

I'm Broken

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There were dark clouded patterns floating in the darkening sky. Atmospheric like a new morning, but it was a reminder that summer had almost come to its end, with a hint of an autumn blowing round my head. Paper bag in hand, I could have easily told Mac that I didn't want to do an evening round, since I got battered. Yet time proved to be a healer, so I was willing to help.

The papers were stacked aside for me, with a list of house numbers on a piece of paper. Mac offers a coffee to warm me up a bit; I walk over to his office, take a chair and hear the news. A twenty-two year old man was arrested in connection to the Murder of Miss Mary Anne Wilcott. The newsreader goes through the details of her death again, but reading it in the Evening Post had more appeal, more detail.

'How's school coming along?' Mac enquired, pouring water into two mugs.

'Could be better,' I replied. He had heard many of my school stories; some he laughed at, some that he frowned upon. Wasn't much of a surprise when I told him that the class was prevented from taking part in work experience. That week was getting closer and I wasn't looking forward to helping the caretaker. Most of the class had a gut full of him using us to do his dirty work. At least Mac treated me as equal.

'Have you decided what you're going to do after school?' he then enquired.

‘Might go to college, just pick up what I was left out on,’ I replied, taking the hot mug of coffee off his hands. ‘Could have a Saturday job, coming to think of it, to fund that the lifestyle,’ I added on with a chuckle.’

‘Lets see what I can do near the time. You’re a good lad Martin. I’d be in a right state if you didn’t help out.’

‘That’s alright.’

Sipping on the coffee, our discussion then turns to Nathan, the one I was covering for. Nathan didn’t ask for much and he certainly didn’t ask for a single parent, alcoholic mother. He only took the job to fund his Adidas trainers and Nike tops with a little money for the youth club. He developed a work ethic, taking any round, come morning and evening. He didn’t ask his mother for anything, knowing what money was in the house be spent on a bottle of vodka. At every possibility, Nathan would beat my house, on the Playstation or in the park, kicking a ball against a wall, to forget about his home life. However, someone made a big issue out of his personal life in Hafod High, and needed several stitches around the neck.

‘Poor bastard,’ Mac remarked, ending the matter. The door shop opened and he leave his burning Lambert on the ashtray. There’s a discussion on the Wilcott case on the radio, local residents phoning in with their views. I had mine that Mac shared; she caused nothing but bother to locals, shoving the chapel down people’s throats. She made to make others feel small, making sure she was right. No different to the teacher I had once before. Yet confronting Gav and Sal proved fatal.

Wasn't difficult picturing Sal sweating it out in a police interviewing room. Cocky, demanding his lawyer, saying nothing and only giving shit. He knew that someone would back him up, giving false information. How he would bullshit around his DNA on the bottleneck that was slit into her throat was a different matter.

In February 1996, Sal Clay was sentenced to serve life for the murder of Anne Mary Wilcott.

'Better be off,' I said, placing the mug in the sink.

'You know the route.'

'Only take me twenty minutes, if that.'

'Cheers Martin.'

This route was more or less my morning route, only it was in the evening. Walking towards Fern Street, sounds of traffic became distant. People that I delivered too in mornings would see my face, first time in a long time. Asking me how I was, what happened to the other boy, and witness the shock expressions when I told them about Nathan. They'd wish me well. Before closing the front door.

Halfway through the street, I hear smoke, husky voice. I heard them clearly, sounding familiar. I could just about see them, walking down the pavement, talking in boastful tones. The nerves start to twitch; a key called fear switched on inside me. But as I get a clearer glance, they were just kids that thought they had out grown the youth club, sharing cigarettes and bottles of Thunderbird swinging by their side.

Highbury Close soon followed Fern Street, where the houses were recent. Yet for some reason, I felt I was being followed. I'd turn to face whoever was there, but only heard footsteps run in the shadows. On the last house, I closed the garden gate, and made my way to the small path that led to Lynn Street. I walked on, only to see a glimpse of three figures. One made a step forward.

'You grassing cunt,' he said.

