

# Murder Boy

By Bryon Quertermous

"I need tacos," Posey King said. "And beer."

Posey was Dominick Prince's girlfriend. His rock. The fount of reality in Dominick's fantasy-laced world. She also looked hot in a skirt and shaved her pubic hair in the shape of a star.

"And maybe some weed," Dominick said.

"Weed makes you stupid. And sterile," Posey said. "Get a 40 of something cheap for energy and then we'll go do this thing."

"Do this thing? You think you're in some kind of mob movie? Or a heist flick or something?"

"You're a writer but you only quote in movies or TV shows," Posey said. "Don't you read books?"

She'd been giving him this same shit for two years. She thought he was smart but working below his potential. She thought he should be writing some kind of epic shit. Something with a cast of six hundred and a war or a plague.

He said murder and violence was a plague of modern society but she wouldn't buy it. He stayed with her because he loved her. And she swallowed.

"I forget you're smart," Dominick said.

"What was the last book you read?"

"I've been working on my thesis."

"You watch TV don't you? You went to the movies last night."

"I don't need this from you too. You're supposed to support and encourage me."

"I let you fuck me up the ass. In exchange I'm going to make you a better person."

\* \* \*

Parker Farmington came inside his teaching assistant and then farted as he rolled off of her. He peeled the condom off his limp penis and tried to make it into the trashcan next to the bed but missed.

"Pick that up before you leave, it's gross to find those later," she said.

He couldn't remember her real name. He always called her Austen because that's who she wanted to be and Jane sounded old and stupid.

"One of these times I'll make it," Farmington said. "Do you want eggs?"

"Why can't we do this at your house? It feels so creepy doing it here."

"This is your house, how can it be creepy?"

"I rent here. There are six other girls living here and they all bring home frat boys and rock singers, and hairy chicks from Europe."

"Do you wish I had more hair?" Farmington asked.

"I want this to be an adult affair. You're an adult. You live in adult house and I want to fuck in your adult bed sometime," she said, getting out of bed and dragging the sheet with her.

"I told you, that's not going to happen," he said.

"Put your underwear on and get the condom off my floor. I'll see you in the kitchen."

\* \* \*

The shells were loaded with rubber slugs instead of buckshot. This didn't really please Titus Wade but the business was no longer 'dead or alive' captures. Blowing off heads was too much damn paperwork these days. So he used rubbers.

Susan was fucking the professor again and she needed to be punished. This guy was a prick and pissed Wade off more than the others. Susan knew that and did it to flaunt him. Why else would she be with a loser like that? He wouldn't even take her back to his fancy house on professor row.

One barrel, six shells, two pumps. Titus was ready to go.

\* \* \*

Dominick passed the plate of nachos and a 20oz Diet Coke to Posey as he slid back into the car.

"I want to change the world with a book *and* have a gun fight in there too."

Posey kissed him on the forehead and winked at him.

"I know baby, you're going to do it all. Really," she said. "Now tell me about this plan of yours."

"The Professor needs to be taught a lesson. He refuses to sign off on my thesis and it's due tomorrow morning. If I don't have a thesis, I don't have a degree. Then I lose my fellowship in New York and I'll probably end up on the midnight shift at a liquor store dying in a shootout with a stupid motherfucking 12-year-old."

"And the lesson?"

"Crime fiction is relevant in modern society. I'm going to show him the cause and affects of crime on individuals in this ghetto-ass city."

"And the bounty hunter?" Posey asked, picking up a business card from the ash tray.

"My sister's new boyfriend. He's going to help us with the cause and affects."

Posey smiled wide and Dominick patted her thigh, lacing his fingers through hers as they drove toward the meeting spot.

\* \* \*

Parker Farmington noticed the pick-up truck as he walked out of Austen's dumpy apartment building. Sure it was Detroit - Truck Town, USA - but this was the college and cultural area near Wayne State University, the last bastion of foreign cars in the city. And the truck wasn't even a Ford.

