

Dead in Yellow

written by

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story by

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1 **EXT. TREE HOUSE - EVENING**

1

A small clearing sits among a dense crowd of trees.

Rays of sunlight burst through the forest canopy, illuminating the space.

A wooden sign marks the entrance. Painted in a childish font are the words "Keep Out!". Accompanying it, a skull and crossbones symbol serves warning. Faded over time, battered by the seasons.

Raised off the ground is a TREE HOUSE. Beside it on the forest floor, a PIRATE SHIP. Each made out of a random assortment of wooden planks and bits of tree. Both have been taken back by nature.

The ship flies a faded YELLOW FLAG marked with the words "M & D". Two childrens' handprints are stamped onto it. It struggles to flutter in the wind.

MATTHEW, 17, sits alone in the tree house on an old sofa cushion, rolling a CIGARETTE.

The sounds of nature disturbed by the tinny sound of MUSIC escaping his headphones. Beside him, a YELLOW BACKPACK and a FLASK.

His PHONE begins to ring, disrupting the song. It's from his Mum. He ignores it and it comes to an end. A notification pops up: Missed Call from Mum (5).

He finishes rolling, places it behind his ear and climbs down.

2 **EXT. STREET - EVENING**

2

Matthew walks back down a quiet street smoking a cigarette. His MUSIC remains on.

DANIEL (17), holding a skatebord, EMILY (17), and JESSICA (17) are walking towards Matthew on the opposite side of the street.

Jessica spots him first.

JESSICA
(excitedly)
Matt hey!

Matthew doesn't hear her.

DANIEL
Matt!
(beat)
Matthew!

(CONTINUED)

He jogs over the road cuts in front of Matthew. The others follow.

Matthew starts to look up.

MATTHEW
Fuck! You scared the shit out of me.

Jessica forces a slight laugh. He takes his earphones out.

Matthew and Daniel share a handshake.

DANIEL
Where you going man.

MATTHEW
Home, what about you?

DANIEL
We're- JESSICA
-We're off to the rec, wanna join?

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Yeah come on.

MATTHEW
I would but mum's in a mood.

DANIEL
(jokingly)
Fuck's sake, fine-
(walking off)
Be boring!

Matthew smirks and puts his earphones back in.

JESSICA
Bye Matt.

Matthew's family sits eating dinner around the dining room table.

His mum SARAH (44), his sister SYLVIA (15), and his dad MARK (44) each occupy a side of the table, with an empty place set for Matthew.

It's silent save for the scraping of cutlery. Sarah can't stop shifting angrily in her seat.

We hear the backdoor open and close. Sarah lets out an angry sigh.

SARAH
Where on earth have you been?

(CONTINUED)

Matthew ignores her and walks straight past.

SARAH (CONT'D)

No-

MATTHEW

But-

SARAH

No. Come have dinner.

He comes back and sits at the table, dumping his bag by his feet.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I don't know why we pay for that
phone you never seem to use it.
Where were you? We eat the same
time every week and you're never on
time.

Matthew picks up whatever plate of food is nearest and dumps a spoonful onto his plate. He doesn't care what he eats.

MATTHEW

Nowhere.

SYLVIA

Bet he was with his girlfriend.

MATTHEW

Shut up.

MARK

Hey.

Sylvia smirks.

Pause.

SARAH

You can tell us you know.

MATTHEW

I don't have a girlfriend.

SYLVIA

That's not what Jessica's sister
says.

MATTHEW

You don't know shit.

SARAH

Language!

MARK

Matthew.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH (CONT'D)

You don't speak to your sister like that, especially at the dinner table.

MARK

Alright Sarah.

SARAH

He knows he shouldn't be using language like that.

Everyone gets on with eating except Matthew, who plays with his food. Then, out of nowhere:

SARAH (CONT'D)

Now I think Jessica's a lovely girl. Why don't you ask her to prom? I'm sure it'd make her so happy.

Matthew ignores her.

MARK

Sarah, come on leave it. You know they're going as a group.

SARAH

I'm only saying. I just think it'd be nice. Where'd all this nonsense come from about going in groups, in our day you had to wait to be asked.

MARK

Yes, well you don't need to say, do you. I'm sure they'll naturally pair up anyway, don't push them.

SARAH

I'm not pushing them. I'm simply suggesting he asks Jessica so then, if Daniel and Emily pair up they won't be alone. Also he's 16 and never had a girlfriend that we know of, he needs to put himself out there.

