

2012

Teenage Dusk

English Narrative

The following is my Transition Year narrative for English. I prepared this for several months and enjoyed working on it for the simple reason that I had plenty of time to formulate ideas for the story. This was a major benefit of Transition Year, for me.

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TY1
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Adults are oblivious to a lot of the problems involving teenagers, in society, nowadays. I admit that they know, from experience, all about the desire for intimate relationships and the frequently occurring hormonal behaviour, but are these really “Problems” in teenage society? Almost every human has experienced these feelings as an adolescent. This leads to the conclusion that the knowledge, or even the intelligence associated with teenage relationships and teenage behaviour, means very little as it is almost a given.

These problems that elude parents do so for the simple fact that they are so modern, an adult would struggle to comprehend it, even if the problem formally introduced itself to the world. It is quite similar to the struggle of many elderly people when they try to come to terms with modern electronic devices. A lot of the time, it is naivety that catches these people out. I would be a wealthy man if I could bet on how many parents think that their children are innocence personified and are unwelcome to the suggestion that they involve themselves with such tomfoolery. At the end of the day, they’re only fooling themselves.

Of course though, hindsight allows for entertaining comparisons and humorous words, but the path to this ability to joke about something so serious is never rosy, as you will see in the story that leads to these opinions being formulated.

“Enjoy your day, Frank”, my dad says as he pulls the car up outside of the school. I put down my book and leave the car as I prepare for another futile, yet dramatic day.

Tipperary had narrowly lost the All-Ireland Final the day before, but there was still a sense of pride around the area, as the blue and yellow flags were hanging out from many windows and students walked into the school grounds, with a strong physical emphasis on their hurls as it makes contact with the ground. Normally, when I walk through the school gates, I put on my poker-face groan as all I can hear are the sudden outbursts of the words “Shift”, “meet”, “ride” and “beour”. Not too many adults would know the irritating deep meanings attached to all four of those words. Luckily, all I could hear today was “We were robbed!” followed by 600 students naming at least 3 reasons why Tipperary should have won. It’s the like the Thierry Henry handball all over again.

I normally stand in a group of four with my three friends just a few metres away from the main entrance of the school. A teacher is always standing by the door so hanging out here means that we won’t be attracting to many scumbags to taunt us or the long haired, emotionally twisted guys who don’t want to be caught worshipping the guy who had the guts to bring a lighter into school. Well fucking done. Their belief that they will be happily like that for the rest of their lives absolutely amuses me. Stupidity comes in many different shapes and sizes.

By the looks of it, my friends seem to be bickering again. Siegfried has been a friend of mine since we were six. Ever since we sat the Junior Cert earlier this year, he has started to act a lot differently. Inside, it worries me as it is not the first time I have experienced this, but I am not taking as vigorous of an approach as my two friends, Con and James.

“You’re a dick!” Con says to Siegfried, to nobody’s surprise. I’m sure he has said it more than once before I arrived.

“Whose dick?” I ask, pretending to be serious and all three of them laugh. I am no fool. Con and James are just laughing so they can cuddle up to me for a lovely 3v1 against Siegfried. I can never tell with Siggy, himself, though. He laughs at almost anything.

To be honest, Con and James are teamed up on this one for the simple reason that Con just brown nosed his way into this strong position. Con is angry at Siggy because he is spending a lot of time with Con’s ex-girlfriend. Con doesn’t win me over with his “Guy Code” bullshit. Ironically, it’s a girly thing to say.

Siegfried has been hitting back lately though by calling Con jealous. Calling James a lick arse never helps the 2 on 1 scenario either.

The bell rings and both parties are relieved as they are both running out of things to say. Kind of strange seeing as they've been repeating the same insults over and over for the past week...

An old friend of mine, Paddy Johnson, walks by with his friends (it is hard to identify them as their face is hidden behind their hair) and just gives me a bleak look and sniggers.

I was enjoying that morning so far. The atmosphere around the school was nice and my friends were acting pretty harmless, but the snigger from Paddy always affects my mentality for the few minutes or even hours that come after. Siegfried and Paddy, and I always hung out with each other from 1st Class in Primary school, up until the start of 2nd Year in CBS Thurles.

Paddy came from a difficult family, to say the least. His parents were separated and he shared a room with his brother, who was schizophrenic. While my parents were stopping me from going out with friends, during 1st Year, he was free to go out as much as he liked, and this is what changed his life. His dad loved him and wanted the best for him, but this love is what contributed to Paddy's downfall. His new friends on the streets (I say "streets", but if it was literally the streets, these problems would most certainly not be oblivious to adults). It was very obvious that Paddy had begun to smoke and drink. Mints were never going to take the smell out of his breath. I told his father, who always liked me, but I was forcibly asked to leave the house, as he apparently "Knew" that his son would never get himself involved with these people.

