

PRIVILEGED

Written by

Anthony Moriarty

A packed audience bustles. Side stage, Tony scans the crowd. He notices SORCHA typing on her phone. **SUPER:** @SORCHASOCIAL / Insta & X Followers... 231,141 / The Influencer. He smiles.

Then, across the room, Tony gives a slight nod to MAGS, alt style, sitting with two pints. **SUPER:** Mags Hutton @... / No Online Presence / Their Choice. An MC intros Tony... *

Tony steps to the mic. **SUPER:** @TONYCADZDESENUITS / Insta & X followers... 4,129 / A Comic on the Rise. The crowd quietens.

TONY

I had one of those upbringings
where violence meant, like,
physical violence, not mean tweets.
Privileged, I know.

(waits for laughter)

I mean, our parents really prepared
us for the future. Like I was on an
intermittent fasting programme
before it was trendy. I mean, yeah,
the haters called it *starvation*...
but what the hell do social workers
know about dieting? *

A BIGGER LAUGH. Mags cackles, hard! His biggest fan.

TONY (CONT'D)

The social workers were great.
Really *hands-on*. By eight, I still
couldn't ride a bike. But I could
spell fancy words like: *paedophile*.

(laughs)

Sink or swim, best way to learn
they say. Turns out, the deep end
was a court transcript.

SORCHA (19) laughs as she records. Tony notices. Grins.

TONY (CONT'D)

Learned *Manslaughter* by nine,
although Da taught me that one the
hard way... Man, I miss my Mum.

(waits for *Oooohs*)

What? Oh. You thought my Da killed
my Ma!? That's dark. You filled in
the blanks there. Horrible fuckers. *

(more laughter)

Nah. Ma's an independent woman. No
chance is she letting a man put her
six feet under. Done that herself.
Heroin overdose. Legend.

(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)

(reminiscent)

She died doing what she loved.

(waits, then blunt)

Ruining Christmas.

A MASSIVE LAUGH AND SOME GASPS. Some people shake their heads -- *too far...* others are in hysterics. Sorcha cups her face while she films. Mags claps in delight. Tony grins.

2

INT. CELLAR BAR - NIGHT - LATER

2

Mags sits away from the audience at the bar while another comic entertains. Tony struts to her, elated -- *What ya think?* She gives a subtle nod -- *It's good.* He sits, proud.

MAGS

No wonder you hate Christmas.

TONY

Embellished that one a little.
Wasn't Christmas. (grins) Was my
birthday. (beat) Surprised my Ma
hasn't haunted me yet, invoking her
for the lols.

MAGS

Knowing her, she'd sooner haunt you
for shite jokes. She'd be proud.

TONY

Hope so.
(sees Sorcha approach)
Shit. How do I look?

MAGS

Like you're lucky you're funny.

Sorcha bee-lines to Tony, ignoring Mags. Phone out.

SORCHA

I just wanted to say your comedy
made me think... and laugh.

TONY

...That's the aim.

They hold eye contact -- *a little smirk between the two.*

SORCHA

Can I get your handle for my story?

Eager, Tony stops short of saying: **SUPER:@TonyCadzDeseNuts.**

TONY

Can I type it? Surname is tricky.

He types. Mags feels like a third wheel. Returns the phone.

SORCHA

See you around.

Tony watches her walk off. Sorcha smiles, glancing back.

MAGS

What the..? Guess she's into lads
who scribble jokes on Rizla paper.

TONY

Ha. That was Sorcha McCallan.

Mags looks at him. *Who?* Tony plays a TRAILER: *GENZ-SASS NEWS! POLITICS! OPINION!* Sorcha in a studio with HETTIE & CHARLIE.

SORCHA (V.O)

*Let's overcome the feeling of
powerlessness and reclaim our
voice. No more self-censorship.*

MAGS (O.S.)

The fuck are these dickheads?

Single vid of Charlie staring down the barrel of the camera--

CHARLIE (V.O.)

