



PUPPYDOGS' TAILS

Place: Ireland, Abbeyview Academy

Time: four years ago

Characters: Duck, a student

The Storyteller

Glossary:

Junior Cert: high-school Junior Certificate

Sinn Fein: a political organization, founded 1905, advocating Irish national independence and complete separation from Great Britain. Pronounced “Shin Fayn”

Antrim: one of six counties in the province of Northern Ireland partitioned from the Republic of Ireland in the south in 1921. Originally, part of Ulster, one of four traditional Irish kingdoms. Antrim is famous for its rugged coastline. Belfast, where *Titanic* was built, is the capital.

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MICHAEL WYNNE

PUPPYDOGS' TAILS

Duck smelled a certain way some students sniffed after with sneers, but to me his musk was one of the most powerfully sexual attractions about him as he walked through the crowded corridors of Abbeyview Academy. I admired his rebel aura of recklessness. I liked his rough don't-give-a-shit look. His regulation drainpipes, badly torn, inked with graffiti, rode his legs and arse tight on him as a rind. In the proper halls, I looked for his padded red biker's jacket with the psychedelic names of bands spelled out with industrial marker across the upper back. He had wide spatulate fingers embrowned by the burning butts of the countless Majors he smoked during breaks. His nails were lined with grit. His arrogant gift was a lazy right eye that twitched cordially seeing over, above, around, and through the boys of Abbeyview.

During fourth year, Duck's mother died suddenly. Death lifted him out from our adolescent world, isolated him on a plane at once adult and pathetic, gave him a forlorn mystique. He sat opposite me in history class, hunched ferally under the crinkled map of Ireland that he and his kind had dented with pea shots and spit wads. Often, as he passed by me to his seat during his frequent late-comings, I caught a carnal fecal whiff that set me up imagining sucking his thick, skid-marked fingers back in some bog.

I can't completely remember Duck's first name, only that it was something that seemed exaggeratedly Gaelic and outside the pale of our Abbeyview alphabetical list of Christian names of innumerable John's, Patrick's, and Paul's. His determined father and dead mother called him something like "Garbhan,"

or “Cein,” an odd name anyhow lost in the files of officialdom and replaced by the nickname “Duck,” conferred on him in his first term as a chaw, as the freshers at Abbeyview were disdainfully called. Did the caricature signify that some older boys’ eyes were caught by the prominence of his arse as definitely as mine had. Surely for most boys, the dismissive “Duck” was short-hand ridicule that Garbhan’s bulky butt somehow aligned his owner’s walk somewhere between a strut and a waddle. Once tagged “Duck,” he sometimes aggressively exaggerated his walk comically, as if to say kiss my arse, becoming all the more tempting.

Due to low grades and low esteem, I’d stayed back when I should have been going on to do my final year at Abbeyview. That’s how I got mixed in with Duck and his bunch. Of course, I’d been noticing him before we ended up in the same year, but not for very long. The likely reason for this was that he only really filled out, took on his more manly dimensions since sitting the Junior Cert, returning to Abbeyview after the summer a newer, conspicuously masculinised version of himself. His bigger body made his substantial arse seem properly proportionate for the first time.

Duck had an unexpected penchant for Irish history, a passionately opinionated interest that often brought him to loggerheads with our usually congenial teacher. The main-spring of this interest came to light after I’d had him, had him with surprising ease and surprising thoroughness, toward the end of the school year. In fact, it wasn’t until that day we fucked that we finally got around to properly speaking to one another, beyond random comparisons of bands we liked. It was Sports Day, a concept that appealed to neither of us, but we both turned up, mutually offering the reason that there was no harm in rooting for our more athletic peers, but perhaps really propelled by the fantasy of wanking under cover of the outdoor squash alley while eyeballing all that exposed flesh and all those well-filled shorts on the playing field.

I was particularly keen to see another boy, Loftus (whose first name also escapes me), minimally rigged out. Loftus was a sometime sidekick to Duck and even more studly. He had an arrogantly out-size chin he had to shave twice every day, and muscular arms that swaggered with animal defiance as he carried himself from study hall to pitch. Sexy he was, yes,

but in a highly skittable way. Fantasies of him evaporated entirely when Duck, sidling up to me at the edge of the all-weather field, actually made the side-mouthed suggestion that we share a joint up in the old bell tower.