MARK

It's none of our business-

SARAH

-of course it's out business, we're his parents. Don't lecture me on how to parent-

MARK

-here we go.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

What does that mean, you just can't
let anything slide can you.

They begin to argue but it's muffled as Matthew sits silently,
trying not to be there.

INT. MATTHEW'S HOUSE (MATTHEW'S BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Matthew lies in bed, staring blankly at the ceiling. His
earphones are in, MUSIC at the same loud volume as always.

His mind is empty. Numb.

We can faintly hear his parents muffled arguing, it's as if
they haven't stopped.

Matthew's phone lights up: an invite to a party from Jessica.
He doesn't acknowledge it.

The parents' argument reaches a crescendo and we hear a door
slam.

Matthew pulls a pillow out from under his head and smothers
his face with it.

CUT TO: BLACK

EXT. TREE HOUSE - DAY

Matthew and Daniel are sat in the pirate ship. Daniel's
sipping a CAN OF BEER, playing on his phone, and Matthew is
drinking from a FLASK, staring at the floor.

They sit in silence, disturbed only by the faint rustle of
leaves in the wind.

Daniel puts his phone away. He takes a deep breath in, bracing
himself.

DANIEL

So, um, the other night, I sort of
asked Emily to prom? Nothing's
changed, don't worry, we're still
going as a group. It was so sudden,
it just...felt right I guess.

Daniel looks at him pleadingly, half joking. Matthew looks
back at him.

MATTHEW

I mean, it was only a matter of
time. Don't worry about it. Glad
you finally stopped chickening out.

Daniel lets out a sigh of relief.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

It was amazing though man, we were making out and then, I just did it.

(pause)

Why don't you ask Jessica? At the party?

Matthew's mood flattens, he stares at the ground.

MATTHEW

Maybe. I might not even go.

DANIEL

To the party? Or prom.

Matthew shrugs.

MATTHEW

Both. Either.

DANIEL

Come on don't be like that man. You'll be fine once you're there.

Matthew takes a swig. Daniel thinks.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Do you remember our very first house party?

Daniel smiles at the memory. Matthew perks up, glad for the nostalgia, for the distraction.

MATTHEW

You got way worse than me.

DANIEL

I've never puked so much in my life.

MATTHEW

And you ran home naked.

DANIEL

Ah fuck no, don't remind me!

Daniel reels at the memory and playfully nudges Matthew.

Matthew lets a proper laugh slip out, for the first time in a while.

They both sit reminiscing as they fall to silence once more.

Matthew stands in front of the mirror in his prom suit, staring at himself blankly. Sarah's doing Matthew's tie.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

So you bring it up through the middle, then down through the loop and pull.

Sylvia is sat on the bed, not paying attention, texting on her phone.

SARAH (CONT'D)

There we are.

Sarah finishes tying Mathew's tie and begins to circle him, obsessively straightening out every crease she can, picking off fluff that isn't there.

Mark is stood in the door frame, awkwardly distant from the moment.

As Sarah fusses around Matthew, she's talking to no one in particular.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Look at my handsome little boy. Seems like only yesterday you started high school. Reminds me of John and Diane's wedding. Do you remember that Mark? He was dressed so smartly.

Matthew breaks eye contact with himself to look at Sylvia and roll his eyes. *What's she like.*

SARAH (CONT'D)

Mark go fetch the camera I need a photo of him while he's all dressed up.

Mark does so.

SARAH (CONT'D)

That colour does look good on you. I rang Jessica's mum to find out what colour her dress was, she was right when she said it'd suit you too.

MATTHEW

Wait what?!

SARAH

I felt bad for poor Jessica, at least now you'll look like you're going together.

Matthew looks at her in disbelief. Anger and frustration begin to take hold of him.

(CONTINUED)

MATTHEW

I'm not fucking asking her to prom,
why can't you leave me alone?

His language shocks Sarah.

SARAH

Don't you speak to me like that, I
just thought- *it'd be nice.*

Matthew's feelings reach boiling point and they burst out.

MATTHEW

-just get off my back, Jesus.

In a rage he takes his tie off and storms out of the room.
Pushing past Mark as he returns with the camera.

7

INT. MATTHEW'S HOUSE (MATTHEW'S BEDROOM) - CONTINUOUS

7

Matthew bursts in, taking off his tie and jacket, throwing
them onto his bed. He reaches under his bed and pulls out of a
bottle of vodka. Slumping down he takes one big gulp.

