

Crying Victim

Written by

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**INT. CITY STREET - NIGHT**

The muzzle of a REVOLVER looms. Whoever's holding it snarls.

MUGGER

I said - hand over your wallet!

CLICK. A hammer cocks.

STANLEY (20 something, milquetoast looks) shrinks at the threat. Across the street, a banner waves over a building:

Welcome to the Conservative Convention-Lalapalooza! Entrance fee, \$30. \$10 for meal pass: There Ain't No Free Lunch!

The barrel bobs, an impatient gesture. Holding it: BERGER (30s, thug-life. Muscles upon muscles. Greasy hair.)

Stanley holds up pleading hands to his assailant.

STANLEY

Okay, okay. I need a second. Please!

BERGER

No can do, fuckwit. Time is money.  
Gimme yours now!

Across the street: THREE MEN exit the Convention hall.

\* One wears a GOP (Put Faith and Responsibility Back Into Our Nation) pin.

\* A second wears a MAGA 'Trump Rules, Dems Droolz' tee.

\* The third sports a COWBOY hat that would put John Wayne (not Gacy) to shame.

Spotting the altercation, they gravitate Stanley's way. Berger scowls at his victim.

BERGER

If you don't cough it up soon... God help you, I swear I'll shoot!

GOP Guy glances at Cowboy.

GOP GUY

Huh. It's been my experience God helps those who help themselves.

COWBOY  
 (drawls back)  
 Well, let's just see how this little  
 roundup plays out!

The trio of spectators cross the road, stop at the curb.  
 Just in time to hear Berger's announcement:

BERGER  
 And if I do, I'll pry that wallet  
 from your cold dead hands. Chop-chop,  
 Mr. Ain't-So-Sure. You can't spend  
 money in a pine box. Resisting's a  
 complete lose-lose for you!

Maga Man raises an eyebrow. Shrugs towards Stanley.

MAGA MAN  
 I hate to say, he's got a point.

Stanley shoots them a pleading look. Wins curious stares in  
 return. Berger raises the gun to Stanley's face.

BERGER  
 Speaking of "points". Time to  
 countdown. 3, 2...

Stanley FREAKS - shoves trembling hands into his vest.  
 Revealing: a generic cute TATTOO on his wrist.

BERGER  
 Nuh-uh. No sudden moves, Casper.

STANLEY  
 Uh, my name is Stanley.

BERGER  
 Well, try to play hero Stanley, and  
 you're gonna be a ghost. That *better*  
 be a wallet you're reaching for.

Maga Man waves for Stanley's attention from the sidelines.

MAGA MAN  
 Man, you ask me -

STANLEY  
 Which I so didn't... Busy here!

MAGA MAN  
 This is a classic 'good guy with a  
 gun' opportunity. If you're packing  
 heat, blow that punk away!

Berger hears, hisses (eyes glued to Stanley.)

BERGER

I'm no punk. I'm a professional. And I got no beef with you guys. I'm just workin' here!

Stanley's hands drop. His voice squeaks in fright.

STANLEY

Someone. Anyone. Help?!?

The trio exchange looks. Berger (and Stanley) wait for a response... Finally, GOP Guy clears his throat.

GOP GUY

(to Stanley)

Wait. Let's clarify what you're asking for. You want US to defend YOU?

STANLEY

(nods eagerly)

Uh, yeah. Like, right now? I mean, no need to go Rambo, but at least dial 911?

BERGER

Dumb plan. I'd advise they don't. That'd force me to escalate. And you'll be dead from lead poisoning before they even hit "Send."

Cowboy fingers his hat, mulls the reasoning.

COWBOY

I cain't say it's a pretty picture, but the man here speaks the truth. He's got you plumb outdrawed.

Stanley scrambles for alternatives.

STANLEY

Ok... But there's power in numbers, right? Sure he's got a gun, but maybe you do too? You are coming from a Conservative Get-together, after all.

GOP GUY

(snorts)

Let armed folks in where our Honored Representatives are speaking? What are you, a terrorist? That ain't solid security practice, Boy.

STANLEY

Well, even if you're unarmed - we can take him! There's four of us. One of him. How many can one guy shoot?

COWBOY

(chuckles darkly)

Volunteer if'n you want. But four? I'm countin' three. This demonstration here's proof fightin' ain't your forte. So best not to include you at all...

Berger sidles closer to Stanley, gun against his chest.

BERGER

Wanna play the odds? Do you feel lucky today, Casper?

STANLEY

My name's NOT Casper. And isn't that the line the GOOD guys use?!?

(to the others)

This guy is nuts. Someone, do something now!

GOP Guy's face sours. He steps back, crosses his arms.

GOP GUY

That's quite the victim mentality you got going, Son.

Maga Man mimics Stanley's voice with mincing gestures.

MAGA MAN

Ooooh, oooo, come and help me, pretty please! If I had to fight for myself, I might break a non binary nail!

STANLEY

Wait - you guys think this is *funny*? Don't you see what's happening here?

COWBOY

Crystal clear like champagne, City Slicker. Looks like you want someone ELSE to do your gal-danged work!

Berger nods, appreciative.

BERGER

Cool. You guys get it. I'M the one gettin' things done.

(MORE)

BERGER (cont'd)  
(glares at Stanley)  
Instead of standing around like a  
frightened sponge.

He pokes Stanley with the revolver. About to piss himself  
from fear, Stanley pulls out a wallet, hands it over.

BERGER  
That's more like it.