There, we smoked the spliff on our hunkers at the edge of a charred mattress. The sounds of our more athletic fellow-students, locked in hunkering contest below, drifted up through the ancient slats of the bell tower. Obscene and satanic messages scrawled on the tower walls around us were hieroglyphs from Abbeyview's mini-underworld of gothic boarders acting out mock-Black rites, Ouija readings, and jerk circles. The floor was littered with dead lighters, half-burnt matchsticks, cigarette butts, stained and tattered tissue paper, and a condom.

We didn't talk much as we passed the joint. Duck wore headphones which he took on and off to offer me samples of his CD. For the most part, I feigned interest, even in his favourite music track, which he insisted I listen to three times on his personal stereo. "Puppydogs' Tails" it was called; it had a sly riff and a piston beat pumping a hard, dirty, oily sound under screaming lyrics celebrating, as far as I could make out, gender confusion and sexual insatiability.

His headphones squeezed my ears. His music filled my head. His smell turned me on. His look made me excited watching him sit stoned, in his scuffed jacket, cross-legged and cross-armed, his eyes closed, head gently rocking to some internal rhythm. From where I sat, I could see a rip in the seam at his crotch, and toward the fade-out of "Puppydogs' Tails," I handed him back his headphones and impulsively dared paw ever so deftly across his thighs to slip my fingers into his torn jeans, shoving my hand into the underside of his briefs and feeling around the plump globes of his balls.

Duck made no resistance. In fact, he rose to the occasion, headphones on, wordlessly, only his lazy right eye looking at me, humping himself against my touch till he was rock-hard, cleverly locking his thighs about my hand so I could not pull out, and moving us connected as one over on to the mattress where he flopped on his back expecting frontal work; but as much as I wanted his penis, I wanted, maybe more, to see the hefty spheres of his famous Duck's arse exposed. Jerking down his trousers, I turned him over, flat on his belly, and studied the full pair of his downy-white cheeks, ran my free hand

over them, reading their surface softness single-ply over the underlying tough muscle. Slowly I rubbed my face against his twin scoops as he lay with his face on his forearms, his breath shooting shallow on his thick wrists.

The deep tokes of the joint made me incredibly horny. I jimmied two fingers deep into the trench of his tight butt-crack, then three, prying, scooping, four fingers at a time, smelling his famous smell, and pulling apart the round ducky-duck cheeks, burrowing my face so deep in Duck I could taste the wild Garbhan rardered up inside him. My adoring tongue tasted his unwashedness, relishing the abandon of burying myself freely in his natural wasteland of furzy maleness. Tasting Garbhan, I, for the first time, realized my primal desire for the essence of men.

Working down from his hole, I flat-tongued his sweaty, slung balls. To headphone music only he could hear, he rified and beat and moaned, bucking his butt up eager against my lapping. He pushed his dirty body open to new sensations, intimacies unexplored, and rebellions possibly barely dared conceived of by him sitting on his ducky arse at Abbeyview. I licked him all the more thoroughly, from slow to frenzy, working him like the lashing tracks on one of his headbanger CDs, making him moan all the louder, in the surprise pleasure of tongue and the wild desire of fingers. I squeezed the head of my engorged dick against his dirt-streaked Doc to hold off from my own cuming. He rose up on his knees and backed up doggy-style over my face. He came in my mouth, the first time I let this happen with anyone. I wanted first seed to happen with him. I stuffed my face with his cock as soon as I saw his spit-wet bollocks contract. Tasting before swallowing, I erupted also, and quickly withdrew from underneath him to plant one last stolen kiss on his hoisted heath-brown asshole.

I don't remember much about what we spoke of afterwards, though I know he mentioned in passing his dead mother, and alluded with veiled pride to the Republican links he owed to his determined father, of whom I had vaguely heard, a prominent member of Sinn Fein. He planned to follow his father's footsteps. Thinking he was inflating his personal ego upon my purely sexual curiosity, I changed the subject from him to his CDs, but he lost interest, and abruptly he pulled up his jeans, and together we climbed down the old bell tower,

and sat silently together watching the boys, led by Loftus, on the playing field, as if I weren't sitting beside him with the taste of him ripe in my face.

Four years later, well up across the northern border, deep in Antrim, along a lonely coast road near the Glenariff Forest, Duck was shot at point-blank range in the head by the ex-army officer who, quicker at self-defense, had himself been chosen as Garbhan's target for his initiation into the games of the sectarian world. An old Abbeyview school-class photograph, taken in the grounds during our last year, with the bell-tower prominent above, shows Duck standing in the middle row, his thick thumbs looped at his hips, his eyes, squeezed together, his lazy right eye determined, straining beyond the camera, toward the sun and the seemingly limitless future. He was twenty-two.