Creative Writing Draft- The Buckets' Obiter Dicta

Countless expiries have I presided over in the 4.5 billion years of my existence. I have seen everything which came from dust return to dust since the dawn of life, but I only took an interest in life 200,000 years ago. My bemusement was only kick-started by the appearance of a species that possesses a unique ability- the desire to optimise their own lives and more importantly, that of other Homo sapiens. Any educated chimp can make the observation that this desire overrides the primeval instincts of evading me in vain and reproducing, hoping that their genes remain in the gene pool. No organism really gave a damn about another one's wellbeing for eons, it amazed me how the apathetic steering wheel of evolution was jammed in only 200 millennia, and despite the innumerable amounts of relationship breakdowns humans have to endure, attempting to rectify their psychological predicaments is an act worthy of admiration in its own right.

An old man wrinkled with age appeared at my doorsteps lately. He should have been mine seven decades ago, in one of his routine patrols bombarded by sniper fire if I could recall accurately, but by Fate's request, I relented. Everyone, even me, is equally vulnerable to Fate, and Fate gave me a restraining order to keep away from him until he's in such frail and lonely form because he knew that I can be bit of a loose cannon, putting certain people out of their misery before their time is up. It was a shame, he deserved to meet an honourable end fitting for a soldier. I'm not saying that people dying is a good thing just because I want a few more souls for company in my lonesome job, quite the contrary, I'm fed up with filling in so much damned paperwork. Instead, the end of his life can only be described as pathetic, he was an abandoned baby that they leave at fire stations, a burden for his family who would not do him the favour of a last pre-mortem visit. I heard his requests, earnest pleas for me to take him home with me. Since I can do nothing to help him, he even decided to speeds things up a little by his own accord by asking a part-timer for cigarettes. He was gallant enough to defy Fate! Then again, he survived cold-blooded torture after being captured so one would expect him to be ready for anything, even for me. I believe that he intended his intrepid behaviour as a role model to the young lass, a message for her to fear nothing in life in return for her kindness. In a society so disconnected from the horrors of war and disasters, bravery isn't an easy thing to come by, even bravery to face everyday things like missed deadlines, relation breakdowns and financial hardships.

Once again by the meddling Providence, I was compelled to spare Frank Slovak, a middle aged Outback dweller. He did not made the world a better place in his existence, quite the contrary, he made it slightly worse. Then, it's not up to me to judge people like him. All of the deceased have an appointment with me, good or evil, and I'm not entitled to judge the mortals by their ephemeral existence on Earth, as per the protocol I have to adhere to. I believe I would be doing him a disservice by keeping him alive as a quadriplegic, but he's got another score of years to go, as I have been told. I sense his wife's hidden desire to “retire” Frank from years ago. Frank once made her feel helpless since they walked down the aisle 17 years ago, not that she can avoid it. Now it's the perfect chance for Mrs Slovak to project her past self onto Frank, who similarly could do nothing to avoid his tractor accident. Textbook pseudoscience case study, you may say. I agree, but what makes this special is Mrs Slovak used her nagging powers, usually an infinite source of relationship derailments, to facilitate Frank's emotional thawing. To fully reintegrate himself back into society and maximise the quality of his last 20 years, it is critical that Frank's empathy thrives and that he develops not only the needed competences to face the “crap life chucks at him”, as he would word it, but ways to spread happiness for the benefit of everyone to redeem himself for causing so much unhappiness.

Of course, there will always be souls that I would receive even less kindly than Frank. One of the lowlife that I expected to meet after he overdoses himself, named Shane, would be one of these people. The delinquent firmly believed how an adrenaline-filled, or narcotics-filled, life is preferable to a simple yet mundane life lived out in comfort. “Live fast, die young”, as he words it. This philosophy was his personal motto, so it came as no surprise to me that a burst of impulse costed him his life. Instinctively a mother would defend her offspring to keep her alleles in the gene pool, and Shane triggered this instinct in a fit of indignant idiocy. Nothing to look into in his life, but his surroundings are MUCH more interesting. I couldn't but ask myself “How did he end up in a relationship in the first place?” The unlucky lass' previous marriages were not the most successful, she voluntarily allowed her past to influence her future. She crossed the Rubicon when she surrendered herself to Fate, gave up all hope on a better life. I may as well have possessed her life, the sole thing keeping her from thinking of reaching for the pills was the concern for her offsprings' wellbeing. She was weak both physically and mentally, yet she resisted coming to me, the easy way out, choosing to confront her issues with what little courage she could muster for the benefit of her daughters. Yet it seems that she needs even more valour and determination than she exhibits right now to deal with this problem permanently so that she will not end up with people like Shane again. I'm not sure if she has much more left in her, however she's certainly worthy enough to have bursts of bravery working in her favour, you never know.

