

Hi everyone. My name is Rudi and I'm an alcoholic.

I'm sure you can tell by my accent that I'm not from around here. And I'm sure you can see with my long face and red nose that I'm not sober. No excuses, I got back in with the old gang and a few ups and downs later and I'm the same old party animal. I regret it now but isn't that the same old story - just when I think I've got it sorted.

Look, my story is no different from anyone else here. I've always been a loner. I was an odd looking buck (the long face and red complexion isn't just from the drink!) and when you're younger, well when you don't fit in with the herd, you stay on the outside. So when I was needed to help "doing deliveries" and I was to be the head driver, well the acceptance and belonging went to my head.

I didn't realise how much I needed to be part of something; and to be the 'leader of the pack' was more than I could have dreamed of – all my Christmases coming at once! The foreman, Nick, wanted us to 'drop' into a number of houses and share the wealth around. I didn't think about it too much; I was just happy to be part of something. I wasn't drinking then; but I was soon after.

You should have seen the drop top, though. Beautiful vehicle, shining chrome and smooth as anything; I had it purring; at top speed, it was flying. Nobody could keep up and we were hardly noticed.

Nick knew his job too; in and out without a sound. Only problem, he was more likely to come out with drink than anything else. At the end of the night, seemed we had nothing but a hangover. But the buzz was great.

Only downside was the others. It was a mixed group. Donna was lovely. The others, though; 2 of them sparking off each other like thunder and lightning – either way, they kept me on edge – like watching my parents; one, known as Dash, was speeded up all the time and at least 2 of them had ADHD, they couldn't sit still. They all did their bit when we were on the job but wound me up so tight before and after. Donna wasn't interested; one of the lads tried playing Cupid for us but it never happened.

Maybe that was why I started drinking more. It got bad quickly. I tried to get away, hand in my resignation, so to speak, but that doesn't happen in our gang and anyway; Nick could always dangle the right carrot in front of me – 'Come on, I need you Rudi', he'd say. And for some reason, I couldn't say no.

Things would get quiet after we'd finish a job and I'd drift away and be forgotten about. I started loving the solitude; I didn't need anyone else. Then, as time would move on, the solitude would turn

to loneliness and, while I'd stay sober, as soon as I'd get the call, I couldn't say no. It wasn't that I couldn't say no, I needed to say yes.

The happiness didn't last though. There was a lot of preparation: mapping the job, getting everything running smoothly. And I had to be around the whole lot of them – arguing and posing and me, edgy with the nerves – I was always on the verge of strangling one of them. I'm sure they knew. I go really red when I'm pissed off – I'm like a bloody traffic light. Wanting it all to STOP and able to do nothing.

So I did the same again this year. In fact, I'm in the middle of things right now. I thought if I came to a meeting I might be able to do things differently but I'm not so sure. I love it too much. No, I need it too much. One last night, then I'll stop. I promise.

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Police are investigating the accidental death of an old woman caused by falling masonry during a storm

Our thoughts are with the family of a woman whose accidental death was caused by falling debris during a serious storm. However, more disturbingly, it is alleged by family members that a juvenile female stole some of her belongings including an expensive pair of shoes that have sentimental value to the family. Were this to be true, police would treat this as a serious criminal act.

The young woman involved is said to be 5'8" and of long, auburn hair and was wearing a blue outfit. She is accompanied by her dog. Witnesses say that she told them that she had moved away from home but was now anxious to be returned to her aunt and uncle – she is orphaned and in her aunt's care.

Further reports indicate developments that are of greater concern for the police in that said juvenile has been seen in the company of individuals well known to us. She is reported to be 'quite at ease with them'. The men concerned are known locally to be violent, intellectually impaired and 'animalistic' in nature. There is strong evidence that drugs are in use and not just recreational drugs but also evidence of opiate use.

This gang are known to be unhappy with their lot and there is fear that they are enticing this young woman concerned into joining them in 'challenging authority'. While it is too early to interpret their behaviour as indicating terrorist activities, police are anxious to speak with her as soon as possible.

She seems to be following a set route and although any information received is welcome, Police are confident of tracking her down.

Information can be given at Garda Stations or by dialling the Garda Information Line.

Names have been excluded from this report to protect the youth concerned.

#### Giving to Receive

Mel, Balti and Gaz met in court. They decided that they needed to do something and to follow their dreams. Without much planning, they headed off – literally – in their caravan. They wandered for months, stopping off and hanging out wherever they went.

Not much is known about their journey. They will tell you that they were following their destiny and knew that they would find their purpose along the way. There is suggestion that drugs and drink were involved but they will not confirm or deny this.

They were, however, great readers and would talk endlessly into the night; but their destination seemed to be eluding them. Then came their night of great insight (or 'epiphany' as they like to call it). They realised that they needed to give something back before they would achieve their goal.

They donated their most precious things to a homeless family in a small town. That seemed to give them a great boost and they were very clear that they would do good in the world rather than just hang round.

They are now very successful business men and academics and believe that a good social conscience is essential to getting your life back on track.

They remained friends for life.

Social workers are seeking help in tracing a young homeless couple who are sleeping rough in the centre of town.

Social workers are very concerned about the health of a young woman who is heavily pregnant; they are also concerned for the welfare of her older partner. Both have travelled to the city from the countryside and do not seem to have any supports here.

They are reported to have taken shelter in a shed at the back of a small hote6 but the exact location is unknown. Social workers believe that the place might not be safe enough for the young woman to give birth to her child. Social workers were alerted to the case by a homeless worker who was unable to find them more stable accommodation due to the precarious nature of the rental market here. "I tried to get them to call into Brother Luke's but they said they were fine. They said that they didn't have a mobile phone, so I lost contact with them almost immediately", said Dano, Outreach Homeless Worker.

Senior social workers have revealed that they are very concerned for the mental health of the couple, with both having reported to friends that they have seen visions and heard voices. This may be due to substance use but social workers are not speculating at this point. A lot of people have been seen visiting the shed including, bizarrely, a choir, farmers and foreign royalty, with a celebratory atmosphere being created. This does not fit with their lack of support system, so authorities are concerned.

There is also an underlying child protection issue in that the man is significantly older than the woman. However, the young woman is not revealing the identity of the father of the child. Her aunt, the only family member who has seen the young woman recently, says that she is merely reporting that the child is a 'gift from God' and that her partner is a good man. They are engaged to be married but there is a lack of clarity about whether they are actually married. The man concerned "is not afraid of work. He can turn his hand to anything and is 'good with wood'", says her aunt, Betty.

The young woman is not recorded as having attended any health services and it is unclear if she has had any ante-natal checks. Her general health is unknown although her aunt has suggested that she is fine but "looks ready to drop!"

Senior Gardai, when asked about the case, said that their officers are visiting all derelict buildings and hope to resolve this matter quickly.

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