I stand by my opinion that it wasn't his fault. If I was born to his family, I am sure that I would have been the same. I don't hate him, but he hates me. That is the harsh reality of life. I cannot directly help him as I learnt my lesson when I tried it once. A backstreet threat from three masked men, one of which was armed, prevents it. I hate to admit it, but the men behind the drug trades are geniuses. Awareness is very low when it comes to them, despite the fact that every parent has a child who has known another teenager who is directly associated with them. Since then, I have done my very best to help friends of friends who are struggling with these problems. It is important that I don't make a slight error though or the three masked men will be sent after me again. These errors include offending these people or getting too emotionally attached to them. This information could very easily get back to the men in charge.

I am in Transition Year now and fortunately for me, in a different class to the other three, so I can catch up with others for the day. It's a tedious and pointless year for the most part so I have different methods of getting through the day; whether it is talking to the local rapper at the back of Mr. Brown's Economics class or texting my girlfriend at the back of Mr Doyle's English class.

I've been going out with my girlfriend for a strong 18 months, and it has only started to settle now. For the first 16 months, I lived in constant fear that she would turn out like Paddy, but all that has changed now. Whether it is down to her being smart enough and just realising that she is much better than a freak, or because I used manipulation for the wrong reasons; changing one's life. I still don't know if I did it for myself or for her...

“Thanks be to God”, I think to myself. The phrase is beautiful in my opinion. The phrase is either used when one is delighted or when mass has ended; but what’s difference?

It was a long wait but school has finally ended. I must quickly speak to a girl in town who has a friend who has started smoking. My desire to help has reached an all-time low as the novelty of changing people’s lives for the good, has worn off. In fact, it makes me wonder if I started it because of the desire to help or simply just the powerful feeling of changing one person’s life forever.

The girl is standing outside a sport’s shop in down with a bag of chips. She doesn’t know that I know what she looks like; common naivety of getting to know someone by text. The fact is that I know exactly what she looks like and know almost everything about her life (despite the fact she isn’t on any social networking site), as I had to be sure that she is genuine. The plan is to always make sure the other person thinks that I am a hero from the start.

They get the recommendations to speak to me and instantly they see me as mysterious. I then tell them that I can speak to them in person in a few weeks, as I am busy. I’m not busy but it sends out the message that I am which further contributes to this hero complexion. First impressions are also a key factor. I want this girl to place her friend’s life in my hands and to fear the thought of telling people about me.

I walk over to her and without stopping, I tell her to walk with me. It’s a routine conversation but when she starts to give names and information about her friend, I realise that I do not know everything about this girl. The fact she has no Facebook account has led to me not knowing who exactly her friends are.

“Stacey can’t stop talking about this new guy she is with”, the girl, Anne, told me. Stacey is Con’s ex-girlfriend and Con was angry that Siegfried was spending a lot of time with her.

This new development left me shocked but I had no time to stop and take in the news. I had fortuitously struck oil.

The girl continued to give staggering information about her friend.

“She was bragging about how she was going to ‘The field’ with him and a few friends and that were going to be drinking which is apparently cool. She never considered doing this before she met him”.

I continue to act as if this is just normal news and I told her that I would work as hard as I could, when the time was available, to help her friend but I also gave her a small, routing strategy on how she could do her bit.

I’m not optimistic. I don’t consider myself a pessimist either but I am certainly not an optimist. I’d prefer to just drink the rest of the water anyways.

I knew as I approached the well-known (to the town’s freaks) field that I was going to find my childhood friend there along with my other friend’s ex-girlfriend. I had to check it out to eradicate the 1% chance of it being a mix-up from the girl.

Trees surround the field so all I needed was a quick peek in and I am sorted. Despite knowing what I was going to see, I still feel shocked to see Siegfried in there, drinking from a can. I can’t read what it says on the can but it certainly is not apple juice, the drink his mother packed for him in school for the past 8 years. His mother is far from a bad mother, she is just naive.

The déjà vu of experiencing this with Paddy, a few years before, takes away some of the sadness, but it is a horrible thing to see. I can’t look at Siegfried in the same way I used to anymore.

That day, I felt a glum feeling of revenge. I realised that I never helped for the good of others; it was for the feeling of control. Though, I know that it was justified by the people who were grateful.

Siegfried now lives the rotten life of claiming to be depressed every day, as it is seen as cool but hypocritically saying that his life is much better now with his new friends.

The day Paddy was rushed to hospital forced me to switch my policies from helping one person at a time, to making the effort to raise awareness on a larger scale. Fortunately, he survived, but I doubt that his life will be too useful for him.

There are at least 20 people in that very field every Saturday and all of them are under the age of 18. The Gardaí is another matter that I refuse to get into at this time. Around 1000 people attended the local Junior Cert disco and from reports gathered from there, 70% of the people drank, most under-age. 10 members of the Gardaí were there.

There is very little that I can do now that wouldn't cause me harm. These past experiences can do its bit but I am past my peak. My well-being would be endangered if my actions in this story were known by the masked men. Fortunately though, the point of the story is to enlighten people to these ways, and to do that; the message and the detail of the situation is vital, whereas the names and the numbers are of lesser magnitude, and are almost not even needed!