8

INT. HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

8

It's dark. Disco lights bring short glimpses onto the
characters of the room: a couple making out in the corner;
some friends chatting in a group at the back.

Daniel is stood with a GROUP OF FRIENDS.

We don't see any of that yet though, we're with Matthew. He's
tuned out. He's wearing a smart shirt, he's making an effort.

Jessica is sat on the sofa next to him, she's a bit too close
for comfort, dutch courage. Matthew's holding a bottle of
alcohol. It's almost empty.

Music pounds in the background as Jessica talks to, at,
Matthew.

JESSICA

-so like I know Amy wants this prom
to be memorable but I don't see why
she needs to hire a big car for it.
And she's going with James? She
hated James last week but now
they're back together. Honestly I
just can't keep up, I only learn it
all from Becky, she loves the
gossip.

While she's talking, Matthew looks around him and finds
Daniel.

(CONTINUED)

He stares at him, eyeing him up. Admiring him.

Daniel looks round and notices Matthew looking at him. He nudges his head towards Jessica. *Go on.*

Matthew sighs reluctantly, takes a sip, a deep breath in, and interrupts Jessica:

MATTHEW
-I'm going for a smoke,
(beat)
wanna come?

JESSICA
Oh, ok, yeah sure.

They get up and go to--

EXT. GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

They stand alone. Matthew's rolling himself a cigarette. His eyes flit between the cigarette and Jessica.

JESSICA
I'm glad we're matching by the way.
Takes out some of the stress. But
there's no pressure to label it or
anything, feel free to ask someone
else.

Jessica lets out a nervous laugh and looks at him, trying to see if he'll do just that or not.

Matthew lights his cigarette and takes a long drag.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Do you mind that we're matching?

Matthew shakes his head. *Don't be ridiculous.*

He offers her a drag. She accepts and faintly inhales.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Oh ok, cool. I guess I just didn't
want you to resent it - prom that
is - because we were matching. I
don't know I guess I-

He watches her, eyeing her up, he's thinking.

Matthew makes a decision. He leans in and kisses her. It only lasts a second though before they pull apart.

But then Jessica goes in again. It quickly becomes more intense, catching Matthew by surprise.

(CONTINUED)

Jessica drops the cigarette and puts her hands on his waist. Matthew doesn't know what to do with his.

Matthew decides to take control, to force it to work, to make it his decision.

He spins her around and pushes her against the wall. Matthew moves to kissing her neck. Jessica's hand slips round to the front of Matthew's trousers, undoing his belt. Matthew's jaw stutters ever so slightly with hesitation as her hand slips down into his trousers. He goes back to kissing her as Jessica's hand begins to move in circular motions. Matthew's eyes scrunch up in concentration.

Her hand pauses. Matthew pauses.

Jessica looks embarrassed.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Oh, sorry is this not working for you?

MATTHEW

(pulling away)
It's not you I just-

Their eyes meet. Matthew's show just how drunk he really is.

JESSICA

Wow, you really are drunk. Or, wait, don't tell me you're gay or something.

She laughs. Matthew finds it anything but funny.

Jessica considers she was right. Matthew briefly considers it too. She gasps at the realisation.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

(sympathetically)
Oh Matt,-

He doesn't know how to react, or what to say.

Confusion quickly turns to rage and it rises up inside of him.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Matt, I'm sorry, I didn't know. It's totally fine don't worry about it. You should've said.

MATTHEW

Stop don't.

He feels trapped, he doesn't like this. He panics and pushes past her and back into the house.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Matt wait-

(CONTINUED)

He doesn't hear her, he's already through the house. Making his way to the front door.

INT. HOUSE PARTY - CONTINUOUS

We hear the front door slam. Daniel looks up: Jessica is coming back inside, she sees Daniel and gestures to him: *I don't know*. He looks around for Matthew but can't see him.

Piecing two and two together he turns and leaves through the front door.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Faint drops of rain begin to fall as we follow Matthew down the street.

Beams of light from the street lights take it in turns to illuminate Matthew's face in the night.

Each glimpse we get of him reveals more and more his slow decent into despair.

He shakily tries to roll a cigarette but he gives up, he isn't in control of his hands.

His eyes are bleary. He marches on, angry and in the midst of panic.

Daniel appears in the distance, jogging behind him. Calling out to him:

DANIEL

Matt.

(beat)

Matthew!

(beat)

Wait!

He gets in front of Matthew and stops him.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

What happened back there?

Matthew just stares angrily into Daniels eyes, right on the verge of crying.