Farmington tried not to look directly at the truck as he made his way to the Honda hybrid parked in front of the building. When he was in the car with the doors locked, he called Austen on his cell phone.

"Somebody's watching your building," he told her.

She didn't say anything, but after a second, Farmington saw the blinds on her front window shimmy and saw a hand stick out and pull them apart.

"Jesus, girl, don't let him see you watching him. Close the blinds."

"I bet there aren't creepy people waiting outside of your house," she said.

"Not now. Just keep an eye on this guy - on the sly - and let me know if he tries anything."

"On me, or anything at all?" She asked.

Farmington huffed and ended the call. He watched the truck for another minute or so longer before he pulled away, switching the station from country music to NPR.

\* \* \*

Who the fuck drives a hybrid in Detroit? Wade thought. Even though current gas prices were driving the price of filling his tank to more than he paid in insurance for the truck, he wouldn't drive anything else. Not only did a big black truck send the imposing image needed in his field, the storage space was unmatched and the suspension could take even the city's worst roads at high speeds without hurting the truck or himself.

But Jesus, a hybrid? What did it run on? Gerbil shit?

He wanted to move in when the professor was gone. Susan would be alone in the house and that's when he liked to work, but he'd promised his new girlfriend he'd wait for her dumb ass brother. It was a revenge thing and he was all about revenge. Especially if he could get paid for it.

The Tigers game was on the radio and that little spic Zamia was lighting up batter after batter on Chicago's roster. It made him smile. Revenge and Tigers baseball. That's life in Detroit.

\* \* \*

Dominick knew this girl Susan from advanced fiction workshop because they shared a passion for Michael Chabon and Mystery Science Theater 3000. She was dating the professor and was pissed at him for something so she agreed to let him know when he was staying at her house because it would be easier than doing this at his gated home.

She lived in the student ghetto section of Detroit where large rambling houses, once the estates of auto barons, had been left to rot and then cut into studio apartments or invaded by twenty college students each paying twice what the entire house was worth in monthly rent.

There were no cars in the driveway or directly in front of the house as he pulled up, but it didn't really register with him. Not as much as the big black pick-up truck sitting across the street.

"What do you figure that trucks doing here?"

"Boyfriend I guess," she said.

"You haven't met the girls who live here. They date painters and writers and each other," Dominick said. "I was considered an outcast because I drive a Cavalier."

"When were you here?" She asked, tilting her head.

"Study group."

"You had study group for a writing workshop?"

"We had to work on these fucking multi-media projects in groups of three. Susan was the only one who had a computer with a big enough monitor to work on. She's a graphic design student."

"Well isn't that lovely," she said. "And what was she doing in a writing workshop?"

"This is bullshit Posey and you know it. Focus on what we're here to do."

"Whatever."

\* \* \*

Susan forgot about Dominick Meade until he pulled into her driveway. She recognized the Cavalier right away and then it clicked. Luckily, Parker answered his cell phone when she called and told him she needed him again. Once she'd missed that bullet, she remembered the condom on the floor.

That was the last one in the box and she'd neglected to get anymore because she was preparing for a sexual boycott until Parker let her come to his house once in a while. It was too late to get more so she just hoped everything went down before Parker got his clothes off.

\* \* \*

The Cavalier had to belong to the guy he was waiting for. It was the only thing that stuck out on this block as much as his truck. If he did any more business with students or professors he'd have to get something more foreign. Though the only thing worse than not driving a truck would be driving a foreign truck. Who drives a truck made by Toyota? He might as well wear dreadlocks and flip-flops and call himself Woody.

When he saw a tall white guy get out of the car with a curvy brunette in a ponytail he knew this was his guy. Wade grabbed the nylon equipment bag from his passenger's seat and climbed out of the truck and toward the couple. He stopped when he saw Susan coming down the front stairs waving her arms.

