

Dive: Exploring Pip's Urge to Serve Justice in Holly Jackson's A Good Girl's Guide to Murder

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Abstract

This article explores the intersection of feminist theory and Holly Jackson's A Good Girl's Guide to Murder. It highlights how the novel critiques patriarchal norms and societal biases through its character and narrative technique. The analysis mainly focuses on Pip, the protagonist as a subversion of traditional gender roles, investing all her energy to find the truth. She showcases her agency and resilience in investigating a cold closed case that was overlooked by the authorities. The article also addresses the gendered and racial biases in the portrayal of victimhood, revealing the systematic inequalities within societal and legal institutes. Additionally situates the novel within the border context of feminist young adult literature, emphasizing its role in empowering young women and fostering critical engagement with themes of justice and equality.

Keywords; Feminism, Feminist Theory, Gender Roles, Intersectionality, Young Adult Literature, Holly Jackson, A Good Girl's Guide to Murder, Patriarchy, Victimhood, Justice, Investigation, Women Empowerment, Systematic Inequality, Racial Discrimination

Introduction

Feminism theory helps to understand women better and to end gender inequality in the world. It helps to amend how the world follows the system of patriarchy. It also helps to change the cultural, social, political, and economic discrimination faced by females. It helps to provide help and opportunities to all the people, especially women. Bell Hooks says that 'Feminism is the movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression' in her book FEMINISM IS FOR EVERYBODY.

In the novel A GOOD GIRLS GUIDE TO MURDER by Holly Jackson, Pippa [pip] who is the protagonist decides to re-investigate a case that was closed five years ago. She starts on this case by working on her high school project. In the novel, Pip is a powerful, strong, intelligent and hardworking character. She is unlike other female characters who are often represented as damsels in distress or the victim of any crime. Pip cannot accept the decision made by the jury in the closed case which was the murder case of Andie Bell.

Beyond the Stereotypes

Breaking down the stereotype Pip decides to investigate herself. When people usually work to gain something for themselves like money or fame, Pip works to ensure that justice is served to everyone and the real culprit is called. Pip is intelligent which makes her think out of the box. She knew that something had been missed when the police investigated the case of Andie Bell and Sal Singh. She knew Sal, he had helped her out on many occasions. Everyone believed that Sal killed Andie because he was not a white man. After all, he was an Indian. This shows how people blame him just for being an outsider. This also shows how racial discrimination still prevails in the English society.

‘And when I was in my fast year at school, these two boys were picking on me because my dad is Nigerian, and Sal saw. He came over and just said, very calmly, ‘when you two get expelled for bullying.....’, and afterwards Sal sat with me and gave me his KitKat to cheer me up’

‘Since then, he’s always been a hero to me. I just can’t believe he did it (AGGGTM 44)

Pip challenges the usual role of the female population as the passive good girl and begins to investigate the case all by herself as a modern female. The case of Andie Bell is a sensitive topic of the town yet Pip is not afraid. She is determined to prove Sal is not guilty and the secrets of the so-called victim who was killed and whose body was not found. Despite the warning of the tutor that the case was a sensitive topic, Pip displays a strong determination to bring the truth out and bring justice to Sal’s family who suffered a lot even after he died. The whole town believed that Sal murdered the woman heard. In the novel, the main theme is to bring out the injustice done to many girls.

Pip comes across the victim of bullying while investigating the case. She comes to know that Andie bullied a girl called Natalie da Silva. Naomi says in the interview that Andie also threatened to spread bad rumors about Nat’s elder brother. She also Andie and hid her body away. Later when he felt guilty he killed himself after sending a text to his father which was referred to as the confession text by the police. The people and the police officer believed that Sal was the culprit as he was Indian and his culture was quite different from theirs. Pip being a strong protagonist did not accept what people believed but searched for evidence by herself.

Feminist theory usually allows unity among women. In the novel, Pip with the help of Naomi Ward, who was the best friend of Sal and sister of Cara Ward, who was the best friend of Pip, reveals many secrets, uncovers hidden truths, and brings the truth out to the world. She also learns about the hidden truths about Andie’s life. When the whole town typically believes that Andie is a simple, beautiful, and innocent girl Pip never believes it. While investigating the case Pip comes across the fact that Sal and Pip were arguing regarding something private which Sal did mention even to the police officer when he gave them a volunteer interview after the night when Andie Bell went missing.

The novel highlights the trouble faced by the women in the society. Females are often considered weak and their calls and pleas are not even heard or considered in the record. One of the key components of the feminist theory is to make the voice say that Andie spread some nasty rumors about her. She also confesses that Andie cyberbullied Nat and she released a video of Nat on the internet. Nat had a direct impact after the incident.

