

**Context:** The player has started work as a bartender at a grimy pub in a working class, northern English town. While working the day shift, three regulars walk into the pub and sit down at the bar, ready for a chat. The player chooses which character to begin a conversation with.

**Content warning:** These writing samples contains mentions of chronic illness, depression, vulgar language, and suicide.

**Character 1: John MacGill**

Player: Morning mate, what can I get for you?

John: Oh, nothin' much, just a new pair of legs! Hah!

Player: What's up with your legs?

John: Just my bloody Parkinson's. I'm so tired of this boggin' ugly chair.

Player: I don't think your wheelchair's ugly.

John: Like it, do ye? Hah! You better, it cost a bloody fortune.

John: I didn't pay for it myself, mind you, NHS gave me a voucher and my work gave me the rest.

Player: How much they'd give you?

John: £800. Now that's a lot of money for a simple lad workin' the farms.

John: Came with Parkinson's but hey, who am I to complain? Hah!

Player: You used to work on a farm?

John: Yes son, worked long hours doin' all sorts. We Scots call it bein' an orra man, but here I 'spose the word is farmhand.

John: Handled all the pesticides - sprayed and tended to them fields from day-daw till sundoon.

John: Course, I only found out that the chemicals were toxic once it were far too late.

Player: That's terrible.

John: Aye. It's worse than losin' your mind. Cuz my noggin's sharp as ever but my body's crumblin' away.

John: When the doctor first told me the diagnosis, I counted myself lucky. I thought, 'Oh well, at least I've not gone mad - I can still do the daily crossword...'

John: ...But now these bloody fingers shake too much to hold a pen.

John: It's not too bad though I 'spose, at least I can still drink a pint alright. Hah!

## Character 2: Duncy

Player: How you doing, mate?

Duncy: Not bad mate. Tell you what, this place looks a lot nicer with those decorations you've put up.

Player: Oh yeah? Anything in particular?

Duncy: Yeah, the footie shirts look good. Makes the pub feel a bit livelier.

Player: Glad to hear.

Duncy: You know, I have my own footie shirt back home, Man City gave it to me themselves.

Player: Hows' that?

Duncy: Well, as a young lad I was real into sports - rugby, cricket, I liked them all. But footie had my heart, and I was bloody good.

Duncy: Won a few local tournaments and eventually got scouted by Man City. Course, I was an Arsenal supporter like my old man but I ain't gonna turn down an offer like that.

Player: You joined Man City?!

Duncy: Well, I made the tryouts and got offered a deal. Nothing like what they get paid nowadays but still, I woulda been bloody minted...

Duncy: We had our first big match coming up. I was held as a reserve, my first time ever on telly.

Duncy: Three days before the match, I was training with the lads, and I slipped over on a patch of wet grass. Tore the ligament in my knee.

Duncy: And that was it. That's all it took to end my lifelong dream which hadn't even started.

Duncy: All my hours of training. Wasted. Because of some fucking wet grass.

Duncy: I begged those buggers to let me recover, told 'em I would train and get better but they didn't give a toss. Had me replaced within a day...

Player: Bastards.

Duncy: You know, I remember calling my dad from A&E to tell him the news.

Duncy: He just said, 'What the fuck you cryin' for?' Then he hung up. We never brought it up again.

Player: That's awful.

Duncy: That's life though, innit? A bunch of shit and then you die.

Duncy: When you're a kid, people ask you, 'What's your dream job?' And it's exactly that, a dream. It's unachievable.

Duncy: Everyone's fucking miserable. We just keep thinking about these dreams to keep from offing ourselves.

Duncy: It doesn't even matter. Just pour me a pint, mate.

### **Character 3: Frank Stanton**

Player: Evening mate, what'll it be?

Frank: Just a Guinness, lad.

Frank: Oh, and is that dartboard new?

Player: Yessir, you any good?

Frank: Not nowadays mate. But when I was a lad, I'd shoot darts all the time.

Player: Why'd you stop?

Frank: Ah, well... I must have been about 15, 16, when I met this girl, Lucy Goddard her name was, prettiest girl I ever seen.

Frank: I spotted her in the Old George, back before it closed down, shooting darts with her mates.

Frank: Now when I tell you she was gorgeous... She had these sparkling green eyes, and her smile...

Frank: Well, I'm no good with my words. Anyway, she was gorgeous, and I was just a short, tubby little ginger.

Player: [Laughs]

Frank: See, I wanted to impress her, right? So, me, being the idiot I am, stood right by the board, hand outstretched.

Frank: 'Go on, throw it.' I said to her, 'I'll catch it like I'm superman.'

Frank: It went straight into my hand. Still got the fuckin' scar. Heh.

Player: Was she impressed?

Frank: Hah! Not at all. But she was bloody lovely... Pretended she didn't see me cry.

Frank: We dated for a few months... Happiest time of my life.

Player: What happened?

Frank: Well, it didn't last long - I failed my CSEs and had to join the army. Got shipped off to the Falklands. Bloody Thatcher.

Frank: And now, even all these years later, I still can't look at a dartboard without my hand hurting.

Frank: ...Anyway. Cheers to Thatcher being dead.