

The Guiding Star

By : irvine52

This is the first Chapter of novel the Guiding Star. It is going through a final rewrite before i hit publishers and agents again. The Guiding Star is set in Northern Ireland during the middle 1970s during the period of what was known as the troubles. I myself lived in Ireland during this period though this is not an autobiographical novel I have used some actual events as a backdrop to my story. They were turbulent times and my Novel reflects this. The story is rather simple. My central character is John Watson, a 16 year old working class Protestant boy. Bullied by the other boys at his School. Ignored by his bigoted Catholic hating Mother. Unsure of his own sexuality and trying to find his own place in a turbulent world. Forced to study engineering while he really wants to study English. He dreams of becoming a writer and escaping from his life. John's Life changes when he has a chance meeting with Ryan Cullen, a local Catholic boy of the same age. The boys become friends and a close bond develops between them. Ryan holds a dark secret that if revealed could put his life in danger. The Guiding Star is in part a love story, part thriller ,part social commentary. I have had a great time writing it and I hope you might take the time to read it. Best Wishes
Irvine

Published on
Booksie

booksie.com/irvine52

Copyright © irvine52, 2015

Publish your writing on Booksie.com.

Table of Contents

The Guiding Star Chapter 1

The Guiding Star : Chapter 1

Chapter 1

ï½

That year, 1976 I was the invisible teenager. Invisible in every way to all of those around me even though I was living flesh and bone and had a heart and other body organs, in the presence of those around me, I was the overweight boy who no one really noticed or cared about or took any interest in. The boy not chosen for sports teams, because he had no real talent for sports and hated them anyway. The boy ignored by his teachers even when he was first to put his hand up to answer some stupid unimportant question that was not important in any shape or form. The boy ignored at home and constantly told that he should be a good student like his sister. A sister who was a success at everything she turned her hand to.

I was sick and tired of always being told the same thing. If only I would work harder I would be a success. If only I put some effort into life I might get something out of it...

ï½

If I had a pound for ever time I had been told "To get somewhere in life a boy needed to get a trade, learn a skill and do something useful with his life. "To be a success this is what you needed to do." Boys did not need, poetry, literature or theatre or day dreams. They were sissy things that served no real purpose in life. A boy needed to know how to build, construct, make something, plan towns and cities. Give orders and lead companies and leave a lasting legacy for future generations...

ï½

Or so I was told.

ï½

By the autumn of that year my future had been decided for me. I had an engineering apprenticeship already set up and my future life was led out before me like some all seeing road stretching out into the distance.

A friend of my mothers had arranged for me to start a placement in the engineering company where her husband had worked for the last twenty five years, no doubt loving his job and happy to do the same thing day in and day out and I was expected to follow in his footsteps. I would finish school in May and start in September as sure as the earth went round the sun and birds flew south in the sky as winter approached it was fixed as sure as anything could be fixed.

I would face endless days of learning maths, filing metal and doing other useless crappy things . I had no interest in learning any of them. I didn't want any of it. After a few months of training I would start working on the factory floor when I would be told what to do by some fat man in his fifties who probably hated his job and would use me like is own personal slave, running around making him endless cups of fucking tea and sorting out his toolbox for him and following him around the factory floor like an obedient puppy. It was meant to be on the job training but I saw it as on the job slavery and was dreading every waking moment of it.

ï½

The Guiding Star

After four years the company would take me on and I would be a fully qualified engineer or so my Mother hoped and my future would be set in stone. A life of future misery had been laid out before me and I had no say whatsoever in the matter. Of course the creative side of my character was not important to her or even considered an area for discussion. even when my English teacher had told my Mother that I was good enough to study English at A level and that I had the potential to go to University, my Mother did not want to know or hear anything about it. Mention of anything other than my Engineering apprenticeship was totally taboo as far as my Mother was concerned and for me to focus on or dream about doing anything else with my life was not allowed in any shape or form. I was meant to be excited about my apprenticeship and be grateful to my mother and her friend for setting it up for me.

½

"It's just a phase he's going through" I heard her say to one of the endless list of her female cousins always sitting in our living room, drinking tea from china cups and eating corned beef sandwiches flavoured with mustard with chocolate cake to follow.