MATTHEW

Nothing happened. Just leave it.

Matthew tries to get past but Daniel stops him.

DANIEL

Look, I know something's going on.

(CONTINUED)

He places his hand on Matthew's shoulder. Matthew shakes it off.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Mate-

MATTHEW

-Look I don't know! Ok? I don't know what the fuck is going on.

(beat)

I feel shit all the fucking time, but at the same time I feel so numb and nothing at all.

(beat)

Kissing Jessica was supposed to be it right? It's what you wanted, it's what mum wanted...it's what I was supposed to do. But it didn't fucking work did it?

(angrily)

Why didn't it *fucking* work?

(beat; almost delirious)

I don't belong here Daniel, I don't belong here...What's wrong with me? I'm not like you, why can't I be like you. What's wrong with me?

(through tears)

What's wrong-*with me*.

Matthew breaks down, he can't get anymore words out and every emotion he's been holding in comes flooding out. His crying turns into sobbing. He can't stop.

Daniel's taken aback. He doesn't know what to do, he's never seen Matthew like this.

DANIEL

There's nothing wrong with you Matt, it's ok.

MATTHEW

Don't tell me it's ok. It's not ok.

Daniel panics and he grabs Matthew, hugging him as hard as he can.

DANIEL

(whispering)

It'll be ok.

Daniel's trying to convince himself of it just as much as he is Matthew.

Matthew slowly begins to calm down.

They separate and Matthew takes a couple of controlled breaths.

(CONTINUED)

They look at each other, their faces close.

In this brief moment Matthew feels at ease.

Matthew goes to kiss Daniel. He goes in softer than he did with Jessica. It feels different. It's more intimate. It means more.

But, Daniel immediately pulls back.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Woah woah.

Matthew tenses back up.

He half laughs, trying to recover the situation.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
C'mon man, you're drunk.

Matthew shoves Daniel off and pushes past him.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I'm sorry Matt, but, not me.

Matthew's tears come back and he begins to back away.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Wait, we can talk about it.

Turning round, Matthew slowly begins to jog away from the situation.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Matthew!

Speeding up into a full blown sprint, Matthew runs off into the night.

CUT TO: BLACK.

The bright morning sun penetrates the canopy, a beam of light falls onto: Matthew, curled in a tight ball on the forest floor, sheltered by the tree house.

He looks a mess: his hair is scruffy and full of leaves, his clothes are dirty, his knees muddy, and his clothes are still damp from the night before.

He slowly begins to wake up.

The sun blinds him and he holds his pounding head.

He rushes to his feet and scampers off to vomit.

(CONTINUED)

Coming back he checks his pockets, pulling out his phone he sees it's dead.

He lets out a deep sigh and begins the walk home.

MONTAGE START

Over a series of days, we see Matthew at the clearing in the forest, at home, and at various locations surrounding them.

He's entered a routine. Spending all day at the tree house, isolating himself from everyone. His movements are slow and slouched, he's in a pit of depression.

13 **INT. MATTHEW'S HOUSE (MATTHEW'S BEDROOM) - EVENING** 13

Matthew is curled up in a ball on his bed, staring at the wall.

We hear a knock on the door.

SARAH (O.S.)

Matthew.

(pause)

Matthew, Daniel came round today.

He says he needs to speak to you. I said you'd message him back.

He ignores her.

14 **OMITTED** 14

15 **EXT. COUNTRY LANE - EVENING** 15

Matthew's walking home, without music.

His phone rings, it's from Daniel. He ignores it.

16 **EXT. TREE HOUSE - DAY** 16

Matthew is sat in his usual spot rummaging through his bag.

DANIEL (O.S.)

Matt!

Matthew freezes.

Daniel is stood at the bottom of the tree house looking up.

DANIEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Matthew I know you're up there.

(pause)

Come on man don't do this.

(CONTINUED)

Matthew doesn't reply, he sits frozen in place.

DANIEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Fine!

Daniel walks off and Matthew relaxes.

17 **INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT**

17

Matthew's showering, standing with a hunched back, facing the wall. His skin is red from the boiling hot water. His knuckles are red raw. He's crying.

18 **EXT. TREE HOUSE - DAY**

18

Matthew runs his fingers along old markings on the wood of the pirate ship, tracing old memories.

19 **INT. MATTHEW'S HOUSE (DINING ROOM) - MORNING**

19

Sarah, Sylvia, and Mark are sat round the table eating quietly. There's a place set for Matthew.

