

Live, Dylan

-“Dylan! Wake up!”

That was the first time in the day I heard my name, at least, someone reminded me of my existence. But I wished that next time would not be the teacher, and would not be in the class, not in front of my classmates.

It was very cold, winter. Through the windows I could not see a thing outside. And indeed, as the time went by, I was falling asleep. I was bored, very bored. I had not read a thing for the class, and there I was, lost in my own little world, until the clock stroke 12 pm.

-“Class dismissed” –I finally heard.

I did not remember why we were finishing the class before the usual time (12: 30 pm), as I was tired, and worried, mostly about things I can’t remember at present time.

-“Oh yes” –I said to myself then.

I remembered I had to return a book to the library, and that I should have done it six days earlier.

I was a bit tense, I must confess. The librarian was not exactly the woman you would like giving many excuses to. She was quite scary; Mrs. Clunch was indeed scary.

I got up from my seat and without even looking at my teacher or mates, I just rushed to the library. I had enough time; I could not take the bus before 12: 30.

To my surprise there was nobody at the library. Its ambience was unusually silent.

-“Where are all the ‘NERDs’?” –I once more spoke to myself.

Mrs. Clunch was not there either. And that was indeed a surprise; that woman was never ill, never late, and always sat there.

After some minutes in which I thought about keeping the book one more day, I saw a strange-looking man behind the reception. He was coming out from the depths of the separation between the bookshelves.

He was carrying three books and a magazine, which he put on the top of the reception table, and finally looked at me. He stood there a while, opened his eyes widely and said in a very slowly and gentle way: -“Can I... help you?”

-“Hi” –I just replied. -“Is Mrs. Clunch here by any chance?”

-“She won’t come for a while. I’ll be in charge of the library for now...”

-“Oh, I see”

- “My name’s Miguelo, pleased to meet you son”

I stopped there for a second, and think; ‘Son’? Nobody had treated me that well since I entered that boarding school in 2007!

There it was a polite man, probably in his fifties, with a rather funny name, speaking with a rather funny accent, standing in a rather funny posture; and the best thing of all is that I skipped Mrs Clunch’s yells for the time being.

-“N...nice to meet you too, Mr.” –I bowed my head a little, as I had acquired that manner from watching too many Japanese cartoons. - “I’m Dylan Lockhart, from second grade”

He just replied with a slight ‘Hmm’, and asked me: -“Are you taking any books, Dylan?”

My first reaction was a quite childish smile, and then I replied: -“No, I’m handing this back”

He took the book with a bit tired shaking hands, and read the title allowed; ‘The Great Gatsby’.

Then he looked at the date written on the book’s register card, and said: -“You must really like reading novels, young one. You certainly took your time”

I laughed a bit. -“Actually I don’t like this book at all...” –And I crouched to close my bag and tie my shoe. -“...I found it boring, but I had to read it anyway.”

-“And did you?”

-“I did not finish it... I just couldn’t”

Maybe, that was quite a rude answer. Besides, he was the librarian, and I was not precisely giving a good impression.

-“I thought so, this book ain’t for kids”

I was not sure of what to reply to that. For the first time in quite a while, I kept my mouth shut and turned away.

I don’t remember why I decided then, to sit near one of the tables right there in the library. I still had some time, it was 12: 15.

I just sat with my legs quite relaxed, and started staring at the ceiling. ‘What was I studying there again?’ ‘Oh yes, I was now in college, re-taking second grade as I failed a big bunch of exams the previous year.’

I was not missing home though. My parents usually saw trouble on me. And I did not have much love for my older brother either.

I was the typical teenager stereotype that has problems of behaviour and may act in a very stubborn way in all situations... That was me.

I was also a quite lonely person. Maybe because of my way of talking to others; a bit rude and selfish sometimes, especially with my closest friends. Such irony, isn’t it?

I could be a very introspected and extroverted person at the same time-- But thinking was a real habit. I always stop for a while, and think, to see where I am standing...

I thought about life, and also Taking my life, lots of times; that was also my thinking. But I never could, and I called myself ‘coward’ for that.

I realized that this ‘Miguelo’ person was walking towards me. He just evaded my sight, and sat on one of the chairs, quite far away from me.

I forgot everything I was previously thinking...

He said then: -“Not so many youngsters take good books these days.”

I was about to vociferate a big ‘What?’ but I decided to act friendlier of course; -“We are quite used to read online books nowadays. It’s not like teachers to encourage us to use much paper things either”

-“How old are you Dylan?”

-“19 sir”

-“Young. No doubt you would like computer stuff”

I feared a boring conversation, but I went on talking.

-“What about you sir? Do you have a son or daughter? I’m sure he is used to computers too, everyone is these days.”

Miguelo delayed a bit in answering, and then said: -“I Had a son”

-“You ‘had’ a son? What do you...?”

I felt really stupid, and my ‘stupidness’ had always taken me to make this late conclusions. And maybe that level of stupidity was the responsible for all my failures in life.

Of course the verb ‘Had’ meant ‘not any more’, or so...

-“Passed away” –He said.

-“Oh, I’m sorry” –And I lowered my head.

Some seconds of silence were soon broken by an odd laughter. Miguelo’s. It was not a fake laughter, he seemed indeed happy. ‘About what?’ I wondered.

-I’m happy we met, Dylan.

-Pardon me? –I was astounded by his reactions.

‘He was-- happy?’ ‘Was it a sane thing to say that to a person you just met?’

I smiled and say: -“Why would anyone be happy to meet ‘me’ in the first place?”

As I had conduct and attitude problems in my college, I was neither used to being called ‘son’ nor to feel this kind of-- gentleness coming from a person.

Miguelo handed me a book then. It was the novel I was reading; 'The Great Gatsby'.

-“Why are you giving me this?”

-“For you to conclude reading it. It's a real shame not to finish a book”

-“But I thought I was banned, for not returning it?”

-“Just take it” –He said. –“You don't need to sign anywhere.

I took it and hold it for a while.

-“You know, Dylan” –I stare at him. -“Sometimes, you don't really have to do anything to please people. Any physical action, I mean, like I am, giving you this book”

I gave him a strange looking and said: -“I'm not sure of what you...”

My eyes crossed over the watch in my hand. 12: 35 pm.

-“My bus! I've gotta hurry. I'm sorry.”

And I got up hastily from the chair.

-“Thank you” –He suddenly said.

-“Huh?” –I turned.

Miguelo was looking at me with the same gentile smile from the beginning, when he first saw me.

'What was he smiling about anyway?'

He slowly said: -“You remind me of someone. I feel content.”

And I left, without uttering a word.

--When I was home, I left the book I was holding on the table. A small paper slipped away from the main page...

It was not the book's register or anything. It was a common piece of notebook paper. Something was written on it. It said:

“You can make someone happy just by existing.”