How the hell did she know he was here? Or was she trying to say something to the new kid and his girl? He decided to go back to his truck and wait behind it to see what happened.

\* \* \*

Posey was the first one to see Susan coming down the steps waving her arms like they were on fire.

"Is she talking to us?" Posey asked, tugging Dominick's attention toward the front door.

"Oh yeah, that's her. I'm still curious about that truck. I think somebody's-"

"You've got to move your car," Susan said.

She was now right in front of them.

"He'll know the Cavalier doesn't belong here and think something is up," she continued.

"Goddamit. Why do I get such shit for buying cheap cars because my dad works for GM?"

"Do you want your car to fuck with your little plan?" Posey asked.

He admitted that he did not and moved the car down a few blocks to the same side of the street as the truck. As he approached the house again, he heard someone calling his name. Even though he wasn't high, his head was still foggy and it took him a second to figure out the sound was coming from the truck. Well, from behind the truck.

"Meade," the voice behind the truck said. "Over here."

Dominick hesitated briefly before going around to the passenger side of the truck. He tensed when he saw the hulking man dressed all in black who was leaning against the truck, but relaxed a little when the man didn't shoot him with the shotgun he was holding.

"Who the fuck are you?" Dominick asked.

"I'm either the guy who's going to help you 'cause I know your sister, or you're the guy I'm going to kill because you're fucking *my* sister."

"Ohhhhhhhhhhh," Dominick said. "Your *sister* is fucking the professor. I thought she was part of your harem or something."

"You thought I was cheating on your sister?"

Dominick shrugged.

"She's kind of a slut. Probably cheating on you," he said.

"You're a little twat. Do you have the money?"

"Can't my sister pay you with like sexual favors or something? I'm really tight on cash this month."

Titus raised the shotgun toward Dominick, but instead of shooting him, he smacked him in the back of the head with it.

"She's a fucking lady, your sister. Show some goddamn respect."

Dominick rubbed at the back of his head with one hand and pulled an envelope full of twenties out of his back pocket with the other.

"I had to get this through sexual favors with my girl," he said, handing the money to Titus. "I'm just saying..."

\* \* \*

Parker Farmington was happy he was going to get some more action before he tried to work on his new writing project. Sex with Susan always cleared his head, but their argument after the last round had made him mad and disoriented. He would try to end things on a happier note this time.

Maybe he'd go down on her and try this new thing he'd read about on the Internet. If he was lucky, maybe she'd pass out with pleasure and he could leave without saying anything.

He reached into his backpack on the seat next to him and pulled out a new purple vibrator he'd bought the other day - with Susan's needs, doing it on his own could give him early arthritis - and a bottle of his heart medicine. Sex this much was nice but would screw up his heart if he wasn't careful. He also dropped a roll of duct tape on the seat with everything else. His wife had been begging him to fix the broken something or other in the basement and this was the only tool he knew how to use. It looked very odd next to the vibrator and pills.

The truck was still across from the house and Susan was walking into the house with another girl and a guy he thought he recognized. He pulled into the driveway and let the car continue to run while he thought about what to do.

Maybe she wanted them to have sex with the new couple. That would mean he'd get to have sex with two women but he wasn't too sure about the other guy being there. He wondered if he could maybe talk them into doing it in stages, starting with him and the two girls. He could slip out after that and not have to deal with the other guy.

But what if there was something else going on? Could something nefarious be going on? He knew Susan wasn't cheating on him because she's the one who called him back. But that could be a trap too. Did this have anything to do with the black truck? He decided it wasn't worth the potential danger and started to back out of the driveway. The car only went about ten feet before the baseball bat came smashing through the back windshield.

\* \* \*

Dominick finally came to trust Titus Wade and went back to Posey and the two of them went into the house with Susan while Titus grabbed the rest of his gear. Dominick thought he heard a car pull into the driveway as they made their way into the house but he didn't bother to turn around, he was too focused on the job ahead.

