

Bank Holiday Slam

Mark looked me in the eye; open hands ready to grasp. I wondered if he could actually put his arms around my gut, never mind the strength to pick me up. I had already put Wes up against the wall with a few grazing wounds. They were never my intention, as we acted out dreams that we thought we had left behind as the years went by. It was already Wes' Ultimate Warrior to my Big Boss Man, and Mark was acting out Bret 'The Hitman' Hart. I had Becki egg me on whilst Carla acted out a rule breaking manager. Clearly, we had invented backyard wrestling.

Our arms clutch as the battle of strength kicked in, pushing each other back and forth before releasing ourselves. Mark runs to the wall, only to run back with his arm out for a clothesline, only to be picked up by me in a bear hug position. Mark is light and I could easily feel his ribs with my arms. I carry him like a baby rests its head on a loving shoulder, only I just rub the body against the wall.

'Oh fuck off, not me as well,' Mark pleaded, as Wes got back into his role, slamming his skateboard into my back. Both at each side, at arms length, not knowing who was going to jump on me first. Wes does his Warrior dance as Mark jumps on my back, arms round my head, twisting and turning to bring me down. His left arm is placed around my neck, and though I might have been choking, I don't show them the satisfaction. Wes then gives me a few tapping punches to my chest before I finally give in. Mark releases his arms, as Wes ran up towards me with a clothesline, which I duck, but Mark then had the skateboard and taps me on the head, for which I decided to go down. With Wes' Vans left foot on my chest,

Carla slams her palm on the ground three times, and Wes continues his act, holding imaginary ropes, to green fields and a man walking his dog.

The promised sunshine wasn't out, just light grey skies that could have threatened rain. A few boys that we knew from Hafod High made their tag signs on the battered benches. Mark knew them better than I did simply cause they exchanged designs in school and boasted where they placed them around. My head trickled sweat, our bodies spent but not tired; we laughed and joked over our actions. Nothing could possibly ruin such a fine day.

So I thought.

'I don't get you lot,' a raspy voice enquired. 'You fucking fights each other, but you won't fight any of us. Fucking weak, the lot of you,' Gav Boy said, vodka bottle resting his hand. We stood up before he could even finish off his sentence. Our calm nature was then strangled with tension, with Sully and Fishy behind him, with a few other boys unknown to us, acting out to be somebody.

'Fuck off,' Wes snapped, 'just having a laugh, if you want to know.'

'Turning into a right mouthy cunt now, aren't you?'

'Weren't so mouthy when I gave you a smacking the other week, was you?'

Sully chipped in, his cigarette breath coming out with each full of words.

'Considering that silent but deadly here contributed, the odds weren't quite in my favour, were they?' Wes replied, pointing at Fishy. They did nothing but laugh back at our faces. I hadn't seen Sully in ages; last time I had seen him was in Hafod High, walking away from a calling teacher for bricking a car window.

Before that he was suspended for making the Jewish History teacher break down in tears by saying the Holocaust didn't exist.

'Oh Martin, you're still a fat cunt then?' Sully enquired. 'Still listening to music that you should be put down for as well,' he went on, pointing at my Therapy? 'Teethgrinder' shirt. 'Fuck Martin, you've really let yourself go down hill with the fucking Get Along Gang here. No, sorry, Care Bears was more your thing, wasn't it? Made sure you were on the helping list to push some old goats in wheelchairs, you fucking sad cunt.'

'Yeah, and Martin does it more now he's in a faggot Catholic school,' Gav went on.

'Wha', St. David's, in Clase? Jesus, in a school full of arse bandits, hey? I'm just wondering, how low can you fucking get?'

'Martin, have a bit of self respect and just whack the twat,' Mark said with anger.

'You can fucking shut it as well,' Sully replied, turning his hateful gaze away from me. 'Just as bad as that faggot over there. You had half of the school lick your arse for being the Karate Kid, having your mug printed in the papers. Another fucking do gooder, but fucking chickened out when me and Gav wanted a bit of spar.'

'Yeah, with a fucking penknife screwdriver sticking out of your fist.'

'...' Wes did us a favour and whacked Sully over the head with his skateboard. Mark pushed Sully away and into Gav and the others, before they followed us up the steps. The violent tensions between us had gone overblown and

knowing what boys they were, we just knew that one of them would carry a shiny instrument of the hurting kind with them. As I ran up the steps, I could feel my heart bounce on my rib cage. Fear and adrenaline mixed going through my bloodstream, sweat coming down like tears. I was only inches away from them, as their voices and previous actions repeated in my mind, dug out so deep that I couldn't erase them. Fern Street suddenly became a very long corridor.

'FUCKING GRASSING CUNT...(an elastic band slapping around my ear)...DON'T LOOK AT ME FAGGOT...(someone makes a fat face)...DON'T COME TOP IN CLASS AGAIN...FUCKING TEACHER'S PET...JESUS, MARTIN, WHY ARE YOU SUCH A FAT TWAT...(a pair of football boots whacked across my face)...I FUCKING DIDN'T DO ANYTHING, IT WAS THAT FAT PIECE OF SHIT OVER THERE...(a maths compass stabbing into me)...MARTIN, WAS YOU BORN A PIG OR SOMETHING, CAUSE IF YOU WERE YOU SHOULD'VE BEEN BACON SANDWICHES AGES AGO...OH MARTIN, JEWS ARE USUALLY FAT CUNTS, HOW COME DID YOUR GRANPARENTS SURVIVED THE NAZI CAMPS – SHOULD'VE BEEN BURNT TO DEATH, SO WE WOULDN'T HAVE TO HAVE A FAT SLUG WALKING AMONGST US...'

For what felt like forever, I followed on behind Mark round the corner, where Gav and Sully decided to give up the chase. Wes said something that he wouldn't have to worry about facing up to Gav, cause he would get suspended as soon as he placed a foot on school grounds.

‘I fucking hope so,’ Mark snapped. ‘What on earth possessed you to whack a fucking nut like Sully over the head for? Sully being just as mad as Sal Clay, I don’t fancy being met with a fucking blade across my throat.’

‘Don’t be such a fucking drama queen,’ Wes replied in a calm manner.’

‘That’s alright for you to say, you haven’t been in a dojo where you were expected to have them out.’

‘For fuck sake, why don’t we just chill,’ Carla demanded, looking over the road, where curtains twitched.

I had lost count on how low the argument lasted for. I was lost in my maze of torment, where voices screamed and actions repeated. They didn’t last the afternoon, nor the evening, but till the next morning. If I’m honest, the paths to self-harm were beginning to reopen that moment.