Just like how I cannot exist without life, the quality of resilience born of human suffering could never have existed without the presence of human suffering in the first place. Similarly, there are no easy way to prevent suffering caused by a natural disaster, nor is there an easier way to reduce its impact other than making adequate preparations to tough it out. Mr Moreton, the veteran, would never have lived a truly wholesome life had he not decided to live the remainder of his life in full despite the solitude he will face, nor would Frank make an attempt recover from his physical injuries as well as his social handicaps. In addition, the mother and the daughters would continue suffer under the tyranny of Shane, had the mother not decided to retire him. Misery can also be described as tiered, as there is always someone worse off than you, no matter how dire your situation seems. No exceptions. Being dreaded by everything that lives and breathes, I found out how my presence can spontaneously give lowly mortals more reason to appreciate life even though I'm the one taking it away.

Creative Writing: Reflective Analysis

**Form/Audience:** The tales presented in Cate Kennedy's anthology *Like a House on Fire* have a special focus on the hidden dysfuctional relationship that is more prevalent in Australian society than the public believes it to be. Therefore, to base my creative writing piece on Kennedy's writing style, I envisioned “The Bucket's Obiter Dicta” as three of Kennedy's stories' recounts, focusing on the aftermaths and preludes to the main storylines of *Laminex and Mirrors,* *Flexion* and *Seventy-two Derwents.* An introduction and conclusion were provided, with the conclusion serving to inform the reader about the numerous ways of coping with depression. It was intended as a motivational story told to young, ergo more psychologically vulnerable, people suffering from the fallout of relationship breakdowns such as depression: “no matter how dire, there is always someone worse”. I attempted to appeal to this target demographic by including psychological analysis in my narration so that people fighting with depression may understand the causes of their unhappiness. My piece seeks to dissect the personae in Kennedy's stories to make their circumstances more relatable for people combating depression. This would facilitate their battle against depression, for the first stage of solving any problem is acceptance.

**Language:** The title makes reference to the legal concept of a judge's unofficial verdict in a trial, and further elaboration within the story delivers a message about how unviable it is to judge people based upon their unfortunate circumstances, even for a powerful being like Death: “it's not up to me to judge people like him”. Death's narration is consistently formal, however it can be blunt and mildly profane for emphasis and as a callback to Kennedys' method of drawing attention to a topic. The decision to have Death as a bystander narrator was inspired by *The Book Thief*, making all included psychological analyses seem casual in nature and hence less daunting for the audience to absorb. Short phrases like “no exceptions” as well as fourth wall breaches such as “you know” and “worse than you” were added as emphatic elements used to mix up the pace, just like how Kennedy altered paragraph size to herald the development and change of mood in her stories.

**Purpose:** The purpose of my creative piece is to demonstrate the many forms suffering can take in everyday relationships, and how we can make an effort to minimise its impact on our lives. It depicts suffering arising from various sources, accepting Tolstoy's dogma “All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” I sought to highlight the beauty of suffering and elaborating on how a commendable quality, perseverance, can be derived from human suffering. Through a detailed description of the aftermaths of relationship breakdowns, I intend to inspire my audience to not despair in face of depression and have the willpower to find ways to cope with it.

**Connect:** My creative piece had Death looking over the plot of three short stories occuring in the same Kennedy universe and providing social commentary regarding the causes of unhappiness. Core themes including suffering, resilience and rehabilitation were subtly hinted during the detailed recounts, and then explicitly mentioned in the final concluding paragraph as a message to the potentially depressed target audience. Death's narration focuses on the fallout resulting from Kennedy's stories' endings rather than the plot per se, comparing with her descriptions of multiple relationships in jeopardy that resulted from an earlier, unseen event.

**Evaluate:** I feel I should give more limelight to a crucial motif, positive relationship, in order to guide the audience in rebuilding their own broken relationships. The greatest challenge encountered while drafting my piece was relating with dysfunctional relationships, for I had neither experienced, nor witnessed any. Building on Kennedy's stories about poor relationships, I compensated my lack of knowledge by looking up psychological concepts like depression and the 5 stages of grief in order to effectively target my piece towards depreseed youth.