It didn't even dawn on him that it could be one of the roommates coming home early, which would totally fuck with the plan, or that it could be the professor. Dominick assumed Susan had done her job and the professor was already in the house. Maybe even tied to the bed or something.

But the professor wasn't in the house when they went in. Nobody was there but Susan. She had put out a plate of cookies and a group of bottled water and cans of soft drinks and some discount beer.

"I didn't have time for a proper hospitality plate," Susan said, nodding at the snack. "Parker never lets me entertain his friends but I figured you might want some alcohol for the job."

Awkward silence.

"What exactly is the job?" Susan asked.

Dominick looked to Posey who shrugged.

"I'm not exactly sure of the specifics myself," she said.

"He needs to be taught a lesson," Dominick said.

Susan nodded along without yelling, so he continued.

"He refuses to sign off on my thesis. If I don't have a thesis, I don't have a degree. And then I lose my fellowship position in New York and I'll probably end up on the midnight shift at a liquor store dying in a shootout with a stupid motherfucking 12-year-old."

"And the lesson..?" Posey asked.

"Crime fiction is relevant in modern society. I'm going to show him the cause and affects of crime on individuals in this ghetto-ass city."

"And the bounty hunter?"

"There's a bounty hunter?" This was Susan. "Oh shit, tell me you didn't."

Before Dominick could tell her he did, they heard the smashing glass and then the screaming.

\* \* \*

Titus got pissed when he saw what the professor had in his hands. He didn't originally plan on dragging the condescending little asshole out into the street but when he saw the duct tape and the vibrator he lost it.

"It's not all for her," Farmington squealed and the glass from the window sliced his skin as he was dragged out through the window. "The tape's for-"

Titus punched him in the face and smacked both items out of his hands.

"I don't want to here your sick plans for my sister."

Farmington tried to scurry away while Titus picked the vibrator and tape up from the driveway, but he didn't make it very far before he was grabbed by the neck and hauled to his feet. Titus crammed the purple vibrator into Farmington's mouth and down his throat then wrapped several layers of duct tape around his head, sealing the toy in Farmington's mouth.

"You keep your mouth shut or I'll turn that on, you hear?"

Farmington nodded eagerly and hoped the wet spot in his pants didn't show.

\* \* \*

Susan saw the professor first, Dominick noticed that Titus's shotgun was on the ground with a roll of duct tape, and Posey was pretty sure the same kind of vibrator she owned was taped to the professor's mouth.

"Your plan's kind of kinky," she whispered to Dominick.

"This is not my fucking plan."

"Titus, get away from him," Susan yelled.

Titus shoved his sister out of the way as she ran into him and tried to pull him away.

"I'll deal with you later," he said.

Susan fell backward but caught herself before she hit the ground. She picked up the shotgun and pointed it at Titus.

"Fuck you big brother," she said. "I wanted to shake him up but I think you're getting carried away. Just let him go and we'll deal with this ourselves."

"It's not your deal to call," Titus said, then he pointed to Dominick. "It's his cash, so it's his gig to call."

"Come on Dominick," Susan said softly, "I'm sure we can all sit down and get your situation straightened out."

Dominick looked to Posey who had lost her smirk and was standing closer to him than she usually did.

"This probably isn't what you had in mind," she said.

"Kind of gives you a new outlook on crime fiction, doesn't it professor?"

Dominick asked. "Adultery, betrayal, kinky sex, shotguns. Seems like it all has a pretty valid platform in *this* society doesn't it?"

Farmington hung his head and struggled against Titus's grip on his wrists.

"Hold him for a sec, Titus," Dominick said. "Let me just go get my thesis form from my car. If he signs it you can let him go."

"And I keep the cash?" Titus asked.

Dominick nodded.

\* \* \*

Parker Farmington struggled against the brutes grip trying to get a hold of the heart pills sitting on the seat.

