



An Actor's Life - A Short Story

Duncan Whitehead

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It is Oscar night and Hollywood holds its breath to see if Sir Michael Brookes not only wins the best actor but also the best supporting actor award, which would take his tally of Academy Award wins to an unprecedented six....meanwhile his biggest fan and fellow actor Terry Sparkes watches the ceremony alone in his dingy London flat unaware that this evening will change his life forever.....but have Terry's and Sir Michael's paths crossed before?

A short story of approximately 7,500 words.

An Actor's Life - A Short Story Details

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Author : Duncan Whitehead

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From Reader Review An Actor's Life - A Short Story for online ebook

Uvi Poznansky says

Success fades into oblivion, and failure--if used cleverly to fire your ambition--to eventual success. This story presents Terry Sparkes, a has-been actor whose face no longer adorns the billboards. For as long as he can remember, he has felt the need to play a role. Most of all, he pretends to himself these days, thinking himself a celebrity despite that fact that he is no longer in the public eye. "At least he was still working and that, according to Terry Sparkes at least, constituted success.

The story is set over the course of a Oscar night, during which Hollywood would give recognition to its finest thespians, and one of the contenders for whom Terry and others across Britain are rooting for is one of the world's greatest actors: Sir Michael. His name is in the limelight, much in opposition to his fan, Terry Sparkes, who has fallen into the shadows of obscurity. It is from there that he hopes to get the vicarious thrill of success. As the ceremony plays on his TV, his mind flashes back to his own past, back in the time he has won a role in the BBC's most popular soap opera. "Everywhere he went he was stopped in the street and asked for his autograph... His star was shining bright." Until, that is, the soap opera was axed, and Terry can barely find work anymore, because of having been typecast by it. Perhaps he should not have accepted that role in the first place, because it reduced him from being a character actor to a one-dimensional 'bad-boy'.

The author, Duncan Whitehead, invites us to compare the path of the two actors. They are similar in every way, so the only thing that separates them is their luck: "They were both sixty years of age and each had begun acting at roughly the same time... Both actors were tall men and they each had striking features, coupled with neatly cropped dark hair."

As the Oscar ceremony comes to its height, Terry Sparkes sustains his attention by snorting some white powder. Will Terry come to realize that his meteoric rise inevitably brought about his fall? Will he hear Sir Michael's acceptance speech, upon receiving the golden statuette? Will he realize that it includes a tribute to one special man? Will he reflect upon the connection between the rise of one of them and the decline of the other--or is this reflection left, in the end, only to us?

Five stars

Andra Weis says

<http://openbooksociety.com/article/an...>

An Actor's Life is my first foray into the writings of Duncan Whitehead. This was a very quick read (under an hour) and I have probably pondered longer on what to write than how long it took for me to read.

I really enjoyed Whitehead's writing style. I was engaged and entertained throughout. As well, the story felt well rounded with a beginning, middle and end that fit together. Generally when I read a short story, I do not get closure on the story or feel like too much is left out....but in this instance....it is definitely not the case.

The flashback from Terry's days gone by was interesting and I loved how it was brought back in to play at

the very end.

I can say with no hesitation, I would definitely not want to be an actor. What they go through to even gain a modicum of success seems very difficult on one's self esteem, as can be seen by the fate of all the cast members that Terry worked with.

A well written short story which will definitely have me seeking out more of Mr. Whiteheads stories.

Ionia says

I loved this. This was one of those stories where you should be able to kind of see what is coming at the end, but somehow you don't until you actually get there. As one can expect from this author, the characters are quirky and the story is well written and intelligent.

You can't help but feel a bit sorry for the main character until he commits the ultimate social no no to another actor and it backfires in his face. He is one of those characters that you know you shouldn't like, but you just can't help it.

This ties into the book by the same author brilliantly. If you have not read Mr. Whitehead's work yet, you might want to give this a try. I loved it, and I love the Gordonston ladies dog walking club as well.

This is short, entertaining and will make you laugh. I recommend it.

OpenBookSociety.com says

<http://openbooksociety.com/article/an...>

An Actor's Life

By Duncan Whitehead

ISBN13: 9780982964910

Author's Website: <http://www.duncanwhiteheadauthor.com>

Review brought to you by OBS reviewer Andra

Synopsis:

It is Oscar night and Hollywood holds its breath to see if Sir Michael Brookes not only wins the best actor but also the best supporting actor award, which would take his tally of Academy Award wins to an unprecedented six....meanwhile his biggest fan and fellow actor Terry Sparkes watches the ceremony alone in his dingy London flat unaware that this evening will change his life forever.....but have Terry's and Sir Michael's paths crossed before?

