

BOTTOM FEEDERS

Written by

J.H. Long

INT. RYKER HOUSE - NIGHT

The doorbell rings, and EDMUND RYKER, 40s, opens the front door to find his daughter, SADIE, 20s, waiting outside in a conservative cocktail dress.

EDMUND
There she is.

SADIE
Hi, Dad. Am I late?

They share a hug.

EDMUND
No, right on time. Your mom's setting the table; you can help.

The two walk up the main hall.

SADIE
Ooh, you must be having a another big wig over. Does that mean I can't have my phone at dinner?

EDMUND
He is a big wig, Sadie, and that's a "no" to the phone.

SADIE
He thinking about hiring you?

EDMUND
Just for a few seminars.

SADIE
Oh, so you can tell the employees that a power stance is much better for productivity than expensive quality of life improvements?

Edmund laughs ruefully, and the two emerge into the opulent dining room where FELICITY RYKER, 40s, sets the table.

FELICITY
There she is.

Sadie strikes a pose.

SADIE
Here I am. Dad wants me to resume my servitude right away, so how can I help?

Sadie joins her mother, and the groundskeeper, MIGUEL, approaches Edmund.

MIGUEL

Mr. Ryker, I trimmed the hedges up real nice and got the string lights outside working.

EDMUND

Great, that should be all. You can head home.

MIGUEL

Um, Mr. Ryker?

EDMUND

What is it?

MIGUEL

Well, since the fourth is coming up, I was wondering if you had any bonuses planned or maybe paid vacation days?

EDMUND

Why would you think that? You want more money? You should do more work, or god forbid, invest some of what you have. Get out of here.

MIGUEL

Yes, sir. Just thought I'd give you a chance.

Miguel leaves.

EDMUND

Give me a chance.

Edmund turns to find his wife glaring at him from the table.

EDMUND (CONT'D)

What?

Felicity sighs and shakes her head then the doorbell rings.

EDMUND (CONT'D)

Okay, hurry, hurry.

As Felicity rushes to make everything perfect, Edmund answers the door. WINSLOW and DOLORES ENDICOTT, 50's, stand outside.

EDMUND (CONT'D)
Mr. Endicott, welcome. Mrs.
Endicott, you look stunning.

DOLORES
Thank you.

EDMUND
Please, come in.

The Endicotts enter and appraise the space as they walk.

WINSLOW
Nice home you have here, Edmund.

EDMUND
Thank you, sir. It keeps us dry.

The three enter the dining room to find Felicity arranging freshly cooked dishes on the table. Sadie stands nearby.

EDMUND (CONT'D)
Mr. And Mrs. Endicott, I'd like you
to meet my family. This is my wife,
Felicity, and my daughter, Sadie.

SADIE
Nice to meet you.

FELICITY
You have great timing. The food is
hot and ready to eat if you'd like.

WINSLOW
Don't mind if I do.

The guests take their seats. Edmund stabs some ice off an ice block and makes a whiskey on the rocks for Winslow.

WINSLOW (CONT'D)
I must say, Edmund, you put on
quite an impressive display.

EDMUND
All part of the job. It's important
that my clients and my audience see
that I'm a success.

WINSLOW
Ah-ha! Always selling! I like it.

FELICITY
Edmund's a tiger.

Sadie rolls her eyes.

EDMUND

Have to be. A tiger rises to the
top. A tiger takes what he wants.

Edmund growls. Everyone gives a polite giggle, and then a new
voice chimes in.

MASKED MAN #1 (O.S.)

Funny.

Everyone turns to find MASKED MAN #1 in a plain slate suit
enter from the hall. He carries a camera on a tripod.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)

No wonder people buy your bullshit,
after you've sprayed it with so
much perfume.

EDMUND

What the hell is this?

MASKED MAN #2 enters dressed the exact same way, but holding
a laptop and brandishing a pistol. The guests freeze.

MASKED MAN #1

Call it an employment opportunity.

MASKED MAN #1 sets up the camera.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)

Today, you're going to be
productive members of society.