Now he knew who the kid is he'd seen going into the house with Susan. It was Dominick Meade, one of his graduate students. One of the more promising writers in the department in fact, but hell bent on the course of commercial fiction which wouldn't get him anywhere in academia.

If Farmington signed that thesis form his reputation would be soiled by the manuscript it represented. Not only would his student become a pariah, so would Farmington. Once the book deal was finalized he'd be done with academics for good. But he needed to wait it out two more months so he could draw his full pension.

"Sign it," Dominick said, shoving a stapled set of papers at Farmington's head.

Farmington tried to say something, but even his mumbles couldn't be heard through the tape. He squirmed his wrists against the big man's grip but couldn't get his hands free.

"If I let you go, you gonna sign the boy's paper?" the beast asked.

Farmington shook his head no. The beast flipped the switch on the vibrator and it started shimmying around in Farmington's head. The noise was unbearable and he felt like his teeth were going to explode from the pressure. He nodded his head vigorously until the beast finally shut the damn thing off. Dominick got in front of Farmington again and slapped the papers against his chest.

"Make my future bright," Dominick said.

But it was all too much for Farmington's heart. The stress and the vibrations had punched the last ticket on his heart attack card and when the papers hit his chest everything went to hell.

\* \* \*

Titus was about to let Farmington's hands go when he took a dive at Dominick. Before Titus could do anything, Farmington was on top of Dominick flailing his hands at the boy's face and throat. Dominick struggled to get the professor off of him but fighting weight is hard to move so Titus lent him a hand by grabbing the professor by the neck and yanking him away from Dominick.

"Don't hurt him," Susan yelled out.

"He doesn't look right," Posey said.

Dominick scrambled out from underneath Farmington as Titus flung his still flailing body against the hood of the hybrid.

"Of course I don't look good," Dominick said. "The asshole sucker punched me."

Titus slapped at Farmington a few times and then slid him across the hood and heaved him back upright so Dominick could have a shot at him.

"I said leave him alone," Susan said, firing a slug at Titus's head.

\* \* \*

She only wanted to pump the gun so it would make that intimidating clacking sound. Who knew a shotgun had such a touchy trigger. Leave it to her hyped-up asshole of a brother to have a hair-trigger.

"Oh shit," she said, as the rubber slug plowed into Titus's left eye.

"It's only rubber," she said, dropping the gun and running to her brother. "He only uses rubber. It's only rubber. My God. Why's he bleeding.?"

"Rubber my ass," Dominick said. "I felt that shit burn past my face. You almost took me out bitch."

"Hey, settle down Dom," Posey said, getting in front of him before he could do anything to Susan. "It was an accident. And it is just rubber, you can see the slug next to his head."

"Oh my God, his heart pills. Parker needs his heart pills," Susan was now chanting.

She stood at the hood of the car spinning between the limp bodies of her brother and her lover. Posey reached into Farmington's car for an orange prescription bottle on the seat while Dominick kicked at the smoking pink slug rolling on the driveway near Titus Wade's head.

"Rubber or not, this shit's not supposed to hit you in the fucking eyeball," he said. "I think you fucking killed him Suzy."

"He wasn't fighting you Dom, he was having a heart attack" Posey said, shaking the pill bottle. "Check for his pulse."

Dominick ran two fingers along Titus's neck and couldn't feel anything.

"I don't even think he's breathing," he said.

"I was talking about the professor," Posey said. "But shit, I think they might both be gone."

"*OmigodomigodomigodwhathaveIdoneomigoditwasjustrubberomigod*," Susan chattered.

"It was an accident. Nobody meant for this to happen. It's nobody's fault sweetie."

Posey gave Susan a hug while Dominick continued to feel around for a pulse on Titus.

"Oh fuck," he said, when he rolled Titus onto his stomach. "The forms."

"Now is *not* the time Dominick," Posey said, patting Susan's head and keeping her ear pressed against Posey's chest. "You can deal with this in the morning."

