

Son of Satan

by Charles Bukowski

Entry



Bruce Zeines: **When they come Pray**

What do you associate with the creatures and how do the boys react to the oncoming danger?

Son of Satan

I was eleven and my two buddies, Hass and Morgan, they were each twelve and it was summer, no school, and we sat on the grass in the sun behind my father's garage and smoked cigarettes.

"Shit," I said.

I was sitting under a tree. Morgan and Hass were sitting with their backs against the garage.

"What is it?" asked Morgan.

"We gotta get that son of a bitch," I said. "He's a disgrace to this neighborhood!"

"Who?" asked Hass.

"Simpson," I said.

"Yeah," said Hass, "too many freckles. He irritates me."

"That's not it," I said.

"Oh yeah?" said Morgan.

"Yeah. That son of a bitch claims he fucked a girl under my house last week. It's a god damned lie!" I said.

"Sure it is," said Hass.

"He can't fuck," said Morgan.

"He can fucking lie," I said.

"I got no use for liars," Hass said, blowing a smoke ring.

"I don't like to hear that kind of bull from a guy with freckles," said Morgan.

"Well, maybe we ought to get him then," I suggested.

"Why not?" asked Hass.

"Let's do it," said Morgan.

We walked down Simpson's driveway and there he was playing handball against the garage door.

"Hey," I said, "look who's *playing* with himself!"

Simpson caught the ball on a bounce and turned to us.

"Hi, fellas!"

We surrounded him.

"Fucked any girls under any houses lately?" Morgan asked.

"Nah!"

"How come?" asked Hass.

"Oh, I dunno."

"I don't believe you've ever fucked anybody but *yourself*!" I said.

"I'm gonna go inside now," said Simpson. "My mother asked me to wash the dishes."

"Your mother has dishes up her pussy," said Morgan.

disgrace skam

freckle fregne

claim hævde

bull bullshit, sludder

on a bounce mens bolden

springer op

pussy fisse

gut mave
shove skubbe
butt balle

We laughed. We moved in closer to Simpson. Suddenly I shot a hard right to his belly. He doubled over, holding his gut. He stayed that way for a half minute, then straightened up.

"My dad will be home any time," he told us.

"Yeah? Does your dad fuck little girls under houses too?" I asked.

"No."

We laughed.

Simpson didn't say anything.

"Look at those freckles," said Morgan. "Each time he fucks a little girl under a house he gets a new freckle."

Simpson didn't say anything. He just began to look more and more frightened.

"I got a sister," said Hass. "How do I know you won't try to fuck my sister under some house?"

"I'd never do that, Hass, you've got my promise!"

"Yeah?"

"Yeah, I mean it!"

"Well, here's one just so you *don't*!"

Hass shot a hard right to Simpson's belly. Simpson doubled over again. Hass reached down, grabbed a handful of dirt and shoved it down the neck of Simpson's shirt. Simpson straightened up. He had tears in his eyes. A sissy.

"Let me go, fellows, *please*!"

"Go where?" I asked. "Wanna hide under your mother's skirt while the dishes fall out of her pussy?"

"You never fucked anybody," said Morgan, "you don't even *have* a dick! You piss out of your *ear*!"

"If I ever see you *look* at my sister," said Hass, "you're gonna get a beating so bad you'll be just one *big* freckle!"

"Just let me go, please!"

I felt like letting him go. Maybe he hadn't fucked anybody. Maybe he had just been day-dreaming. But I was the young leader. I couldn't show any sympathy.

"You're coming with us, Simpson."

"No!"

"No, my *ass*! You're coming with us. *Now, march!*"

I walked around behind him and kicked him in the butt, hard. He screamed.

"SHUT UP!" I yelled. "SHUT UP OR YOU'LL GET WORSE! NOW MARCH!"

We walked him up the driveway and across the lawn and down my driveway and into my backyard.

"Now stand straight!" I said. "Hands at your sides! We're going to hold a kangaroo court!"

I turned to Morgan and Hass and asked. "All those who think this man is guilty of lying about fucking a little girl under my house will now say 'guilty'!"

"Guilty," said Hass.

"Guilty," said Morgan.

"Guilty," I said.

I turned to the prisoner.

"Simpson, you are judged guilty!"

The tears were really coming out of Simpson then.

"I didn't do anything!" he sobbed.

"That's what you're guilty of," said Hass. "Lying!"

"But you guys lie all the time!"

"Not about fucking," said Morgan.