*We are about representation.
Diversity. Inclusion.*

"Pffft" Mags has enough. DING. Sorcha's story. Tony's GIG and PROFILE. Looks at Mags buzzing. She locks his phone. *Enough.*

TONY

Necessary evil, I'm afraid.

MAGS

Any news of the fresher gig?

TONY

(big smile)

I got it.

(off Mags' elation)

Officially a booked comic! Nice
fee, so can finally throw you a few
quid for crashing on your couch.

MAGS

You sure you won't go spending it
all buying pints of fucking
Kombucha for "Miss GenZ-Sass."

Tony's shrugs -- *hopefully*. They laugh.

3

INT. MODERN APARTMENT - MORNING

3

SLEEK PODCAST SET UP in the corner. NEON LIGHTS: "GENZ-SASS."
Merch mugs, tees. A brand. Individual insta video set up.
Sorcha lies on her bed laughing as she rewatches the gig. She
zooms in on Tony's grin, admiring him. The door BURSTS OPEN!

CHARLIE, 23, & HETTIE, 21, outfits whisper wealth. **SUPER:**
CHARLIE & HETTIE | Insta & X Followers... 139,0363 | Campus
VIPS AND Two-thirds of... @GENZ-SASS | Insta and X Followers
| 1,133,021 | Royalty. Phones are constantly in their hands.

CHARLIE

OH MY GOD, Sorcha! Your Insta
story. Damage control ASAP! Let's
craft a video and take a stand.

Sorcha looks up, confused. Charlie flashes his phone with
Sorcha's story of Tony's set. She laughs it off.

SORCHA

Against... what exactly?

HETTIE

That comic's systemic attack on the
working class.

Sorcha glances at her phone. What?

CHARLIE

They have no voice on campus. We
are their voice.

SORCHA

Aren't your parents like surgeons?

CHARLIE

I have a cousin who works at Tesco.

SORCHA

That's not really--

HETTIE

Sorcha. You've just associated
yourself with someone punching down
on the marginalised. And it's not
just ethics, it's also about--

CHARLIE

Controversy--

HETTIE

And engagement.

CHARLIE

The new GenZ-Sass line is ready to drop. We've been waiting for a viral moment to cash in. This is it. I mean, who's going to pay for our apartments while we study medicine?

SORCHA

His jokes are clearly his lived experience.

CHARLIE

Babe. You already lost followers.

SUPER: @SORCHASOCIAL / Insta & X Followers... 231,141. Drops to... 226,413 and creeping down. Sorcha's shrugs... so? Hettie and Charlie look to one another, a change in tone.

HETTIE

If you don't define the narrative, someone else will. And if they frame you as supporting his rhetoric, it affects GenZ-Sass too.

CHARLIE

Unless... you're okay to risk being one of the next viral call outs?

*

Sorcha's worst fear.... Sorcha gulps. They have her. Sorcha goes to push back but squirms under the pressure.

4

INT. UNIVERSITY CAFE - DAY

4

Busy bustle. Tony reads a comment: '*Hilarious and distinct.*'
SUPER: Insta & X following 10,325 / A Somebody. Mags joins Tony with her lunch. The only student not on her phone.

ACROSS THE CAFE: Sorcha, Charlie and Hettie sit. Sorcha catches Tony's eye but instantly looks away. Ashamed.

On his phone, a VIDEO of his gig pops up. Sorcha is a talking head featuring Hettie and Charlie in the background. Tony's flattered. SPLIT SCREEN: TONY'S REACTION AND SORCHA'S VIDEO.

SORCHA (ON PHONE)

This is first-year University student Tony Cadogan.

BOOOM! @TONYCADZDESENUITS appears on the screen. He grins.

SORCHA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

Tony thinks it's funny to poke fun at the working-class community, portraying them as heroin addicts and violent criminals who neglect their kids, further perpetuating outdated, tired stereotypes.

His smile fades as it turns into sheer terror.

