

THE ANTAGONIST

by

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EXT. STREET - NIGHT

LOLLI FEATHERTON, 20s, distressed, half-naked, one side of her face slippery, burnt flesh, tries to flag down a car.

A car stops. An OLDER MAN gets out. Goes back to grab a jacket for her. Turns to see that she's collapsed.

He puts the jacket on top of her. Dials in a panic.

MARTIN (V.O.)

Lollie collapsed beside the good samaritan, her skin still boiling from the acid. Down the road, the killer lit another cigarette and kept driving into the night. Onto the next truck stop. Onto his next victim.

INT. HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Hanging upside down from a pair of gravity boots, writer, MARTIN EDGEWOOD, 35, types on the laptop on the ground below.

He types "The End".

MARTIN

Oh, dear Lolli, I think I'm going to miss you the most.

He closes out the doc that says: "The Railway Murderer".

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(shouts)

The end.

He pulls himself up, unhooks the boots as his dog rushes in excitedly. They play fight.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Are you proud of me, frog face?

Huh? I finished.

(pours champagne)

Cheers, to my most graphic novel to date. It is done!

He downs the champagne.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A loud pounding comes at the front door as Martin sleeps. Then, the sound of it being smashed in.

His dog barks as he groggily spins around to find four angry COPS staring down at him. He puts his hands up.

COP #1  
Martin Edgewood?

MARTIN  
Yes?

COP #1  
You're under arrest.  
(to Cop #2)  
Grab him.

They struggle to put the handcuffs on as he squirms.

MARTIN  
Would you mind telling me for what?

COP #2  
Homicides, you scum of the earth.

MARTIN  
Homicides? As in multiple? Wait a minute, you've got the wrong guy!  
(gets loose, darts under bed)  
You're having a nightmare, Martin, wake up.

They grab his foot. Drag him out as his eyes grow wide.

MARTIN (CONT'D)  
I didn't do anything!

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

The JUDGE looks down on a handcuffed Martin sternly.

JUDGE  
Well, that's what you're here to prove, isn't it?

MARTIN  
I thought it was innocent until proven guilty. That's what I've always heard, right?

He looks around. People in the gallery stare but stay quiet.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

You can't just take someone from their home and put them on trial for an egregious crime like murder without even questioning them. I don't even have an attorney.

A disheveled ATTORNEY in a wrinkly suit stands, his glasses falling off his face.

ATTORNEY

I'm the attorney, I'm here.  
Mister...

He drops paperwork as he comes down the aisle. He picks it up. Straightens his glasses to read.

ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

Edgegood?

MARTIN

Edgewood.  
(to judge)  
This can't be my attorney. Surely I have some say in the matter.

JUDGE

And what in the world would make you think you would? Besides, he's the best attorney we have. Well, the only attorney.

MARTIN

Your honor, if I could just speak to you privately, I'm sure I could--

JUDGE

You will speak to your attorney and he will translate it to me in legalese.

(scoffs)

Haven't you ever been on trial before?

MARTIN

No, that's what I'm trying to tell you. I don't even kill bugs. I let a spider out last week. He came back and bit me but that's besides the--

JUDGE

Attorney, control your client.

ATTORNEY  
 Yes, your holiness.  
 (pulls him down)  
 Listen, I think I should tell you,  
 my wife is going to give birth any  
 minute. She's been having  
 contractions for two days now.

MARTIN  
 What?

He waves at his PREGNANT WIFE breathing through contractions  
 in the gallery.

ATTORNEY  
 I'm about to be a dad, Michael.

MARTIN  
 Martin, my name is Martin.

PREGNANT WIFE  
 Arghh!

JUDGE  
 (bangs gavel)  
 Order, order in the court! Everyone  
 shut up. Bring in the jury.

The jury files in, already angry. Juror #1 flips him off.

MARTIN  
 She just flipped me off, that's  
 bias. She can't do that, can she?

ATTORNEY  
 (shows sonogram)  
 If you look closely you can see his  
 little feet. You see?