"That's what you lie about most, that's where I learned it from!"

"Corporal," I turned to Hass, "gag the prisoner! I'm tired of his fucking lies!"

"Yes, sir!"

Hass ran to the clothesline. He found a handkerchief and dish towel. While we held Simpson he jammed the handkerchief into his mouth and then tied the dish towel over his mouth. Simpson made some gagging sounds and changed color.

"You think he can breathe?" asked Morgan.

"He can breathe through his nose," I said.

"Yeah," Hass agreed.

"What'll we do now?" Morgan asked.

"The prisoner is guilty, isn't he?" I asked.

"Yeah."

"Well, as judge I sentence him to be hanged by the neck until dead!"

Simpson made sounds from beneath his gag. His eyes looked at us, pleading. I ran into the garage and got the rope. There was a length of it neatly coiled on a large spike on the garage wall. I had no idea why my father had that rope. He had never used it as far as I knew. Now it would be put to use.

I walked out with the rope.

Simpson started to run. Hass was right behind him. He made a flying tackle and brought him to the ground. He spun Simpson

kangaroo court selvbestaltet domstol
gag kneble
jam stoppe
sentence dømme
coiled rullet op i spiral
spin snurre
spike nagle

verdict dom
 release slippe fri
 settle ordne
 slide glide
 stained plettet
 resigned resigneret
 noose løkke
 porch veranda
 beam bjælke
 yank trække med et ryk
 faucet vandhane

over and began punching him in the face. I ran up and slammed Hass hard across the face with the end of the rope. He stopped punching. He looked up at me.

"You son of a bitch, I'll kick your god damned ass!"

"As the judge, my verdict was that this man would *hang*! So it will be! RELEASE THE PRISONER!"

"You son of a bitch, I'll kick your god damned ass good!"

"*First*, we'll hang the prisoner! *Then* you and I will settle our differences!"

"You're damn right we will," said Hass.

"The prisoner will now rise!" I said.

Hass slid off and Simpson rose to his feet. His nose was bloodied and it had stained the front of his shirt. It was a very bright red. But Simpson seemed resigned. He was no longer sobbing. But the look in his eyes was terrified, horrible to see.

"Gimme a cigarette," I said to Morgan.

He stuck one into my mouth.

"Light it," I said.

Morgan lit the cigarette and I took a drag, then holding the cigarette between my lips I exhaled through my nose while making a noose at the end of the rope.

"Place the prisoner upon the porch!" I commanded.

There was a back porch. Above the porch was an overhang. I flung the rope over a beam, then pulled the noose down in front of Simpson's face. I didn't want to go on with it any longer. I figured Simpson had suffered enough but I was the leader and I was going to have to fight Hass afterwards and I couldn't show any weakness.

"Maybe we shouldn't," said Morgan.

"This man is *guilty*!" I screamed.

"Right!" screamed Hass. "Let him *hang*!"

"Look, he's pissed himself," said Morgan.

Sure enough, there was a dark stain on the front of Simpson's pants and it was spreading.

"No guts," I said.

I placed the noose over Simpson's head. I yanked on the rope and lifted Simpson up on his toes. Then I took the other end of the rope and tied it to a faucet on the side of the house. I knotted the rope tight and yelled, "Let's get the fuck out of here!"

We looked at Simpson hanging there on tip-toe. He was spinning around ever so slightly and he looked dead already.

I started running. Morgan and Hass ran with me. We ran up the drive and then Morgan split for his place and Hass split for his. I realized I had no place to go. Hass, I thought, either you forgot about the fight or you didn't want it.

I stood on the sidewalk for a minute or so, then I ran back into the yard again. Simpson was still spinning. Ever so slightly. We had forgotten to tie his hands. His hands were up, trying to take the pressure off of his neck but his hands were slipping. I ran over to the faucet and untied the rope and let it go. Simpson hit the porch, then tumbled forward onto the lawn.

He was face down. I turned him over and untied his gag. He looked bad. He looked as if he might die. I leaned over him.

"Listen, you son of a bitch, don't die, I didn't want to kill you, really. If you die, I'm sorry. But if you *don't* die and if you ever tell *anybody*, then your ass is dead for *sure*! You *got* that?"

Simpson didn't answer. He just looked at me. He looked terrible. His face was purple and he had rope burns on his neck.