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Review:

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Rebecca says

Although this short story isn't an 'edge of your seat' mystery or crime drama, I really enjoyed the irony.

The cleverly inserted references to the author's novel, are brilliant. I now hope to read The Gordonston Ladies Dog Walking Club very soon.

With my being an author who has written and published a short story, I know just how hard it is to write one.

I highly recommend this dark little tale.

Rebecca Scarberry (Scarberryfields on Twitter)

Alana Woods says

This short story is cleverly tied to the author's novel The Gordonston ladies dog walking club. The focus is towards Oscar night and one of the nominees for best actor in his role as one of the characters in a film adapted from the phenomenally-successful novel—you guessed it, The Gordonston ladies dog walking club. The story is carried by Terry Sparkes, a has-been actor who admires and envies the nominated Sir Michael Brookes. Unbeknownst to him he's the person instrumental in Brookes becoming the top actor he is today.

The story is terrifically told with the crescendo towards the denouement steadily building.

Well worth reading and not dependent on having read the novel, although it may well spur you to do so.

Sheila says

The American Oscars are on TV and the unknown English actor is hoping a rather more famous English actor will garner an award. There's a nice touch of name-dropping and name-twisted in this short, neat tale, together with an all-too-plausible storyline of drama and soap.

Oscar glamor contrasts brightly with an old has-been watching pay-per-view in the small hours of an English morning, a contrast that carries through to plausible hopes and lost dreams, and then to the story of that failed actor's life. But success and failure are closer together than they seem. The old man, for all his losses, has achieved most of his dreams, and just one remains.

There's a sting in this tale that makes it well worth the read. And references to the author's longer novel (fictionally turned into a movie) blend perfectly into the mix of real and imagined Oscar delights. A short tale filled with contrasts, sad and funny, sweet and sour, all perfectly combined.

Disclosure: I've not read the novel, but I certainly enjoyed this free short story.

Kim (Wistfulskimmies Book Reviews) says

This is the story of Terry Sparkes. A failed actor, he is reduced to catching glimpses of his hero, Sir Michael Brookes on TV. Tonight he is watching him at the Oscars, hoping he will win the double of best supporting actor, and best actor...

Right off the bat I will admit I find short stories really hard to review, its so difficult to give a quick synopsis without giving away the entire story! That being said, on with the review. This was a lovely quirky little tale. It made a passing nod to Duncan's full length novel, 'The Gordonston Ladies Dog Walking Club', which I have also read and enjoyed. This story had the same offbeat, slightly flawed characters, and the same vein of dark humour running through it. I would recommend this as an excellent introduction to Duncan's work. A nice, light easy read over a cup of coffee.

Madhukara says

normal story where u can see the ending much earlier.

Steve Cohen says

This is a tight little story with a terrific twist at the end that's worthy of an episode from The Twilight Zone. It tells of a moderately successful actor who recalls his whole career while preparing to watch the Oscars on TV. The author writes very well, including seamless teasers for his novel, The Gordonston Ladies Dog Walking Club. In this story, that book has already been made into an Oscar-caliber film. It's a clever device

by a writer worth paying attention to. And since this short story is free, it's a nice way to sample this author's estimable goods before you plunk down cash for his longer work. Well done, Duncan. Highly recommended.

Jeannie Walker says

How many of us have crossed paths with the rich and famous? I can honestly say I have been fortunate enough to cross paths with several rich and very famous people. I can also honestly say I have God to thank for granting me my wishes and blessing me so many ways.

In this short story -Terry Sparkes is quite the actor. I also think the author, Duncan Whitehead is quite a talented writer in that he was witty enough to mention his other novel "The Gordonston Ladies Dog Walking Club" in this one. In an "Actor's Life - A Short Story" the main character is an amateur, but he is smart enough to follow a successful actor in Hollywood. Not only is Sir Michael Brooks a renown actor - he is also the richest. Little does Terry know his life is about to change forever.

Riches and Fame! How many of us wish for this, but so often never reach our goal - maybe it's because we quit trying and just give up on our dreams. I believe it is the irony to a lot of people in a lot of situations. But that doesn't mean we cannot be happy with what we achieve in our lifetime.

I hope this author wins an Oscar for his performance. He has my vote and so does this short story that is witty and very well crafted.

