

Papercut
by
J. E. Clarke

Copyright
J. E. Clarke
janetgoodman@yahoo.com

FADE IN ON:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

An active classroom. Two thirds full.

MRS. FOSTER (30s) scribbles notes on the chalk board, an elephantine woman in a flowing skirt. Some of the CHILDREN play on phones. None of them pay attention.

PETER DUNNING (12) sits with RALPHIE LEEDS (11), their desks stuck close together.

PETER

You wanna go to the movies? They're playing Shark Attack Three tonight!

RALPHIE

Shark Attack Three? The one where they go underground? Yeah, I'm there!

His face suddenly falls.

RALPHIE

I got no allowance 'til the weekend.

PETER

(grins)

No sweat. My mom gave me enough for both of us.

They high-five. A SNICKER breaks their reverie.

GEORGE TUCKER and TOMMY KNIGHT sit a few desks away; 12 year olds going on 20. Big for their age, big attitudes. George's stomach peeks from under his too-small tee.

He points towards Mrs. Foster's skirt.

GEORGE

(to Tommy)

Look, she has a wedgy!

Tommy throws a cup of applesauce across the room. It hits the board near Mrs. Foster's face, and slides down with a slimy SQUISH.

Mrs. Foster swings around - pretty quick, given her size.

MRS. FOSTER

What in blue blazes -

George and Tommy grin back at her. Mrs. Foster's face falls instantly. Her chalk drops to the floor.

GEORGE
Sorry, Mrs. Foster.

TOMMY
It slipped.

MRS. FOSTER
(hesitates)
Well, boys... that's understandable.
Everyone makes mistakes.

She picks up the cup like it's a bug, and tosses it in the trash. She goes back to writing silently. The rest of the class watches, surprised.

Tommy nudges George in the ribs.

TOMMY
Check out the new weirdo. Over there!

George looks in the direction of Tommy's finger. As do Peter and Ralphie.

ANDRO MALARIC (11) sits in a corner, a dark little boy with patchwork clothes. There's a sea of empty desks around him; which makes him stand out even more.

GEORGE
(to Tommy)
Where's he from?

TOMMY
Someplace weird. I heard Romania. His name's Andrew-something.

GEORGE
Romania? Looks like a vampire to me.

TOMMY
Let's strip him down after school. See if he glitters!

They GIGGLE. Peter and Ralphie turn pale.

PETER
(to Ralphie)
Poor kid. We should warn him.

RALPHIE
I dunno. He's kinda strange.

PETER

Yeah, but look how small he is. If George sits on him, he'll explode!

Ralphie looks between Andro and the bullies. His face crinkles with worry.

The bell RINGS. George and Tommy climb over desks, and run out the door. Mrs. Foster ducks out of their way.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Andro pulls a brown bag out of his locker. Peter and Ralphie approach carefully.

PETER

Hey. Your name is Andrew, right?

Andro stands with his back to the locker, facing towards the hallway and the boys. He doesn't move a muscle.

ANDRO

My name's Andro.

RALPHIE

What kind of name is that?

ANDRO

It's mine. I'm Croatian.

RALPHIE

Oh.

He pauses as the fact sinks in.

PETER

Listen, we came over to warn you.

Andro stares at him; solemn eyes under jet black hair. The two boys fidget, unnerved.

RALPHIE

It's about Tommy and George. You know, the big kids in class?

Andro looks across the hall. Tommy and George are on their way. Ralphie and Peter's backs are turned - they don't see.

ANDRO

(nods)

Yes. The ones who made fun of teacher.

PETER

Yeah. Those guys. They're real trouble.
Especially for us little kids.

RALPHIE

They steal our lunch money and stuff. We
think they might be after you.

Andro looks puzzled.

ANDRO

The adults will protect us. Won't they?

Tommy and George are now just feet away. They stop behind
Peter and Ralphie, listen in.

PETER

(to Andro)

You don't get it, do you? Tommy and
George's dads are even worse. So they do
whatever they want!

RALPHIE

Sometimes I just wanna pee in their
Pepsi!