PROSECUTOR  
 Mr. Edgewood, is it not true that  
 you are a murderer?  
 (to transcriber)  
 Let the record show that the  
 defendant refuses to approach the  
 bench.

ATTORNEY  
 What are you doing, get up there.

MARTIN  
 You didn't...

He stands. Awkwardly goes up to the stand. Trips over a cord. Finally makes it. He hits the mic, it squeals loudly.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Absolutely n--

PROSECUTOR

No further questions. I think with this confession and the evidence--

MARTIN

What evidence?

PROSECUTOR

Did you not, on April twenty-first, look up, "how to properly gut someone?"

MARTIN

Yes, but--

PROSECUTOR

So, you admit it!

MARTIN

No, I'm--

PROSECUTOR

Oh! Just a coincidence that you looked up how to gut someone and we find a gutted body on the freeway in your same state?

The whole court gasps as photos of the crime scene go up.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)

Take it off the screen, I don't want him to get an erection.

(reads)

"How does it feel to kill?" "Pigs or wood chipper disposing of body?" "If you smash someone's head in will their eyes pop out?" All searches on your computer.

MARTIN

All that was just research for a novel. I'm a writer.

ATTORNEY

Objection!

MARTIN

You can't object to me, I'm your client.

ATTORNEY

Oh... right.

The courtroom gets restless.

JUDGE

(bangs gavel)  
Order! Order!

PROSECUTOR

The state would like to admit into evidence Martin Edgewood's serial murderer journal manifesto of all of his crimes.

The prosecutor holds up "The Railway Murderer" novel with Martin's name underneath.

MARTIN

Yes, that's my novel--

PROSECUTOR

Let the transcripts show that he is claiming ownership of the serial murderer journal manifesto from which I will now read.

(opens, reads)

"She watched as he prepared the acid, how could she know at the time that he was the Railway Murderer and burning his victim's faces off with acid was his calling card?"

(to gallery)

It's all here, weapons, victims, instructions to torture and kill. A blueprint for murder with the defendant's name right on the front.

He throws the crime scene photos at Martin.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)

Take a look at what you've done. Cecily Greene, Joseph Hanson, Michelle Turner, all dead because of you.

MARTIN

(laughs, picks them up)  
Cecily, Joseph... ? These are my  
characters.

(turns to the jury)  
They're not real people, I made  
them up.

JUROR #2

How can you say something like  
that?

PROSECUTOR

And, if true, how can the state  
call Lolli Featherton?

Lolli, timid, her face disfigured from the acid, comes into  
the courtroom, her head down.

MARTIN

Lolli?

JUROR #2 gives him a dirty look. The Prosecutor whispers into  
Lolli's ear. Points to Martin. She turns, terrified as she  
gets on the stand.

PROSECUTOR

Miss Featherton, thank you for  
joining us. You almost weren't able  
to because you were a victim of the  
Railway Murderer, barely escaping  
with your life.

LOLLI

Yes. I jumped out at the light  
after kicking the trunk open.

PROSECUTOR

Good for you. And how did you meet  
the murderer?

LOLLI

My car had broken down. He stopped,  
asked me if I needed a ride.

MARTIN

(under breath)  
So cliché, I could've had them meet  
anywhere.

LOLLI

(breaks down crying)  
I'm sorry.



PROSECUTOR

It's obvious you're traumatized beyond belief, so lets just cut to the chase, who is responsible for that trauma?

LOLLI

(points at Martin)  
He is.

PROSECUTOR

Let the transcripts reflect she is pointing to the defendant.

The TRANSCRIBER nods. Types.

LOLLI

All the horrible things that happened to me, to all of us, he's responsible.  
(voice cracks)  
I was strangled.

PROSECUTOR

Miss Featherton, if you could, speak up. How did he attempt to kill you?

LOLLI

(loud, into mic)  
Ssstrangulation. Then he poured acid on my face and put me in the trunk.

The jury gasps.

MARTIN

I did no such thing!

JUDGE

Through your attorney.

Martin looks over at the attorney who is doing Lamaze with his pregnant wife.

MARTIN

Ask her if I physically choked her.

ATTORNEY

Did he physically choke you?