I got up. I looked at him for a while. He didn't move. It looked bad. I felt faint. Then I got myself together. I inhaled deeply and walked up the driveway. It was about four in the afternoon. I began walking. I walked down to the boulevard and then I kept walking. I had thoughts. I felt as if my life was over. Simpson had always been a loner. Probably lonely. He never mixed with us other guys. He was strange that way. Maybe that's what bothered us about him. Yet, there was something nice about him anyhow. I felt as if I had done something very bad and yet in another way, I didn't. Mostly I just had this vacant feeling and it was centered in my stomach. I walked and I walked. I walked down to the highway and back. My shoes really hurt my feet. My parents always bought me cheap shoes. They looked good for maybe a week or so, then the leather cracked and the nails started coming through the soles. I kept walking anyhow.

When I got back to the driveway it was almost evening. I walked slowly down the driveway and into the backyard. Simpson wasn't there. And the rope was gone. Maybe he was dead. Maybe he was somewhere else. I looked around.

My father's face was framed in the screen door.

"Come in here," he said.

I walked up the porch steps and past him.

"Your mother isn't home yet. And that's good. Go to the bedroom. I want to have a little talk with you."

untie løsne
burns vabler
faint svag
loner enspænder
vacant tom
framed indrammet

6 feet 2 ca 187 cm
fist næve
blow slag
rush ryk

I walked into the bedroom and sat on the edge of the bed and looked down at my cheap shoes. My father was a big man, six feet two-and-one-half. He had a big head, and eyes that hung there under bushy eyebrows. His lips were thick and he had big ears. He was mean without even trying.

"Where ya been?" he asked.

"Walking."

"Walking. Why?"

"I like to walk."

"Since when?"

"Since today."

There was a long silence. Then he spoke again.

"What happened in our backyard today?"

"Is he dead?"

"Who?"

"I warned him not to talk. If he talked, then he's not dead."

"No, he's not dead. And his parents were going to call the police. I had to talk to them a long time in order to get them not to do that. If they called the police, it would have killed your mother! Do you know that?"

I didn't answer.

"It would have killed your mother, do you know that?"

I didn't answer.

"I had to pay them to be quiet. Plus, I'm going to have to pay the medical bills. I'm going to give you the beating of your life! I'm going to cure you! I'm not going to raise a son who is not fit for human society!"

He stood there in the doorway, not moving. I looked at his eyes under those eyebrows, at that big body.

"I want the police," I said. "I don't want you. Give me the police."

He moved slowly toward me.

"The police don't understand people like you."

I got up from the bed and doubled my fists.

"Come on," I said, "I'll fight you!"

He was upon me with a rush. There was a blinding flash of light and a blow so hard that I really didn't feel it. I was on the floor. I got up.

"You better kill me," I said, "because when I get big enough I'm going to kill you!"

The next blow rolled me under the bed. It seemed like a good place to be. I looked up at the springs and I had never seen anything as friendly and wonderful as those springs up there. Then I laughed, it was a panicked laugh but I laughed, and I laughed because the thought came to me that maybe Simpson *had* fucked a little girl under my house.

"What the hell are you laughing at?" my father screamed. "You are surely the *Son of Satan*, you are not *my* son!"

I saw his big hand reach under the bed, searching for me. When it came near I grabbed it with both hands and bit it with all the strength I had. There was a ferocious yowl and the hand withdrew. I tasted wet flesh in my mouth, spit it out. Then I knew that while Simpson was not dead I might very well be dead very soon.

"All right," I heard my father say quietly, "now you've really asked for it and by god you are going to get it ..."

I waited, and as I waited all I could hear were strange sounds. I could hear birds, I could hear the sound of autos driving by, I could even hear my heart pounding and my blood running through my body. I could hear my father breathing, and I moved myself exactly under the center of the bed and waited for the next thing.

(1982)

spring fjeder
ferocious vild
yowl hyl
withdraw trække tilbage
pound hamre

Interpretation

1. Establish time, place and characters in the introductory paragraph.
2. Describe the hierarchy of the three boys – who seems to have the leading word?
3. "Look who is *playing* with himself" – Explain the sexual associations of the pun (=ordspil). Find similar examples in the text for discussion.
4. How do the boys bully and intimidate Simpson verbally and physically?
5. Simpson's reactions: he is terrified – puts up a resistance – is frightened out of his wits – gives up – is a sissy. Which words are best and why?
6. What is the purpose of the "kangaroo court"? Establish the different roles of the three boys. Show how the boys try to "act the part". Where have the boys learned about the methods and language of such a court?