"You don't understand," Dominick said. "If Professor Farmington is dead, that puts my whole fucking thesis in limbo. They'll tie me up in red tape so long I'll be paying for my PhD with Social Security."

"My God Dominick, it was an accident. They'll understand."

"You don't get it baby. They don't understand. They *feed*. They will eat this shit up. No, they have to believe he's just gone away for a while until my paperwork clears."

"I can keep them here," Susan said. "We have a cellar."

"You're not going to keep two corpses in the cellar of a rental house," Posey said. "That's even fucked up in Detroit. We've got to do something now. Like call the cops."

"Oh hell no," Dominick said. "You think academics rush to conclusions? There's no way in hell we're explaining this one."

"There's no bullets. This one died of a heart attack and that one, well it's not a bullet. That's got to mean something."

"And the bruises on the professors hands? And the tape marks on his mouth. And his fucking girlfriend's fingerprints on the shotgun?"

"He has a wife," Susan said, peeking out from Posey's bosom. "Someone should tell her."

"You think she's going to believe this was an accident if *you* tell her?" Dominick asked, pointing to Susan. "*Ha.*"

"I think this has all gone to your head and you need to cool off and think for a while," Posey said. "Let's get these guys into the house and cleaned up and figure out what to do from there."

"If we clean up this scene, they're going to think we're hiding something," Dominick said. "So no cops. I know people. We can get rid of them later."

"But he's my brother," Susan cried. "My mom is going to want to bury him with pop. Can't we just send him home or something?"

"Hold on, hold on," Posey said, rubbing her temples with the insides of her hands. "All you need is a signature right?"

Dominick nodded and said, "From a dead man."

Posey looked at Susan.

"Did the professor ever do any school business at your house? Might he have left any paperwork here or anything with his signature on it?"

Susan thought about that for a second. Dominick's hopes bloomed, her eyes flittered. And then she shook her head.

"He never wanted to burden me with his school work. It always frustrated him how bad most of his students were."

Dominick didn't bother sticking up for himself because he was too busy being disappointed.

"But wait," she said. "There might be something else."

The tease.

"He did a lot of his writing here. It always seemed to make him feel like a big man for me to see him signing all the paperwork for his book deals and such."

Without finishing the thought, Susan turned back toward the house and ran inside.

\* \* \*

"I think he gave me a copy of his new contract to keep safe here," Susan said, when Dominick and Posey finally caught up to her in her third floor bedroom.

She was digging through the bottom drawer of a small metal filing cabinet in her closet. Susan almost smacked her head on the low ceiling out of excitement when she snapped her hand up in the air holding a thick stack of folded paper.

"Aha," she said.

Dominick grabbed the papers from her and rifled to the back looking for the signature pages. Before he found it though, he found something else much more interesting.

"I know these guys, this publisher," he said. "They publish mystery novels."

Posey grabbed the papers from him and looked through for herself.

"He was going to be paid very well for it," Susan said.

"You knew about this?" Dominick asked. "You knew the asshole was publishing a mystery novel at the same time he was telling me not to?"

"He didn't want it to affect his pension," Susan said. "This was going to be good for him."

"Well I'm sure he'd appreciate the irony," Dominick said. "That's one thing he always said I did well."

After a few tries on scrap paper, Dominick had Farmington's signature down enough to scrawl it in the three required places on the thesis form and then initial before signing his own name.

"You don't think they'll mind the blood?" Posey asked, trying to smear some of it off of the pages of my paperwork and onto her jeans.

"Hell, they probably expect it."

*Bryon Quertermous is a writer and editor who's fiction has appeared in SHOTS, CRIMESPREE, NOIR ORIGINALS, FLASHING IN THE GUTTERS, CRIME SCENE SCOTLAND, and previously in THUG LIT. He is also the editor of the crime zine DEMOLITION.*