FELICITY

Look, if you want money--

MASKED MAN #1

Money, yes. It's the order of the
day. Money's what we're here for.

EDMUND

Then take whatever you want.

Masked Man #2 hands the laptop to Masked Man #1 and Masked
Man #1 connects it to the camera.

MASKED MAN #1

No, Mr. Ryker, fools who steal
money never get very much, not as
much as they could, anyway.

EDMUND
So, what do you want?

MASKED MAN #1
I'm becoming an entrepreneur. I
want you to make money for me.

Masked Man #1 opens the laptop and presses a key. A
livestream of the dining room starts and a comment section
floods with comments from spectators.

EDMUND
How?

Masked Man #1 paces to the table and takes the ice pick.

MASKED MAN #1
Work, of course. Work for your pay.
Work for your livelihoods.

Edmund stands and moves to leave.

EDMUND
We're not doing anything. Get out.
I'm calling the cops.

MASKED MAN #1
I was told you'd be arrogant.

Masked Man #1 grabs Sadie's wrist and nails her hand to the
table with the ice pick.

Sadie screams.

The dinner guests cry and shout. Masked Man #2 fires his
pistol into the ceiling and everyone quiets. Sadie sobs.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)
Punishments for non-compliance will
be severe.

EDMUND
You idiots! Screams! gunfire! This
is a good neighborhood. The cops
will be here any minute! Run now!

MASKED MAN #1
You still think you're in charge,
don't you? You think you're safe.

Masked Man #1 twists the ice pick in Sadie's hand.

FELICITY
Stop! What do you want us to do?

MASKED MAN #1
We're going to participate in that
most American of endeavors. We're
going to have a competition.

Masked man #1 turns the laptop for the dinner guests to see.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)
Here, we have our consumers. They
will pay me good money for a show.

Masked Man #1 pulls a coin case out of his pocket.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)
This is my currency, and you're my
workers. Do a good job, get lots of
likes, and you earn coins.

He draws a revolver from his waistband.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)
Pay enough coins back to me, and
your families live another day.

WINSLOW
Cute, and what's he represent?

Winslow points to Masked Man #2

MASKED MAN #1
You don't know? He's the law. He
makes sure I always get my way.

A beat.

WINSLOW
How do we entertain the consumers?

EDMUND
Mr. Endicott, don't humor him.

MASKED MAN #1
Well, that's up to them. What do
they want? What will they pay for?

Masked Man #1 turns the laptop and reads the comments.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)
Ah! Excellent idea @EatTheRich.

He turns to the guests.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)
I'll be needing two breadwinners.
Mr. Ryker, Mr. Endicott, would you
like to volunteer?

EDMUND
Go to hell.

Masked Man #2 puts the gun to Sadie's head.

MASKED MAN #1
Comply. My associate here, like the
government, isn't afraid to enforce
the current social order.

Winslow stands up.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)
Good. To the front of the table,
please, where the camera can see.

Winslow complies and Edmund follows soon after.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)
My customers demand fingers. They
don't care whose.

Masked Man #1 pulls out a large hunting knife and stabs it
into the table between the men.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)
More fingers mean more coins. More
coins means more breathing family
members come bill time. Well?

EDMUND
You can't seriously--

Winslow yanks the knife out of the tabletop and slashes
Edmund on the arm. Edmund retreats.

FELICITY
Edmund!

EDMUND
Winslow, what the hell?

WINSLOW
Sorry, but you heard him. Tiger
blood and all that.

Winslow slashes and the women cry out. Edmund dodges.

WINSLOW (CONT'D)
Does he need to be alive?

MASKED MAN #1
Certainly not.

Winslow slashes and stabs. Edmund dances around the dining room to avoid him. Masked Man #1 pans the camera to follow.

The laptop pings with likes.

Winslow stabs overhead. Edmund catches his wrist and falls against the table next to Felicity.

The two struggle, and the knife descends toward Edmund.

Closer.

Closer.

Felicity grabs the fondue pot and dumps the cheese onto Wilson's back. Wilson screams and retreats.

Likes ping in rapidly amidst the screaming and chaos.