Weapon trained on Stanley, Berger opens it. Starts to count.

BERGER  
You know, it's your attitude that's  
brought you to this point, Casper.

STANLEY  
That's "Stanley."

BERGER  
Whatever. You marks look the same.

Berger nods to the trio.

BERGER  
Everyone else feel what I mean?  
Losers like him practically walk  
around with signs that scream:  
"Pushover". They want everything  
handed to them, including their own  
safety. If a guy's gonna take some  
responsibility in life, surely he  
should handle THAT one himself! Next  
thing you know, he'll walk into a  
bathroom-

MAGA MAN  
(snorts)  
The women's bathroom, 'cause that's  
how he identifies!

BERGER  
And ask one of THEM to wipe!

The trio nod. Mumbles of approval grow.

MAGA MAN  
I bet little 'ole Stanley's never  
been in a fight. Typical liberal  
elite. Sittin' in his mother's  
basement, playin' video games. When  
he should learn how to throw a punch,  
and git a job...

STANLEY

Excuse me?!? I'm a middle market manager at COSTCO!

Maga Man giggles, points at Stanley's wrist tattoo.

MAGA MAN

"Management" of what? I bet you got a degree in lesbian dance theory. Or underwater basket weaving, if your grades were good enough...

STANLEY

My BA was Sociology!

The three men burst out in laughing HOWLS at that reveal.

GOP GUY

Same difference, Soy Boy. "Initiation of Violence" is a great rule of thumb for ideologues n' all. But truth be told - you're the moocher here.

Stanley's eyes bug at that accusation.

STANLEY

How? Are you people blind? He's the one mugging me!

COWBOY

And what are you doin' about it? Except whine, I mean. If it was any one a' us, I guarantee - we wouldn't be askin' for help. We'd be kicking thug life butt!

(to Berger)

No offense meant, Sir.

Berger grins. Finishes counting his ill gotten gains.

BERGER

None taken.

(beat)

No offense, that is. But this cash? Well earned. And mine all mine.

He waves the bills in Stanley's face.

BERGER

Two hundred? Let's write this off as break-even for service done.

STANLEY

Service?!? To who? Bonnie and Clyde?

BERGER

Stupid socialist. You think Smith and Wesson's grow on trees? New, this beauty cost \$400, which amortizes over use. There there's maintenance costs. And the bus I had to take over here. Do the math. It all adds up.

Maga Man nods, counts on both hands.

MAGA MAN

See? This guy knows how to budget. He's a true business man.

BERGER

After all that, I *only* get \$200. Albeit tax free.

GOP GUY

Taxation is theft!

BERGER

In this case? Absolutely. I'm the one who did all the work.

(to Stanley)

So you're getting my labor cheap!

Pocketing the money, Berger prepares to walk away.

BERGER

One last word of advice. My ears are pretty sharp. I'm a top notch shot, too. So if you start to dial 911 to -  
(puts on a baby voice)  
Cry to the police -

MAGA MAN

Wah!

BERGER

One bullet's all it'll take. And your crippled ass will owe me more.

Stanley's jaw drops. Berger backs away. His bicep flexes as he trains the gun on Stanley's face.

MAGA MAN

Hey, nice muscles, man!

BERGER

Thanks! I lift every day. Self-care equals self-sufficiency. It's the least everyone should do.

MAGA MAN  
Respect. Alpha Males rule!

As Berger retreats, a corporate dressed COUPLE stroll by.  
The man flips a finger at the GOP banner across the road.

MAN  
Fascist deplorables. Hope they all  
eat horse de-wormer, contract COVID  
and die!

WOMAN  
(giggles)  
Trump loves Putin. Let them be butt  
buddies in jail!

MAGA MAN  
Clam your wad, Femi-Nazi!

STANLEY  
Help!!

The couple freeze. Stop. Look around.

MAN  
Uhhh, sure. What's going on?

STANLEY  
(points wildly)  
That guy over there mugged me! And  
THEY'RE cheering him on!

WOMAN  
(hisses)  
Figures.

STANLEY  
Then he threatened to shoot me if I  
call the cops!

The man blinks. Grabs his date, starts walking.

MAN  
I feel your pain. Best of luck.

Stanley calls after them, in shock.

STANLEY  
Wait. You guys... You aren't  
Republicans, so I thought-

The man shrugs. Keeps going.

MAN

We're the good guys. You know -  
centrists? Pull yourself up by your  
own bootstraps. Find some way to  
compromise!

The couple leaves. That's Stanley's final straw.

STANLEY

Fuck this. I'm calling!

He starts to dial 911. A SHOT rings out. True to his  
promise, Berger hits bulls-eye.

Stanley drops the phone. Goes down, clutching his hand.

STANLEY

Ow!

COWBOY

That's some mighty fancy shootin'!  
Make that "Wow"!

Berger runs around the corner, vanishes. The trio walk away  
from Stanley, too. Casual quips. Back slaps galore.

MAGA MAN

Long day. I think all this deserves a  
drink. You game?

COWBOY

You kiddin'? Shots and a chaser. I'll  
pay first round!

Crumpled on the ground, Stanley waves helplessly.

STANLEY

You're just gonna leave? What about  
me?

GOP GUY

We all saw - you have no money. Go  
buy your own drink, moocher!

Stanley groans. Deflates...

STANLEY

I quit.

MAGA MAN

(yells back)  
That's what you snowflakes always do!

FINAL FADEOUT: