

I Told You Everything

Mary Wilkinson

MY NAME IS DOT. DOT GOGGINS. I live in the cul-de-sac that faces the old cemetery out on Bracken Road. Our house, my mam's and mine, is the one with the broken gate. Mam says that's how you can tell our house is the only rental on the road. It's a quiet enough place though and Mam is convinced we live in one of the better estates in this town. I should say I was supposed to be born a David but when I was in the hospital the nurse put a bunch of dots where my name should have been and so Mam called me Dot after that. I don't mind. It could be worse.

Most days I can tell everything that's going to happen to me. Like today. Friday. It's six a.m. and if you look in through the window you will see me lying stretched out on my bed. I'm wearing my school uniform and reading a book about rainbows.

There is so much to learn about rainbows. A rainbow is an arch of colours visible in the sky, caused by the refraction and dispersion of the sun's light by rain or other water droplets in the atmosphere. So there. Most people never even look at rainbows. But that's not my problem. I've just turned fifteen. And I might add that I've had these books for ages. Rainbow facts are vast. Light for instance is the lifeline to a rainbow and don't even think about catching one or finding a crock of gold at the end. It's all illusion.

Anyway back to now. I'm on the bed.

Check.

As always.

Check.

It feels good to be up early and have no one, but you, looking in on my

thoughts.

Check.

Now and then I think about my dad. It is always summertime when I do that. Once June arrived Dad would slowly roll up his sleeves and the legs of his pants like he was thinking about taking on the world and after a few weeks of sunshine he'd decide that life was okay. To be tolerated. And if he saw me looking at him from the window of my room he would wave and then point to his white hairy legs as he scrunched his face to meet the sunlight. Straight-up. Like it was something he had come to terms with. He reminded me there and then of the albino rat they had on display at the pet shop on Eyre Street before it closed down. Everybody was going to see that rat. I can still picture him in the small cage with his nervous pink eyes looking out at me and his nose all snively like he had a permanent cold.

You should know, yes you, the watcher through the window, watching me on my bed, that the other lads say, look at that Dot Goggins, he's a real weirdo. They all hate me.

Maybe it's the glasses. Mam got them on the medical. I know they call me mole.

Blinkers.

Bugger eyes.

Worse.

This light. This light at six thirty a.m. is special because it comes into the room gradually in a sneaky kind of way. You don't notice it immediately, if you know what I'm saying. Slow and easy and soft like cotton wool until wham it gets so bright that you'll be sure to be rubbing your eyes they can hurt so much. Mam gets up soon after. Some days she curses more than others and makes a big racket out in the hall. Like right now, she opens the door and she's shouting at me, I can't do this. I cannot do this anymore. When I ask her what she can't do anymore, she says Dot. Just that. Dot.

And then she puts her arms out on either side of her as if she's trying to hold up a great big heavy rock and says,

This.

Dimwit.

This.

You.

Stupid.

Dimwit.

By the time I get to Eurobreak it is close to eight thirty a.m. Paulina is already halfway through sipping her tea. She smiles at me. Paulina is nice. Her hair is blonde and so straight that it looks like it's been ironed out. I asked her once if they have rainbows in Poland and she laughed and said, silly boy Dot. Today she asks me if it's the usual. I nod.

No mayo?

Check.

No mustard?

Check.

One slice of ham?

Check.

One slice of cheese?

Check.

On white?

Check.

Three euro.

Done.

Paulina says have a good day Dot. She says Dot like I'm someone important.

A kaleidoscope is a toy consisting of a tube containing mirrors and pieces of coloured glass or paper whose reflections, yes, reflections produce changing patterns when the tube is rotated. Dad bought me a kaleidoscope when I was eight. It was made of tin with colours of the rainbow painted all around the outside of it. When I shook it the sound was magic. Shh, shh, shh, as if the colours and shapes were talking and trying to get out.

Walking to school is what it must be like to be stuck inside a great big kaleidoscope.

Tall skinny black railings.

Orange rust beginning to form on top.

A lost and found purple glove stuck on a spike.

Pale blue jumper on woman standing at bus stop.

White bobbles on her sleeves.

Grey seagull.

Swoops low.

Flash.

Check.

Bark of tree peeling silver.

The blare of car horns angry red.
Check.
Baby screams from a buggy.
The mam on phone ignores baby.
The baby is all pink.
Icy white stares.
Light.
Check.
Swish, swishy light through railings.
Dark.
Light.
Dark.
Light.
Shadows.
Touch it.
Shh, shh, shh.
Catch the shadows.
No I won't.
Check.

There's no smell today. Must be the way the wind is blowing. Usually the yard stinks of pig.

Because of Baconland. The factory across the river. Most of the lads' dads work in Baconland. Neary's dad is the foreman. Everyone is friends with Neary. He has what they call leadership qualities. That's what Mr. O'Connor said about him in civics class. We all need to strive to have 'leadership qualities' like our young man Neary. But I don't have to tell you that. You can see.

Right?
Check.

Back to the yard. I suppose you could call it a normal, boring kind of a yard. Standard size for a yard. Basketball hoops missing nets. Rusting. Twisted. No pig smell today.

That's a bonus.
Check.

Pebble-dash wall. That I used to stand up against. And put my hands on and press them into it so eventually the dashed pebbles make marks on my

palms. Small indentations. Neary and his team down the other end. Close enough to the outside toilets. Smoking.

Check.

I pretend not to see. Pretend I'm counting the cars passing by out on the road. Try to look as if I'm concentrating. My palms tingle from the pebble-dash marks. I never can tell what day Neary might be in the mood for me. To get his kicks. Use up some of his leadership qualities. Right now he's talking to his followers in a huddle. One of them turns and calls out.

Goggins.

Goggins get on down here. Then they all start.

Goggins. Goggins. Gog. Gins. Gog. Gins. Cha cha cha. Goggins. Gog. Gins. Gog. Gins. Cha cha cha. Clapping and stamping their feet. Jeers gone mad mixed with smelly fingers always poking at themselves. Great fun it is.

Check.

Did you know that echoes are reflections? Echoes occur because some of the sound waves in your shouts reflect off a surface like a well or a canyon. Or even off a pebble-dash wall if the shouts are loud enough. I know that if I walk down there they'll push me around a bit. Call me queer. Say things about Dad. How he disappeared one day. Soon after the money went missing from the safe at Baconland. How when he was last seen he was walking towards the train station. Someone said he was whistling.

Check.

I wait for the buzzer to signal the start of class. Do you see me?

Waiting.

Friday nights Mam and I always go to China Villa for curry and chips. We sit across from each other at one of the small tables and drink Coke while we wait for the food. We don't talk. Mam studies her phone and I look out the window at the dark black shiny street. But somehow I always end up watching our reflection in the big glass window. We could be strangers. Just ordinary people in China Villa waiting for our curry and chips. Although I could watch Mam's reflection all night long. Her head bent over her phone and her thick black hair wrapped around her neck like a small animal taking a bit of a sleep for itself.

Check.

Neary comes in with his dad for a takeaway. Neary waves over at me and smiles. His dad says nothing. After they leave Mam says, why don't you get to

know that young man?

He seems like a nice lad.

Check.

When we get home I go outside to sit on the wall and look back at the house. The night changes everything. Takes the edge off. With a few lights on. An illusion? Maybe.

I see Mam pour a shot out for herself and drink it quickly. Then she pours another one and turns to go down to the room to watch telly. I imagine Dad then outside the kitchen window in his rolled-up pants and sleeves. Freckles scattered like huge raisins along his arms as he unravels the hose until it becomes a big yellow snake that stretches the length of the garden. Then Dad slowly turns on the tap. He's telling me we need to do it properly. I remember the water coming out in shy gurgles and sputters until it flowed in a clear, even stream. I remember thinking something special was going to happen.

Check.

And then I'm touching it. The something special was right there in my hands. The yellow of forgiveness. The blue of hope. The red. The orange. All arched in the spray. And Dad reminding me how he said that he'd catch us a rainbow someday. How anything's possible.

Check.

I hear Mam calling me. Dot. Where are you Dot? I decide not to answer her straight away. My voice stays stuck down inside of me. I'm going back over the day. How this very morning I told you I knew everything that would happen to me today. And I did. I told you everything. Well, almost everything. There is something else but it might be best not to mention that. Some things can wait. There will always be another opportunity.

Check.

Like reflections that never stop coming. Or echoes like the ones running around in my head.

Echoes that might just get too loud. Then what? Mam's closing the venetian blind now. The slats throw shadows across her body to make her look as if she's in a prison cell.

I whisper Mam.

Wait Mam wait.

What's on the telly Mam?

**I'm coming Mam.
Tell me something Mam.
Anything at all Mam.
Do you remember Mam?
Wait Mam.
Wait.
Check.**