Jeannie Walker- Award Winning Author "Fighting the Devil" - A True Story of Consuming Passion, Deadly Poison, and Murder

Fighting the Devil: A True Story of Consuming Passion, Deadly Poison, and Murder

Gaele says

Written with the same style and offbeat darker sense of humor, Whitehead has crafted a short story of intersecting lives: two actors, one famous one not so. While Terry Sparkes is anxiously awaiting his own private Oscar viewing, the fickle hand of fate is highlighted in the contrast of the two careers.

Duncan Whitehead has managed to cleverly integrate his full length mystery, The Gordonston Ladies Dog Walking Club in the Oscar story, and utilizes his humor and skill to craft a story that is the perfect accompaniment to savor with a cup of tea. A quick and clever short story that gives a nice feel for the author's style, and should encourage you to read more of his quirky characterizations that can be found in his novel.

I received an eBook copy from the author for purpose of honest review. I was not compensated for this review: all conclusions were my own responsibility.

Boyko Ovcharov says

This short story is more or less about everyone's life on this planet, as it reviews some common existential problems of a modern-day person, who wants to achieve something big, to become somebody and enjoy the

'cheers' of others. Apparently, the protagonist, has got a certain talent, but somehow does not quite manage to develop his full potential; or possibly - he is never in the right time, in the right place, and never makes the right choices. Whether the latter is accidental, we should judge for ourselves somehow. The reasons behind this sad storyline are presented in a rather humorous and amusing way.

The plot is very natural, though with sufficient unexpected twists and surprises, together with a pinch of black irony. The style is really superb and enjoyable. Characters are quite realistic and oftentimes, allegedly, refer to real-life celebrities and events, without actually incurring any insult or overdone parody.

In essence, the moral of this narrative is nicely interwoven into the plot, so that the reader could arrive at it without any additional 'push'. The author definitely implies some interconnectedness between humans, their talents, relationships, value systems and sacrifices on the way to success. The key word here is perhaps success, but at what cost? Are we prepared to bear the cost indeed? Whatever the cost?

On the other hand, what are our priorities: family, career, friendship, success, fame? Could we always find the right balance between all those goals?

In a way, it is a 'soul-searching' exercise, both from a Shakespearean perspective and a 21st-century viewpoint. Nevertheless, one thing is for sure, whoever is not afraid of being sincere with themselves and wants to be a better person or more successful professional in the long-run, should read this great literary work.

Graham Downs says

Hmm....

This isn't a bad story, but it's wasted, because there are lots of problems with it.

It tells of an Oscar-nominated actor, Michael Brookes, and his "biggest fan", fellow actor Terry Sparkes. All Terry wants to do is meet Michael, shake his hand, but they're on opposite continents.

There's very little showing, and a whole lot of telling, in this book. Plus, the author seems to think an ellipsis consists of a random number of fullstops, anything more than five (it's exactly three. No more, no less. Plus an extra fullstop if the unfinished thought ends the sentence).

It turns out that one of the characters is gay, and, when mentioning this character's boyfriend, the author puts the word "boyfriend" in inverted commas. Almost as if a man having a boyfriend is a strange thing, which makes me feel like the author is a bit homophobic himself. I'm not going to pass judgement on that, but if you really feel that way, then why go there to begin with?

There are a few mildly amusing theatrical jokes, and a few more which I got the impression were meant to be funny, but weren't. Maybe I'd have appreciated them more if I had a better understanding of pop culture, but I don't think so.

All in all, I'd give this story a miss. What a pity.

Gippy Adams says

Wow! There's so much power in this short story, it blows me away. Duncan Whitehead is a great writer and

this story *An Actor's Life* is a quick read. You will want to put the time aside to read it through in one sitting once you meet Terry Sparkes, the actor. First I liked him. Then I disliked him. Then I felt sorry for him. My emotions were everywhere. It's amazing that a writer can create that much emotional turmoil in a short story. As a wordy person who has to edit a lot, I feel this is truly a gift.

Why I think this story is a good read for everyone who breaths on this earth, no matter your path, is because there are many life lessons in this story. Of course, it depends on where you are in your life what you take from it. Throughout, Terry Sparkes is a huge fan of another actor, Sir Michael Brookes who is up for two more Oscars. He, of course, is rooting for Mr. Brookes and can't wait until Oscar night.

The ending will throw you I'm sure. I love to guess the endings along the way not just of books, but also with crime shows. Sometimes I'm right on, but this time I have to say I was shocked. What a clever ending.

This book has prompted me to definitely place Mr. Whitehead on my list of reading material. I highly recommend this short story. Don't miss it!