Edmund grabs the empty pot from his wife and strikes Winslow over the head. Winslow falls to the floor with the knife.

Edmund stands over Winslow and strikes him again and again, grunting, arm pumping over and over while Dolores screams.

Winslow mostly loses consciousness.

DOLORES
Stop! Stop!

Dolores runs to Winslow and shields him with her body.

Edmund turns to Masked Man# 1.

EDMUND
You happy now?

MASKED MAN #1
The customer called for fingers,
Can't pay until I have them.

EDMUND
You son of a bitch.

Masked Man #2 presses the gun against Sadie's head.

Sadie whimpers.

EDMUND (CONT'D)
Felicity, get me a butcher's knife,
the heaviest one you have.

FELICITY
Edmund, please.

EDMUND
You want it quick? Get the knife!

Felicity looks at the Masked man. He nods approval and follows her into the kitchen.

EDMUND (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

Dolores cries and alternates between scraping away the cooling cheese with her hand and cradling Winslow's head.

Felicity returns with the knife and hands it to Edmund.

Edmund kneels and Dolores pushes at him, feebly.

EDMUND (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

Edmund pins Winslow's hand against the floor and raises the blade. Felicity wraps her arms around Dolores.

The Masked Man zooms on the action.

Edmund gathers his courage.

He takes a deep breath. Sweat beads on his face.

Chop.

Dolores screams.

Likes ping like mad on the laptop.

Edmund stands and holds out Winslow's bloody middle, ring, and pinkie fingers.

EDMUND (CONT'D)
That enough?

MASKED MAN #1
I believe so.

Masked Man #1 takes the fingers and sets them on the table.

Felicity gives Dolores a cloth napkin and the woman wraps it around Winslow's hand.

Winslow regains consciousness.

He clutches his bloody hand. His wife holds him.

Winslow glares at Edmund.

WINSLOW
Son of a bitch.

MASKED MAN #1
Quite the performance. You've
earned many coins this round.

Masked Man #1 sets two tall stacks on the dining room table.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)
Well, that's one round passed. Time
to pay the bills.

Dolores helps Winslow to his feet.

Masked Man #1 extracts three neat rows of coins from Edmund's
pile and sets them aside.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)
Good news, Ed, you've earned enough
to spare your family. There's even
change to spare.

FELICITY
Thank God.

MASKED MAN #1
Yes! Thank God.

Masked Man #1 paces to the Endicotts.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)
You two, on the other hand, seem
rather destitute. Guess you're just
not the tiger you thought you were.

EDMUND
Wait! I have coins left over. Can I
pay for them?

Both masked men eye Edmund.

MASKED MAN #1
What shocking charity. I would say
you do, but only for one.

Edmund and the Endicotts look at each other.

WINSLOW

Take me. Please, if you have to
kill someone, spare my wife.

MASKED MAN #1

Don't worry, Mr. Ryker's heart has
grown three sizes. Mine can, too.

Masked Man #1 shoots Dolores in the leg with his revolver.
Dolores screams and falls to the floor.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)

We'll consider that a debt.
Everyone, take your seats, time for
another round.

Felicity and Edmund sit. Felicity strokes Sadie's hair.

FELICITY

Can I please take this ice pick out
of my daughter's hand.

Masked Man #1 scans the comment section.

MASKED MAN #1

It would be much smarter to leave
it in if you're that worried.

Masked Man #2 speaks with a familiar voice.

MASKED MAN #2

Everyone in a seat.

Edmund glances at Masked Man #2.

Winslow helps his wife to her feet and they sit.

EDMUND

When will this end?

Masked Man #1 looks at him.

MASKED MAN #1

Will it? Does it ever end for
anyone else, this constant struggle
for survival in an uncaring world?

He scans the screen again.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)

Ahh! Here's an excellent suggestion
from @StrataRider. They want you to
come up with something.

EDMUND

You expect us to torture ourselves?

Winslow holds up his bloodied hand.

WINSLOW

How are we supposed to compete?
We're at a disadvantage.

MASKED MAN #1

Sucks, doesn't it? The reality is
that people who have less tend to
just have less and less.