My Mother always made sure the crusts neatly trimmed off. She said that it gave a touch of class to her sandwiches and this just told me what a working class snob she really was.

½ This was a ritual gathering that went on at least once a week, fifty two weeks a year and God how I hated it.

I was sick and tired of listened to these fat highly ignorant woman most of whom were in their mid fifties talking their rubbish always willing to chip in with advice about my character and what I needed to do to improve my situation in life. I should get out more, join clubs play more sport become more active, go to church more often....

½

"Once he starts work he won't have time to daydream" " Once he has a girlfriend, everything will be ok" "Don't you think it's strange that he hasn't had one yet?" Our Ronnie has had loads, different one in the house every month... He's a good-looking boy, just needs to lose a few stone. It will make him look better and then the girls will be knocking at his door, just watch and see." I lost count of the number of times I heard this of similar comments on the nature of my life and how I was so bloody sick of it.

½

I once heard one of my mother's thick stupid cousins, a hideous woman called Susie ask my mother if I was a "fruit". My mother in her own unique way of never facing an issue head on immediately changed the topic to something else, the latest sectarian murder or the price of a loaf of bread or something like that anything to moved the conversation away from my sexuality or any discussion of it. Hey ho.

½

As if a girlfriend would be the magic solution to solve everything that was flying through my brain. Every day warring emotions flew through my brain yet this could just be offset by Just finding some stupid girl and fucking her a few times and that will knock the dreams of self expression out of you...

½

The Guiding Star

" Empty your balls lad and everything will be ok". Not that my mother would ever have used such colloquial terminology to describe the act of making love.... Or even mentioned such a topic or raised it for discussion. She was too much of a schoolmarm prig to mention anything of a sexual nature. It was strictly off limits in our household a totally taboo subject matter never to be mentioned or publicly discussed and I guess it was the same for many households back then as that was the way things were back in the far of days of the 1970s, things were not discussed and sexuality was hidden away behind a locked door never to be opened, some things were just never meant to be talked about.

ï¿½

Off course I didn't really blame my Mother for trying to sort out my future Engineering career , to her it was may road to a happy and successful future. To me it was a path that would lead to slavery and a miserable future.

My Mother was the victim of her own cultural upbringing. She believed what she had been told. It was a cultural norm that she had lived with from an early age. Boys did men's work and that was the way it had always been and I guess that I was expected to follow in similar footsteps and set the world alive through my knowledge of the engineering world.

My wishes and hopes were not taken into consideration in any way, I was meant to do as I was told and be a good and supportive son. That was my role in life nothing else other than that.

ï¿½ï¿½ï¿½ Strangely enough, my younger sister was encouraged to follow a musical and creative path. She had started playing the violin whilst in primary school and by 12 she was playing in the county youth orchestra at a high level. I guess she was good if you like that sort of thing, personally I just couldn't stand it, it just sounded like noise to me and I could see no point to it.

ï¿½

This may have been a wonderful achievement when viewed through my Mothers rose tinted glasses. However, I wanted to take my sisters violin and smash it into a thousand pieces and scatter them to the four corners of the wind . Not because I hated the sound of her practicing drifting through the wall between our bedrooms afternoon and night. Scrape, scrape fucking scrape every evening for two hours starting after dinner and going on till early evening. Or the smug look on her face whenever she was on stage saying "this is me I'm wonderful". It was because the violin represented a symbol of success to her. A way for her to show that she was better than me and how did she like to show it. Something for my mum to hold up as a beacon for me to follow a shinning example of what a young person could achieve if they put their mind to it. Anything was possible.

ï¿½ï¿½ï¿½

I hated that my Mother and Sister as I hated everything else that went with them back then. I felt that I was just an embarrassment to both of them. Something to be laughed at. Useless at everything with no clear point or direction to his life. I was crap at most school subjects except English and History. Anything related to math's or science held no interest for me. I was useless at them. Yet because of this my mother deemed me a failure. A failure at 16, someone would never do anything positive with his life unless he had the right guidance that his stupid engineering apprenticeship would give him.