‘Nat was inconsolable. She even skipped the first two days back at school after Easter because she was so humiliated.’ (AGGGTM 127)

After learning about the horrible things Andie had done she set out to seek Nat. There she was let into her house after she learnt that Ravi had accompanied her and answered her questions. Pip also discovers that Andie despite being a popular figure at the school had a different life that other

people were not aware of. As Andie was a perfect girl on the outside people believed that she was the victim. This shows how society easily blames women for bringing trouble to themselves and making themselves victims of some criminal act.

Feminist theory often talks about how females are portrayed in reductive terms. The novel reveals the hidden life and secret personality of Andie Bell. Pip reveals that Andie had a secret affair with some older guy, sold drugs played the role of a supplier, and also bullied others at school. Her actions had a direct impact on many people. Many girls including Becca Bell and Nat became the victims of the drug sold by her.

Feminism theory often talks about the emotional balance of women in both society and personal matters and affairs. In Pip's mind, the only thought was to bring justice to Sal who was considered as the murderer in the entire society. Pip's sense of empathy is strong in the case of Sal which makes her continue her investigation despite the hardships. Pip tried to gather information from various sources such as police officers, and the journalists who worked on that case for five years, and also learned about the protocol regarding the missing person case.

This novel also highlights the voice and the pain of the female victims who were raped by a guy named Max Hastings. He was one among the friends of Sal. He used to buy drugs from Andie during their school days. He also used to hold parties for the high school students from their town. These parties were also named as the calamity parties. It included the drinking activities of the underage kids and the use of many drugs. During the investigation of Andie's case, Pip discovers that many people have been drugged during these parties. Max Hastings drugged Nat and Becca Bell and raped them at one of those parties. Max has used a drug called Rohypnol. He spiked their drinks and later assaulted them. The girls were under the influence of drugs so they were not able to do anything. They also had flashbacks of those memories later, as they had no proof they remained silent and hid away their pain cursing themselves all along.

When Becca found out that Andie sold drugs to Max, she was furious. She had become one of the victims of the drug. Becca says that she found the information from a burner phone hidden in Andie's room. She wanted to ask her sister about it when she came back. But when Andie returned the situation took a drastic change which led to the death of Andie Bell. Becca confesses to Pip that Andie's death was entirely an accident.

“She tried to leave the room and I stood in her way. Then she said I should be grateful that someone had actually wanted me, because I was just the fat, ugly version of her. And then she tried to push me out.....I couldn't believe she could be so cruel. I pushed her backwe were both shouting and fighting It happened too fast” (AGGGTM 415)

The death of Andie Bell was an accident. Before Becca fought her Andie had a head injury. Andie had visited the secret older guy, Elliot Ward, the father of Naomi Ward and Cara Ward. She was having a secret affair with him so could get into Oxford along with Sal. She was angry because Sal was leaving without her. When Elliot wanted to end the relationship, she threatened him saying that she would ruin his life. He had his daughters and had to protect them. She visited him and she began tearing the painting done by his late wife which made Elliot push her away. She hit the table and her head and her head began to bleed. She ran away.

When he came to know that Andie was missing the next day he was afraid. He thought that if people knew about them and the accident that happened that day it would end him. So he approached Sal and drugged him with sleeping pills and suffocated him to death. Later he sent a text to his father confessing that he killed Andie and due to the extreme guilt he also killed himself. He carefully placed the dried blood under Sal's fingers and placed him in his car to be found. He thought that if Sal killed Andie it would be a proper story to convince people. Sal was the Indian Boyfriend who was dating Andie the white girl.

Becca Bell who after the fight thought that she had killed her. She panicked and tried to hide the body of Andie Bell. She hid the body in the septic tank of an old house. As Sal was murdered he became a criminal. The case was closed after the jury ruled saying that Sal was guilty and Andie Bell was legally declared dead after a few months.

Conclusion

At the end of the novel Pip completes her school project successfully and also uncovers the hidden truth of the case. Elliot Ward is arrested for killing Sal Singh and for framing him for murder. Becca Bell is punished according to the law. Pip officially began to run a crime podcast series later. Sal's name is cleared and the secrets above Andie's nasty atrocities are brought out into the light. Max Hastings is also charged with allegations of drugging Becca Bell and Nat.

Holly Jackson's *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder* talks about the exploration of feminist themes, challenging the world and the readers to ponder the social customs and traditions of society. It also explores the dynamics of gender, power, and justice. The novel challenges the world by providing the world with an intelligent, strong, independent, and fearless female character like Pippa, unlike other novels where the protagonists are usually male. The female protagonist is determined not to give up on her investigation despite several hardships.

Pip's determination to unmask the truth brought justice to Sal Singh who was murdered and was blamed as a murderer himself. Pip also exposes the systematic failure of patriarchal institutes such as the press and police force. Jackson's work reflects the growing demand for a feminist narrative that empowers young women to take control of their stories by placing Pip at the center of the story and allowing her to confront social issues.