Sarah looks to Mark to complain.

SARAH

He can't just miss dinner like this, where is he.

MARK

Leave him Sarah.

Sylvia murmurs under her breath.

SYLVIA

Maybe if you tried asking him what's wrong.

Sarah looks to Mark.

Mark nods.

20 **EXT. TREE HOUSE - DAY**

20

Matthew steps in the pirate ship and sits at the helm.

MONTAGE END

21 **INT. MATTHEW'S BEDROOM - DAY**

21

Matthew is curled up in a ball facing the wall.

(CONTINUED)

We hear a knock at the door. Matthew ignores it.

MARK (O.S.)
Matthew.

No answer.

MARK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(assertively)
Matthew open up.
(beat)
I'm coming in.

He swings open the door and enters.

Mark takes in the room, it's a mess: covered in empty packets of crisps; an empty bottle of vodka; dirty plates etc...

Mark crosses the room and throws open the curtains.

MARK (CONT'D)
Be ready in 15 minutes, we're going out.

It's raining and Matthew and Mark are parked up somewhere, sat in silence. Matthew's staring out the window, mind blank as ever.

There's empty takeaway packaging in the console, Matthew's is still full.

It takes Mark several attempts to start the conversation before he's finally able to find the right words.

MARK
Are the chips alright?

No response.

MARK (CONT'D)
Sylvia told us what was going on. Look, no one knows who they are at your age Matthew. You're still finding out what you want, how you feel, how to act. It's as if you're fighting the world, all on your own. Screaming for your own bit of independence and no one's listening. I can't imagine what it must be like to fight for your own place in the world, as well as fighting yourself.
(pause)
Have you spoken to him?

(CONTINUED)

Matthew shakes his head. Mark sighs.

MARK (CONT'D)

Daniel's still you're best friend
you know. He's worried about you.
Now I can't pretend I know how you
feel, but I imagine you're feeling
lost, and angry, but likely shame.
Shame at who you really are and
what that might mean.

Matthew's staring out of the window, embarrassed, ashamed,
trying to hide the fact that he might be crying.

MARK (CONT'D)

There's worse things to feel than
shame Matthew. To feel artificial, a
life of not being who you truly
are, is a life not worth living,
wasted. Too many years are spent by
people acting how they think they
should.

(pause)

I want you to be the happiest you
can be and I need you to know that
I will always protect you. That you
will always have a place to call
home. Now I know your mother and I
don't make home the calmest place
to be, but, you are loved Matthew.
And you will always be safe there.

Matthew looks appreciatively at his father, holding back
tears. Mark looks back with love and sympathy, and worry.

Matthew starts to slowly eat his food.

The gap between them is a lot closer to being bridged.

Matthew stands in front of the mirror in just a towel wrapped
around his waist. His prom suits hangs neatly on his wardrobe
behind him.

He stares at himself, then his prom suit, and back to himself
again. His eyes start to gently tear up.

He collapses down onto the floor, slumped against the wall and
just lightly cries. He doesn't have the energy to sob anymore,
he just lets the tears drip out of his eyes.

He stares at himself in the mirror.

He can't be bothered to fight anymore.

24 **INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING**

24

Matthew stands awkwardly in the centre of the living room as Sarah rushes around him taking photos on the family camera.

He goes along with it, smiling for the camera.

He's much more present in the moment, joining in with the family antics.

Matthew sends Mark a faint smile. *Thank you.* Mark sends it back.

SARAH
Sylvia go stand next to your
brother, I need one of the both of
you.

MARK
Are you sure you don't want a lift?

Sylvia sighs and grudgingly stands next to her brother. They exchange a glance and appease their mother, smiling for the shot.

MATTHEW
It's fine Dad, thanks.

25 **EXT. MATTHEW'S HOUSE (FRONT DOOR) - EVENING**

25

Matthew leaves his house dressed in his prom suit holding his YELLOW BACKPACK.

He closes the front door and immediately the facade he'd put up for his family deflates.

His phone vibrates, he checks it.

DANIEL
(text)
Are you coming tonight?

He ignores it, turns, and leaves.

26 **EXT. TREE HOUSE - EVENING**

26

Matt sits in his same spot in the tree house.

His YELLOW BACKPACK is sat next to him and he's sipping gently from his FLASK.

He stares off into the distance, something moves into our line of sight, just behind Matthew. He doesn't notice.

Gradually it's revealed: Daniel is standing there, dressed in his prom suit too, looking up at Matthew.

THE END