ï¿½

The Guiding Star

I'm talking a lot about my mother, but for me she was mother and father all rolled into one. Its not easy being a single parent but I guess that she tried to make a success of it however misguided her intentions were.

ï¿½ï¿½ï¿½ï¿½

Off course it hadn't always been like that. I had started life with both parents like everyone else but by the time I was 11 I was left with one and it just had the misfortune to have been my Mother.

ï¿½ï¿½

In some ways on reflection my parents were old when I was born. My Mother was 34 and my father 46. I often suspected that my Mother was pregnant with me and that she had to marry my father to avoid any scandal breaking out and her reputation being forever tarnished as a woman who would drop her knickers on a first night out and let all and sundry give her a good banging.

ï¿½ï¿½For a couple to have a child out of wedlock in those days was almost unheard off, hence the fact that many men and women married even though they may have ended up hating each other for the rest of their lives. I often wondered in some warped and twisted way that only I could think of that maybe My mother blamed me for the fact that she had to marry my father and that now she was taking her revenge out on me even more so now that my Father was no longer alive.

ï¿½ï¿½

My father had died when I was 11. He had been having a few pints in our local pub "The Welcome Inn" with some friends after work no doubt enjoying the endless round of banter that a working class Irish pub offers it customers. What we called "The Craic" ï¿½ï¿½

My father had a habit of telling really bad jokes to anyone who was willing to listen to them, his children included. I lost track of the times he would tell some stupid joke and he would be the only one laughing at it, in some ways his unfunny jokes would be the death of him literally speaking....

One Friday evening, mid joke, he had a massive heart attack and was more or less dead before he and pint glass of Guinness he was holding hit the wooden floor of the public bar with a resounding thud sending glass and Guinness flying all over the place.

Off course there was the usual outpouring of grief, a whole range of endless visitors offering their condolences, saying what a pity it was for the children and that a boy needed his father. Who would be there to take him fishing? To football matches, for walks along the beach and do all those other father and son bonding things that help a boys development through his crucial teenage years. In some strange way all of this was alien to me, for I was never really close to my father. In many ways he was a stranger to me and I often thought that deep down inside ï¿½ï¿½I was a sort of embarrassment to him, though he never really said anything to me I guess that would have just been to heartless of him to say to an eleven year old boy. After all he wasn't my mother.

ï¿½ï¿½

Of course I cried as his coffin was lowered into the cold unwelcoming earth. I raided that day and I remember that the earth I picked up to throw in on top of his fingers stuck to my fingers and that I cried because I could not get it off my fingers and wondered what my Mother might say to me when she saw that my hand was dirty.

The Guiding Star

I don't really know what the tears meant as we had done none of those bonding things that are supposed to bring fathers and sons together. I sometimes think that I cried just for the sake of crying because that was what was expected of me. I guess that all children cry at funerals especially if it was a funeral of one of their parents.

No fishing trips or walks along the beach for me we never did anything remotely like that. My father was too preoccupied with work to have time to do those things. By the time he came home from, had dinner and settled down to watch some shit TV drama it was my bedtime and I was ushered off to bed while he had a few glasses of whisky then spent the rest of the evening talking to my mother before he went to bed.

½

He was kind enough I guess. I always got nice birthday and Christmas presents and he would always take us on holiday once a year always to the same caravan park in Southern Scotland where in normally rained every day and Mary and I were stuck inside praying ½ for the rain to stop so we could go and play on the beach.

½

What I didn't really get was the attention I needed, I don't think he even once gave me a proper hug, ½ or told me that he loved me, but then time might be warping my mind and the reality might have been totally different.

½

Enough of this David Copperfield, little orphan Annie type stuff. This isn't a "My parents fucked me up" type story. To be honest as I sit here writing this I don't know what it is going to turn out to be. "The truth" Sometimes I don't know what the truth is anymore. Perhaps this story is my last chance to discover what the truth is. My chance to talk about things that have been hidden away for many years. Maybe some things are just too painful to talk about but then again some things need to be said.

½

½

½

½

½

½

½

½

The Guiding Star

Created from Booksie.com

Generated: 2015-01-31 14:34:39