I turned back around only to be pushed into a wall of pebbledash, cutting and grazing my head. I tried escaping, but I was soon pushed to the wall with force. In street lamplight, the three figures made themselves known. The other two, standing to my right, were unknown to me. Gav Boy, Tracey and Fishy looked at me with all the hate in the world, before Gav repeated his first set of words.

'You grassing cunt,' he said again, before a set of fists went straight into me. Winded, I couldn't scream out. These other boys must've been part of Sal's drug dealing crew, I thought, before I received a further kicking and another throw against the wall. All five of them, standing around, watching me fall, struggling for air as I fell. Fishy rips the paper bag off my shoulders, taking one out of the bag, and starts ripping the front page.

'You don't fucking learn, do you?' Gav enquired, kicking away my supporting arm for strength, banging my head on the ground. 'You had to grass to the pigs, didn't you?'

‘Fucking get up,’ Tracey screamed, her voice going through my head. She then stomped on me before giving a venomous spit. ‘You grassed my brother up, don’t you deny that.’

‘Get up, fatboy,’ Gav demanded, and I start to rise on my knees, using the wall for support. Winded and bruised, I’m then pushed forwards, as Gav’s elbow struck across my cheek. Holding back the tears, I’m then held by one of Sal’s crew as Fishy stuffs the front page into my mouth. Tracey then smashed a beer bottle; the jagged edges gleam under the light. A few more punches before they egg Tracey on to jab me with that broken bottle. The voices were loud enough for those housed to hear. She then pierces me with the bottle, grinding my gut and ribs, blood trickling down the side. She pushes the bottle further, before they left me to fall, with bloodshot eyes and a punctured bag of fat for the second time.

Alone in a hospital ward, I’m the only patient. I couldn’t bring a word out of my mouth, nor make eye contact. I wanted to be alone, I wanted to die. All the hateful emotions I had about myself had returned with a vengeance. I didn’t do a paper round after that. I had hated myself with a rage, for not fighting back. All this as I looked into the mirror with my bloodshot eyes, well and truly broken in spirit.

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Diary Piece, 21st October 2004

I sat in Dr Sarah Chapman's office for the best part of an hour. I stammered through most of it, to the point where she thought I would break down in tears. But in saying that, we had been building up to the moment where I got beaten and stabbed. I went through every detail I knew, going back to that Wilcott murder.

I told her about Gav many times, the company that he chose, in and out of Hafod High. There were enough notes about him to make a book about him. He got expelled the previous September, before the stabbing, as did Tracey Clay. I told her that much. I don't know why I told Dr Chapman about all this, but I suppose its all part of it.

Going through the details of that event nine years ago, how Gav and Sal picked me out for a scapegoat. There were five of them onto me, beating the sweet Jesus out of me, before gliding a broken bottle into my body.

Dr Chapman just told me to calm down. She said I didn't have to tell her, but I had to tell her because it repeats on me. It repeats on my so much that I fist myself to erase out of my head when I try to sleep. I even tell her the song I play everytime it goes through me. 'I'm Broken' by Pantera. Somewhat fitting, I told her.

But when I told her that after I was discharged from hospital, and told her the first ting I did, she took notice and started writing notes. I told her that I kept myself in the bedroom, in silence, and got a razor that I kept in the drawer. The old man thought I was through with cutting myself, because I had friends, didn't have any bother at school, a model son, in a way. But what happened just brought it all back.

I'd tell her that I would place the blade on my shin and start slicing myself, repeatedly. I told her that I felt the blood formed and dribbled like tears, all down the calf. Said it was like an old junkie going back to his old habit, welcoming it like an old friend. I couldn't talk to my mother about it, or my friends, and Gav and Tracey pushed them to the edge in school. Didn't take so long to find sanctuary in the friends I had; they were pretty understanding.

Dr Chapman then asked about what happened next. I couldn't recall much, other than that both Tracey and Gav were sent to reform school, or whatever it was called, only to be seen dealing on the Kingsway a few months later. I just wanted to break down again, giving the only satisfaction that would give to a runt like Gav – a weak bastard that couldn't prove himself in battle.