was Beth, a local girl Iâ€™d met some days before
in a park while she was taking photographs of ducks.
She wasnâ€™t a pretty girl, she wasnâ€™t even particularly clean,
but she had pretty eyes and a cryptic smile.
I wanted to know what was behind that smile.
â€” Are you going to let me in
or leave me standing out here all night?â€”
How had she found me?
â€” Itâ€™s open.â€”
She made her way through the door,
managed to negotiate her way over the scattered unpaid bills in the hall,
and found me in the lounge.
â€” You leave your door open?â€”
â€” Iâ€™ve nothing to steal.â€”
She walked around the room until
she came to a loose floorboard,
which seemed to amuse her.
She rocked back and forth
on the floorboard, causing it to squeak.
â€” Does that entertain you?â€”
â€” A little, yes.â€”

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â How did you find me?â
â I followed you home. This place is a wreck.â
â Thank you. Why did you follow me home?â
â You interest me.â
She came to join me at my desk.
She fingered through my papers until she found one titled
â Solitary Prose.â
She began to read:
â The solitary writer writes only for himself
and so knows his work is true.â
She threw it back down on the desk.
â Is that the work of a great writer?â
â No.â
â But you are a great writer, aren't you?
I mean, that's what you said,
Donnie Sylvester,
the greatest writer to ever live.
That's what you said in the park.â
â Yeah, well, you said you don't talk or mix
with strange men, yet here you are.â
â Oh but you are not strange, Donnie.
I mean you clearly wish you were,
like some kind of exception to the rules.
That's why you live out here,
leave your door unlocked,
and steal cheap wine from the supermarket.
I mean seriously, if you're going to steal it,
why not something with a little taste?â
She twisted the bottle that stood on my desk
so that she could see the label.
â What are you, a stalker? I like cheap wine.â
â Of course you do, cheap wine, cheap clothes,
cheap house,
and I bet you like your women cheap too.â
â In my experience, all women come with a heavy price tag.â
â Ha ha yeah â that's true,
you should write that down.â
â Maybe I did.â
â Well, maybe you did. And maybe it was published
and maybe it launched you into a great figure of world literature.â
â Maybe it did.â
â Maybe it didn't.â
She was beginning to annoy me.
â What do you want?â
â I'm not sure; like I said, you interest me.â
â Well, I'm busy.â
â Ha ha, busy dying, yes.â
â What does that mean?â
â Oh Donnie, Donnie, you are no different from the rest of us.
You think you're special,
sitting here writing this crap like you're a somebody?

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Like somebody gives a shit about you
and what you do and what you write?

Iâve met a lot of writers, Donnie,
they were all unemployed too.â

â And what about you? Youâre special, are you?â

â In many ways, yes.â

â Really? And what do you do thatâs so special?â

â Take me to your bedroom and Iâll show you.â

This I had not seen coming.

â I donât have a bedroom.â

â Everyone has a bedroom, Donnie.â

â I usually just sleep over there on the couch.â

â Iâm sure thereâs a bed upstairs.â

â Thereâs an upstairs?â

She walked over to the couch and began to undress.

She got down to her underwear, which didnât match
and was soiled. She was trying to disrobe in a sexy fashion
but it had no effect on me.

â Then weâll do it on the couch.â

â Do what?â

â Sex, Donnie, sexy sex.â

â Sex is boring.â

She stopped undressing just
as she was about to pull down her knickers.

Then she just stood there and looked at me.

Her face battled a mixture of emotions:
embarrassment, anger, and upset.

â Trust me, sex with me is far from boring.â

â Sex with anyone is boring.â

â Not me.â

â What makes you so special?

Nothing from where Iâm standing.

You are not even attractive and you are not clean.

Look at you standing there, dirty feet,
dirty knickers, cheap bog-perfume.

Youâre a mess. I should throw you out and masturbate,
at least that would save me a trip to the clinic.â

Her face turned to rage and she began to get dressed.

â Fuck you, Donnie fucking Sylvester!

Youâre a piece of shit!

You donât have to throw me out
because Iâm walking out and youâll be lucky
if I donât creep back in when you are asleep
to cut your fucking balls off.â

When she was done dressing and ranting,
she walked over to me.

She leaned over me and brushed all my papers onto the floor.

â There!â

Then she walked out, slamming the door behind her.

I could hear her screaming abuse at me
all the way through the industrial estate.

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I knew I had hurt her feelings but I also knew
she would be back.

We freaks stand alone, and yet we tend to attract each other;
we come together in a beautifully disruptive way,
like thunder and lightning.

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