George COUGHS. Ralphie spins around, terror in his eyes.
The bullies slam the smaller boys against the lockers.
Ralphie's head CLANGS off dented metal.

GEORGE

You peed in my Pepsi?

RALPHIE

(stammers)

I didn't! I just said I wanted to! I
mean, not that I want to. Really...

TOMMY

(to Peter)

And you're warning this freak to stay
away. You should mind your business!

He slugs him in the stomach. Peter crumples to the floor.

An ADULT HALL MONITOR sees the assault, and slinks away.
Andro stands there, frozen.

A shadow falls over Peter's face. Tommy rifles the prone
boy's pockets, and pulls out money. Holds it up.

TOMMY

Lookie what I found!

PETER

My money - for Shark Attack Three!

George turns Ralphie's pockets inside out. Finds a single stick of gum.

GEORGE

This one's poor. What a dick!

He kicks Ralphie in the groin. Ralphie joins Peter on the floor. The bullies swing on Andro next. The boy's trapped on all sides.

TOMMY

Wonder what they have in Romania?

ANDRO

I'm Croatian.

George rummages through Andro's pockets. Finds nothing.

GEORGE

Don't vampires have money?

ANDRO

I'm not a vampire. My family's Gypsy...

Tommy snatches his lunch bag away.

TOMMY

Let's see what vampires eat -

His face lights up. He pulls out a wad of cash, and hands it to George.

TOMMY

Wow. Double score!

ANDRO

That's my lunch money!

Tommy pins him against the locker by his forehead. Andro snatches at one of the dollar bills, and tries to pull it back through Tommy's hand.

The dollar slides against flesh, causing a paper cut!

TOMMY

Ow!

He grabs his hand. Blood oozes between his fingers.

TOMMY

I'm gonna make you my bitch!

He yanks open the locker, and shoves Andro in. Smashes the paper bag on his head. George CHUCKLES.

GEORGE

You should like it there. It's nice and dark. Like a vampire coffin...

He high-fives Tommy, and stuffs the money in his pockets. They slowly walk away; Tommy counts his half of the loot.

TOMMY

Five. Six. Damn, this kid's a gold mine!

Andro sits up in the locker, and glowers at the bullies.

ANDRO

(mutters)

As you want money. It wants you.

Tommy continues the tally.

TOMMY

Seven. Eight... Ow!

Another paper cut. He shakes his hand. A bill flutters to the floor. Little red spots dot the edge. He SCREAMS as another dollar cuts into his palm.

TOMMY

What the hell? It's biting me!

George HOWLS and doubles over in pain.

GEORGE

Ow! My leg. My stomach!

He grabs at his crotch. Blood trickles down his shorts.

Ralphie and Peter sit up, on the floor. Little cuts appear magically on George's face. Others on his pale, exposed belly.

He collapses to the ground. Tommy falls next to him. Andro stares at the bullies, in a trance.

ANDRO

Let the flesh pay for it's sins.

Tommy and George writhe on the floor - new cuts appearing constantly. They throw money away from them, as fast as they humanly can.

Dollars flutter down, and create more wounds. The bullies kick them away.

Mrs. Foster sticks her head out of a classroom. She sees the scene - SLAMS the door.

Finally, mercifully - silence.

Andro picks dollars off the floor. Tommy and George scabble to their feet. George digs into his wallet and throws Andro all his money.

GEORGE

Take it all. Far away!

Andro takes a step. George and Tommy trip over each other, running away.

Peter and Ralphie rise to their feet, and watch the bigger boys retreat. Ralph looks at Andro in awe.

RALPHIE

Wow. Did you do that?

ANDRO

No. The money did.

PETER

(blinks)

Do all Romanians have superpowers?

ANDRO

I'm Croatian.

PETER

Whatever. You're totally cool.

He shakes Andro's hand.

PETER

You wanna go see Shark Attack Three?
Looks like we got enough for another ticket.

Andro smiles for the first time. He reaches into his locker and grabs his bag.

FINAL FADE OUT: