

THE DAY I WENT FROM BEING A QUIET KID TO A HARD STOIC REBEL

It was 2014 and I was studying in my first year in the Performance Diploma at LASALLE College of the Arts. After finishing and passing my IGCSE 'O' Levels and slowly recovering from all the tough times, particularly the bullying, that I encountered back in high school, it was time for me to start anew, focus on my college studies and hopefully graduate with the Diploma that I had my sight on. I felt so determined and concentrated on nothing but my education at college. However, my first year didn't start off, as I would have hoped. There was this certain obstacle that was in my way during my first year. That one obstacle was Bob.

Bob was a freshman student, like me, and had bright green eyes, light brown hair, a stubble beard, around 6 foot 2 and had a thick Dutch accent. He was taking the Diploma Course in Technical Production Management in the exact same year as me. The moment he saw me, he immediately realised that I was a soft and vulnerable target; 'hmmm, different course, younger than me, scrawnier than me, shorter than me, never met or seen him before in my life', that's what he thought. 'He's perfect'. Yeah, so perfect that, according to him, I was number one on his personal hit list. Without any clear reason, it was up to him to make my journey at LASALLE as miserable and painfully unbearable as much as possible and, if he's lucky, watch me break down into an 'I can't take it anymore' strop. Just when I thought that I was past all that shit back in school, turns out that I wasn't safe from it even when in college. 'It's going to be a long road ahead', I thought to myself.

There was a lot of physicality, mainly pushing and grabbing, that he did to me, which always made me feel uncomfortable and dreading college every time I attended LASALLE. Especially when he had that stupid smirk on his face every time he looked my way as his way of saying 'I find this very entertaining. I'm getting a great deal of joy out of it.' I always had this paranoia as to what he would do to me next and would it be much worse than the last time. As much as I tried to tell my lecturers at the time how this ongoing charade has affected both my work and life, the only 'valuable solution' they could offer me was, 'Just ignore him, Jack'. Well, as much as I tried to 'ignore' him, he of course clearly didn't get the message and continued doing what he was doing to me. 'Just ignore him', pretty much easier said than done, right? Aside from all the torment that he inflicted on me and no matter how many times I tried to 'ignore' him, much to the piss poor help my lecturers gave me, the worst was still to come from him. It was only a matter of when and how I will eventually snap at him despite me wanting to keep a cool head throughout my college years.

The worse began when he decided to change his tactics from pushing and grabbing to threatening me with a weapon. We were working on a collaborative piece called Land Lores and it involved the diplomas in Performance, TPM, Audio Production and Dance. He was in charge of the power drill and had to nail in these supporters to these 10 15 feet tall planks, which were used as the entrances and exits while I was in charge of putting the sandbags under these supporters to give them weight. The power drill he was using had a bright light that came on above the rotating drill every time you pressed the trigger. He knew right away this was another way to really get under my skin. So, with that same smug grin that he had, he came up to me with the drill, pressing down on the trigger simultaneously and therefore, causing the movement and sound of the drill to go on and off. The light was flashing on and off right in front of my face. This nictitating and blinding flash was so bright that I started to feel this massive lump in my throat. That being said, I was so scared that he was going to trip over and drill one of my eyes. I told him to stop doing it, but he just shrugged it off and continued. That evening, to be perfectly honest, was much tamer compared to what he did the day when he pulled a penknife on me.

While working on the set of Land Lores, the director asked him to bring a roll of tape to him. Bob, being the closest to it, then told me to do it in which I responded to him telling him to get off his high horse and get it himself. Bob didn't take this very lightly and, when I least expected it, grabbed me by the shirt, pulled me behind the stage and put a penknife right up close to my face. 'Oh, you think you're a tough man, huh?', he would say to me as a way to intimidate me. 'Bob...please, just, put the penknife down'. I was trembling so much both vocally and physically. Never in my wildest dreams would I have been so shaken by an incident like this.

He then went back to his old strategic ways; shoving and gripping my arms really tight until they turned red. It then came up to the point where I just had it. I fucking had it. Even though I was trying to keep my temper under control, I couldn't restrain it anymore especially with all the forcible and pressurising attempts Bob made towards me. If he kept this up and I still sat in silence, I would have probably struggled during my 3 years in college. My 3 years at LASALLE would have mainly consisted of my tempestuous relationship with Bob. Because I was afraid of that, I marched right up to him and gave him a right bollocking. I was seeing red when I approached him and the moment when I started screaming and shouting at him. 'You're taking your eye off the ball! Get your head out of your ass! You came for one reason and one reason only; for an education. Not so that you can bully people who are smaller and younger than you!' I was argumentative, seething, belligerent and was right up in his face. I just fucking had it with his bullshit. This was the first time I actually felt rebellious. The fire burning inside of me that wanted to come out for so long. So, I decided to let it out of its cage. Keep in mind that he was 20-21 years old and I was only 17 when this happened, which made this moment not just rebellious, but also cherishable and I got a good deal of satisfaction out of it. I was standing up for not only myself, but also other people that Bob bullied in the past. After my long and emotional tirade, he then came back to reality and remembered all the pain that he had caused. He made a promise to no longer bully anyone ever again, we shook on it and that was it. Ever since that day, we did bump into each other from time to time during the 3 years and he would always say to me how he never forgot a single word that I said to him when I vented my frustrations against him. How he was more focused in his studies than anything else. 'Good for you', I always said to him. That one time when I stood up to him, it really did change him as a person. He went from being a silly and manipulative bully to a more mature and concentrated individual. A lot of his other hit list victims actually came up to me and started to thank me for standing my ground and speaking my mind. Whenever I feel depressed, sad or angry, I always think back to that moment. It was a huge part of my life then and it's a huge part of my life now.