Winslow eyes Sadie.

WINSLOW

I have an idea.

Everyone looks at him.

Winslow points at Sadie.

WINSLOW (CONT'D)

I'll hurt her. I'll do whatever you
want to her.

EDMUND

You can't be serious.

Likes ping on the computer. Masked Man #1 reads the comments.

MASKED MAN #1

I think we'll need to move this to
the second set.

EDMUND

Second set?

Masked Man #1 pulls out his revolver.

MASKED MAN #1

Alright, grab her.

Winslow stands.

EDMUND

Endicott, stop this. I helped you.
I spent my coins on you.

WINSLOW

Lot of good that did.

Winslow tears the ice pick out of Sadie's hand and yanks her to her feet.

MASKED MAN #1
Take her upstairs.

EDMUND
Dammit, I'm not the enemy here!
Winslow, stop!

Winslow and Masked Man #1 disappear upstairs with Sadie.

Felicity covers her face.

MASKED MAN #2
Alright, better do something.

The three remaining dinner guests look at each other.

DOLORES
Please don't hurt me.

FELICITY
No. No one's going to hurt you.

Felicity stands, looks to the camera, and pulls a strap off her bare shoulder.

Likes ping.

Edmund stands.

EDMUND
Felicity, what are you doing?

Masked Man #2 points the gun at him.

Felicity holds out a hand to Dolores.

FELICITY
We can work together. They want a show? We'll give them one. Just get Winslow to stop what he's doing.

Tears stream down Dolores' face.

DOLORES
I can't. I can't.

Sadie screams upstairs.

EDMUND
Goddammit, Miguel, stop this!

Masked Man #2 looks at Edmund.

EDMUND (CONT'D)
I know it you, Miguel. Think I
wouldn't recognize your voice?

MASKED MAN #2
Honestly, I didn't think you'd
notice anything outside yourself.

Masked Man #2 pulls off his mask to reveal Miguel, the
groundskeeper, underneath.

Likes ping on the laptop.

Felicity spots the hunting knife on the floor.

EDMUND
Why are you doing this? I helped
you. I gave you a job.

MIGUEL
But not your respect. You always
look down on me, on all of us,
while you feed us scraps.

Sadie screams again.

EDMUND
Goddammit, Miguel, you're found
out. Now everyone watching knows
you did this. You should run.

MIGUEL
You think they care? They tune in
because they want to see you get
what you got coming.

Miguel steps closer and aims the gun at Edmund's face.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)
And here it comes, puto. We're all
bottom feeders, now.

Felicity lunges and stabs Miguel in the shoulder. Miguel
pulls the trigger and a bullet tears through Edmund's ear.

Miguel falls to the floor with Felicity on top of him.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)
No! No!

Felicity stabs Miguel in the chest over and over as fast as
she can. He can't even raise the gun before shock sets in.

FELICITY

Edmund, hurry!

Edmund tears the gun from Miguel's hand and stumbles up the stairs, ear bleeding, panting, tinnitus all he hears.

Edmund reaches the top of the stairs just as Masked Man #1 emerges from Sadie's bedroom.

Edmund shoots a few bullets at Masked Man #1. The man flops onto the hardwood.

Edmund enters Sadie's room and finds Winslow and Sadie sitting on the bed. Bruises purple Sadie's skin, her nose drips blood, and her dress is almost completely torn away.

WINSLOW

You got them?

Winslow smiles and moves to stand.

WINSLOW (CONT'D)

That's amazing!

Edmund shoots Winslow twice in the chest. Sadie screams. Winslow falls onto the bed.

Edmund helps pull Sadie's tattered dress back up.

EDMUND

Let's go. Grab your phone. We're getting out of here.

Sadie grabs her phone off her nightstand and runs out.

Edmund sneers at Winslow's corpse before following.

Sadie patters down the stairs in bare feet. Edmund reaches the top of the stairs as she reaches the bottom.

EDMUND (CONT'D)

Felicity, let's go! We're Leaving!

Sadie opens the front door and another identically dressed MASKED MAN #3 jumps from behind the door and stabs her in the stomach. Sadie's mouth drops open.

