

A response to Kevin O'Connor

A Fork in the Road

Will Hardy

The interminable quest for happiness feels like an endless traipse across our landscape. There is no right path to achieve it, but we know it deep inside; that feeling that guides us onto the definitive path. As a young person, there are times I will pause and reflect on my present situation and piece together the events that have led me towards a destination greater than what came before it. Kevin, your story is a reminder that what is expected of us, isn't a destination that'll provide us with fulfilment in our lives. You were expected to work in the Naval Dockyard, presumably at Devonport, facing cold steel, physical labour and challenges only a man's competent nature could undertake. Your destination from the dockyard changed course, as did your path. Your mother's response to your career change, after such distance must have left you feeling like a small child to her, unworthy of changing your path or undeserving of receiving the love we all need to find solace. I find that a woman as traumatised as her would lack the ability to see the same change you've experienced. Her response is hard-hitting, almost like it's a reflection of her own wasted time mocking her son's life path. Alas, it was not her torch to bear and there was no stopping the wheels you set in motion to further your career.

You pressed on, knowing full well you had a job to do. Amidst teaching Dickens, you introspectively paused to evaluate your situation. 'I am standing here teaching and influencing young minds.' I do wonder if the conversation about stocks and shares made its way

into the final cut?

At the culmination of your story, the young lad Alan faces his fears on the climbing wall. This is a pivotal time for any child to show his true character that's kept him hidden under a blanket. The other true event that occurred that day is a reminder to you as well; that you faced a fear and courageously helped a lost boy from long ago take the leap onto a legendary fireman's pole. In both instances you persevered to allow change to affect itself onto a child who won't forget his mentor. I'm convinced you saw yourself in him.

Experiences such as yours are part of the reason I am following a writing path, and sharing with others has been invaluable in the process. From this, I am writing so others can emotionally connect with pieces that may fit into their own lives. This grounded approach is what I appreciate about the craft, and a minuscule conversation at work encouraged me to set these wheels in motion. I thought I was incapable of learning the craft, but as I reached 22, I realised there is no better time to learn than the here and now. I took a chance and applied to ARU whilst I was working in customer service, and a choice to better myself has put me on a road that's still being written. Then again, it's a path we're both still on.

Reading stories and consuming fiction has influenced my responsibility towards writing my experiences whilst living in Cambridge, but most notably at university have I began searching to find my voice to use within the craft. I like navigating my emotional patterns and writing about them from my time growing up in Cambridge.