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Anyway What's Your Story?

by Lawrence Howard

“Anyway, what about your story Johnny?”

“Well where do I start. Home life was crap. My muvver used to say “people from round here don’t get top jobs. You just keep your head down Johnny and don’t give no one any bovver”. “And if I ever gave her any lip she’d give me a whack, although I got used to it and it didn’t bovver me in the end. When my dad used to beat me, that really hurt. But he left home when I was 7 and I haven’t seen him since”. Me teachers said that I was wasting their time at school as all I did was play up and be disruptive. So I left school with nuffin.”

I was doing a bit of this and a bit of that to make a few quid. But everyone looked down on me in me high vis jacket. All I wanted was some respect. Me muvver said I was never no good at anyfink. But then I used my contacts and started doing a bit of buying and selling. I started to make some money. People looked up to me. I bought better clothes, a new car, had cash in my pocket to spend. Women started to notice me. I started to feel more confident about myself and who I was. I achieved acceptability, respect and life had become good”.

“So what about you Sam. What’s your story? You’re from a different world to Johnny. “

“I went to Winchester, my father was a neurologist, my mother a barrister and I had every advantage in life. I was expected to get top grades like my older brother and sister who went on to Cambridge. But me, I tried hard yet struggled.

I couldn't get the grades and felt like a failure. My parents often told me how disappointed they were with me. Winchester just saw me as a liability that would reduce their position in the league tables.

After I left school I had an allowance I wasn't ever penniless, but I needed to prove that I could earn my own money. I was languishing in jobs that were going nowhere with people I didn't fit in with. Meanwhile my friends were all on fast track careers, or working in their parent's firms that would eventually be handed down to them. So, like Johnny, I used my contacts and started doing some buying and selling to earn my own money. I started to earn a lot and gained respectability. But like Johnny no one really knew where the money was coming from. Except those that we did the deals with.

"So here you both are" said the prison councillor. "Both serving time in Wandsworth Jail. Can you see any similarities between you?"

"Well, we're both coke heads," said Johnny.

"No," said the prison councillor, "both of you want to be loved."