EDMUND (CONT'D)

No!

Felicity appears in the hallway and covers her mouth. Sadie falls to the floor. Edmund points the gun at her assailant.

Bang, bang! Bullets strike Edmund in the back. He falls down the stairs.

Masked Man #1 appears at the top of the stairs nursing two bullet wounds between his chest and shoulder.

FELICITY

Edmund!

Masked Man #3 pulls out a gun and points it at the women.

MASKED MAN #3

Don't move.

Masked Man #1 staggers down the stairs.

MASKED MAN #3 (CONT'D)

You alright?

MASKED MAN #1

Agh! I can't move my arm.

Masked Man #1 looks down at Edmund's corpse.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)

Didn't even ask yourself how the two of us could have set up the second set, did you?

Masked Man #1 points his gun at the women.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)

Get the fuck back in there.

The women stand frozen in terror.

Masked Man #1 aims down and shoots Edmund twice more.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)

Now!

Felicity and Dolores slink back to the dining room.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)

Sit across from each other.

Masked Man #1 grunts as he spins the cylinder on his revolver then tosses it onto the table.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)

Guess what happens now?

FELICITY
How does this fit in with your
ironic retribution gimmick?

MASKED MAN #1
Who rises up and who falls down is
mostly luck. That good enough?

Felicity rolls her eyes.

The laptop doesn't chime.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)
The winner walks.

FELICITY
You expect us to believe that?

MASKED MAN #1
Scout's honor. So, who's first?

FELICITY
Oh, who cares.

Felicity picks up the gun, sticks it in her mouth, and pulls
the trigger without hesitation. The gun clicks.

The laptop pings rapidly. Felicity tosses the gun back down.

MASKED MAN #1
Good. Next?

Dolores hesitates.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)
Pick it up, and you might live. You
don't, and you join your husband.

DOLORES
Winslow's dead?

MASKED MAN #1
Oh yeah.

Masked Man #1 and Felicity exchange a look.

Felicity lowers her eyes.

Dolores' hand trembles as she picks up the gun. Tears squeeze
loose as she puts it to her head.

FELICITY
Just do it, Dolores. Dying's the
easy part.

Dolores cringes.

Click!

MASKED MAN #1
One in four chance now, Mrs. Ryker.
Still confident?

Masked Man #1 groans and puts a hand on his wounds.

Felicity picks up the gun. She raises it, but pauses.

Masked Man #1 wheezes. He struggles to draw more breath.

MASKED MAN #3
What's wrong?

MASKED MAN #1
I don't-- I don't--

Masked Man #1 collapses and his breaths grow non-existent.

MASKED MAN #3
What's happening? What? What did--

Masked Man #3 looks down the barrel of the revolver.

Felicity pulls the trigger and the gun fires. Masked Man #3's head bursts open.

Felicity glances at Masked Man #1 as he writes on the floor, and then tosses the gun aside.

Masked Man #1 reaches out for help. Felicity turns away and marches down the hall.

Dolores pushes herself to her feet and limps after Felicity. She finds Felicity collapsed atop her daughter. Felicity shakes with sobs.

Sadie's phone rests in her limp hand. Dolores grabs it and dials 9-1-1. The dispatcher answers.

DISPATCHER (O.S.)
Emergency services, what's your
emergency?

DOLORES
Send the police. Masked men came
into the house. They made us do
awful things. We have people dead.

DISPATCHER
What's your location?

DOLORES
We're in a community. It's called
Pleasant Grove, I think.

DISPATCHER
Just follow their instructions.

A beat.

DOLORES
What?

DISPATCHER
Just accept it. It's your new life.
It's no less than you deserve.

Dolores looks out the open door and into the night.

Her jaw slackens. She drops the phone.

Dolores paces out into the night like a little girl walking
into a dream. She stops just outside.

Dozens of identically masked and besuited people stand in the
street. All turn and stare at her like mute statues.

Dolores and the masked people stare at each other. Cries and
gunfire ring from houses throughout the neighborhood.

Felicity just weeps.