LOLLI

Not exactly--

PROSECUTOR

Did Charlie Manson physically murder anyone? Lets call him a hit man, would he be any less guilty?

ATTORNEY

Damn, that's a good one.

JUDGE

You may step down.

Lolli rushes off the stand crying. Runs down the aisle.

PROSECUTOR

The state calls the next witness.

The KILLER is quickly pulled into the courtroom in an orange jumpsuit, struggling with two bailiffs.

KILLER

Yeah, that's him, he made me kill them all.

MARTIN

Wait a minute--

KILLER

If I'm going to be locked up for the rest of my life you should too, you son of bitch.

They rush the killer off as he continues to fight.

PROSECUTOR

I rest my case.

He goes to sit down. Stands back up.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)

But I will reopen my case for closing arguments to say that none of the murders/maimings would've happened if it weren't for Mr. Edgewood. You take him out of the equation, everyone lives to see another day. I ask that you find this cruel, no-hearted, sadistic sociopath guilty of all charges.

He goes past Cecily Greene's Aunt as she comes forward. She reads from a piece of paper.

CECILY GREENE'S AUNT

I'm Cecily Greene's aunt. You have no idea how her death has affected us--

MARTIN

Victim impact statement? I haven't even been convicted--

CECILY GREENE'S AUNT

She lit up every room she came into and now we just sit in the dark--

PREGNANT WIFE

The baby's coming!

ATTORNEY

Mazel tov, I've got to go!  
(gathers wife up)  
We're having a baby!

MARTIN

Wait a minute, who's going to represent me?

ATTORNEY

Well, it's murder.  
(clicks his teeth)  
So...

Everyone says "congratulations" to them as they go by.

ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

Thank you. Thank you.

MARTIN

This is a kangaroo court and I demand a dismissal on all charges.

The transcriber types quickly.

JUDGE

The jury will deliberate.

The jury turn to each other and mumble loudly.

JUROR #1

Well, yeah...

JUROR #2

So, that's it, then, he's guilty.  
(turns)  
Guilty.

JUDGE

Guilty!

JURORS AND JUDGE (IN UNISON)

Guilty! Guilty! Guilty!

MARTIN

Guilty?

JUDGE

Get him out of my courtroom.

The bailiff grabs Martin. Carries him away as he screams.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

This is the worst case I've seen in all my years on the bench. Those poor people.

MARTIN

(over his shoulder)

They're not people, they're characters. Someone stop this! Who's going to feed my dog?

V.O.

"Someone stop this! Who's going to feed my dog?" Martin screamed as he was carted out of the courtroom. He could feel his vision going out, his knees getting weak. All the things one would think one would go through in such an instance. How could it be happening?

MARTIN

Who said that?

(to bailiff)

Did you hear that? This is absurd.

JUDGE

Gag him.

V.O.

"Gag him", the judge shrieked as Martin managed one more quick glance back--

MARTIN

This is absurd!

V.O. (CONT'D)

"This is absurd!"

The bailiffs push a gag into his mouth. Drag him out.

V.O. (CONT'D)

The bailiffs pushed a gag into his mouth. Drug him out of the courtroom toward a terrifyingly unclear punishment.

JOSEPH HANSON'S MOM

I hope you see my son's face every day of your worthless life.

CECILY GREEN'S AUNT

Burn in hell, Martin Edgewood!

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Writer, BRADFORD SIMS, 35, types The End at the bottom under "Burn in hell, Martin Edgewood!"

He closes the doc, showing the title, "The Antagonist".

Wife, AUDREY, 32, puts her arms around his neck.

AUDREY

Congratulations, Darling. Such a brilliant idea. A writer jailed for killing characters off in his book, whatever made you think of such a thing? So much different than your slasher/horror pieces.

(gets in bed)

Come to bed, lets celebrate.

BRADFORD

(gets into bed)

I think the publisher's going to love it.

AUDREY

But, poor Martin.

BRADFORD

Indeed.

He turns out the light. They come together.

A loud pounding comes at the front door. Bradford turns the light on. Sits up, his eyes wide in panic.

THE END