

# A Tough Day

By Jack White

Its ironic isn't it? How someone can feel so upset on such a bright, sunny day. It seems like everyone in the world has a big grin on their face. Everyone except me.

The only other person that seems even as remotely unhappy as myself is my mother. I really meant it when I told her to have a good day as I left the car with all my school gear.

My schoolbag is empty. This suits me well because I am empty as well. It is so strange being in a schoolyard filled with smiling, happy people. Everyone, and I mean genuinely everyone is smiling, laughing or playing hurling. There's even some first years running around.

About now you're probably wondering how someone can go on and on about being gloomy. And I hate when people use the word "gloomy". What on earth has happened to me to make me so bitter, so mean, so grumpy, so sad. Did I break a string on my guitar, did I lose a pen, or a hurling match? Or am I just generally unhappy all the time, like one of those Goths that we see on American sitcoms? Nope, as it turns out, my Granddad passed away four days ago. His funeral was yesterday, and I am still very much not over it.

I know, I know, I should be at home with my family sitting around in a circle drinking tea and sharing stories. Or even just grieving. Unfortunately life doesn't always turn out the way it should. My mom has to work and my dad doesn't live with us anymore, so I have no choice but to spend the day in school.

I may be coming off as bitter, or mean. I genuinely don't mean to be. In actuality I am terrified of seeing all my friends right now. I don't want to be in the public eye. Not only because there's about a 50 percent chance that I'm going to just break down and cry, but even usually, I hate when more than about 4 people pay attention to me at the same time. I know this is going to be difficult.

I see my two best mates, Steve and Joey. The last time I saw

them was in a church, in a shirt and tie. I can see already that they are bracing for the tension. I don't even have an explanation for why this is weird, but I completely understand it. I know that they will treat me differently. Usually if you come in after three days of being absent you will be met with jeers of "dosser" and "faker", but as I expected I was just met with a relatively polite "Well Jack".

Thank God they didn't want to talk about it. I'm just uncomfortably being here. I just want to be at home.

Conversation went on pretty much as usual with the occasional pause and awkward silence. I try to add to the conversation, but my voice slips upwards and lets out a sort of squeal, but nobody says anything. If that had ever happened before, I wouldn't be here the end of it.

The school bell rings just as I'm drifting into my own thoughts. And of course my first class of the day is with a teacher who may as well change her name to "Mrs. Hitler". I go to a seat in the back of the class. I sit beside nobody. Once again, I drift into my own thoughts. Mostly about what I would be doing right now if there wasn't a death in the family. Of course my luck runs out again when "Mrs Hitler" asks me a question. Everyone in the class is looking at me. It feels like I'm being physically pushed towards the ground. I'm shrinking in my seat. I hate this. After about five seconds, but feels like a year to me, I tell her that I don't know the answer. I don't know how she heard me, it must have been barely a sound. I hear whispers of "he's fucked" and other things like that. "That's alright Jack" Mrs Hitler replies. Wide eyes spread around the classroom like a contagious virus, and they are all on me.

This is when the worst happens. One of the lads who received detention from her earlier gets out of his seat and starts accusing her of blatantly picking favourites in the class. He uses me as the main point in his argument, which leads me to a point where I have a burning sensation in the back of my throat. I beg myself not to cry. Finally my luck comes back. Mrs Hitler, who at the moment is my best friend for defending me, but worst enemy for putting me in the spotlight, puts the

rebellious lad down with a warning of tripling his detention. But I just know he'll be back to me at lunch.

A good part of the day goes by. I just stick to myself at the back of the class. I realise that if I don't bring attention to myself no one will even notice that I'm here.

At lunch I go outside and meet up with Steve and Joey. I missed them. I hadn't seen them since this morning because since I went into TY classes had switched around. Lunch goes pretty fast. We pretty much just sit on one of the benches in the yard and talk, about sports and TV. I get glimpses from people in my class. I reckon a few of them have gotten the picture of what happened. I hope so anyway. I still feel like everyone is judging me though. I don't know what it is, but whenever I do anything, even if its something good, or if its something irrelevant like if I'm just standing somewhere, I feel like everyone around me is secretly judging me. I don't understand it, because I know that I'm an average person. No one should, or would spend time thinking about someone like me. I just feel like this anyway.

I get the picture that people have figured it out because no one is asking me how I get away with not paying attention in Irish. I don't feel relieved like I should be, I still feel like everyone is judging me. This is driving me crazy. It's then that I realise it. Everyone pities me. No one thinks I can handle it. Fair enough, as you can see I have turned into a paranoid, under confident student. But that's up to me to decide, not them. At least now I know what everyone thinks of me. I just don't like it.

The rest of the day passes slowly. I spend the classes feeling judged. I feel completely pathetic. I don't even talk for the rest of the day. Everyone's grandparents die, why does my one have to be such a big deal?

The bell finally rings mercifully. I get through the corridor managing only to be bumped into walls and lockers a few times, and I head out the gates to where my mom is waiting for me in the car. It's sad to think that the happiest I've been all

day is seeing my mom tearing up at the sight of me. I even feel her judging me. Being proud of me for getting through one day of school. What does she mean by that? That she didn't think I could?

To be honest I was proud of myself as well, but I was allowed to be. Now I know that I can do it. I know that I can get through tough days.

I just have to get through the rest of my life now.