SORCHA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

Tony has created an unsafe environment on campus. Where his bigotry ends, can't say, but today, Tony, you are facing *CONSEQUENCES!*

Bustle falls to an EERIE SILENCE. Tony's eyes dart. Everyone on their phones, typing. INCESSANT VIBRATE DING! DING! DING! He picks up his phone, afraid to look. Text bubbles appear.

AVALANCHE OF HATE: SUPER: 'Ejit cosplaying working class for laughs' 'Seriously problematic that he thinks this is funny.'
'Playing victim for attention. Sick.' 'Get off our campus!!'

Tony is about to puke. The buzzing intensifies. Mags notices something's off, touches his arm - *you okay?* A panic attack threatens. He looks up to find Charlie & Hettie towering.

CHARLIE

We don't feel safe with you here.

Tony's eyes scan the canteen. People leer. Clutching phones. Mags is confused. Tony gets up and dashes off.

Across the cafe, a DM bubble looms over a subdued Sorcha.
SUPER: *'Thank you for standing up for what you believe.'*

5

INT. MAGS' APARTMENT - DAY

5

Cramped. A couch made up as a bed. Mags watches Tony pace. Tony throws himself down on his temporary bed in a sulk.

TONY

What will I do about Freshers?

MAGS

What do you mean?

TONY

An audience of students? You saw that reaction. I can't do my set...

(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)

I'll make it worse, I could lose my bursary, get thrown out of Uni, I'll be stuck here crashing on--

MAGS

You're comedy got you that gig.

TONY

I'm not about to be another cancelled comedian. Here. Record.

Tony gives Mags his phone. She looks at it, confused. Mags opens the camera, amused, and starts to roll.

TONY (CONT'D)

Hi. I just wanted to say to everyone offended by my jokes--

Mags stops recording, annoyed. He looks at her *WTF?*

TONY (CONT'D)

I didn't even say sorry yet.

She eyeballs him. Fine. Clicks record again.

MAGS

This is 1st year university student Tony Cadogan recording a bollocks apology for some virtue-signalling BT9ers who twisted his jokes for some performative social justice.

Mags stops recording and throws the phone on the bed.

TONY

Some people were offended.

MAGS

Well, I find that jumper offensive.

Tony looks down at his jumper, some abstract art.

MAGS (CONT'D)

Take it off. I find it offensive.
(off his confusion)
That hair triggers me. Shave it.

TONY

Mags, what are you--

MAGS

Stop talking.

TONY

Don't tell me to--

MAGS

As a working-class person, I find it offensive when you speak. *

TONY

Well, as a working-class man, I find this fucking ridiculous.

MAGS

No! Your double standards are fucking ridiculous! Funny that... cuz here was me thinking that's what your comedy was about.

Mags storms into her room and SLAMS the door. Tony puts his head in his hands while he mulls over what to do.

6 **INT. MAGS' APARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER** 6

Tony scribbles down new jokes. Tony bites his pen as he reads over them. He shakes his head and scrawls them out with fury.

7 **INT. MODERN APARTMENT - SAME TIME** 7

Sorcha scrolls. Mind is elsewhere. She bites her lip, conflicted with a thought. She clicks to VM Tony... Then, she locks her phone. Chucks it. She sits in silence.

8 **INT. CELLAR BAR - COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT** 8

OPEN MIC. Tony sheepishly approaches the mic. Slight fear of the audience. Exhale reverberates off the mic. Mags watches, curious. A hooded Sorcha slips in and sinks in at the back.

TONY

Tryna study for exams but TikTok's got me. Not learning, I'm mastering ... dance trends in sweatpants.

TUTS and HUFFS. Tony ignores them, but senses Mags. He avoids her disapproving stare. Sorcha tilts her head - *same guy?*

TONY (CONT'D)

Canteen food is a gamble. I grab what looks like a burger, take a bite... like chewing a yoga mat. I'm thinking, eight quid, I expect food, not a CrossFit challenge?

Mags shuffles across the audience. Tony eyes on her, uneasy.

TONY (CONT'D)

(distracted)

Kept hearing about 'friends with
eh... benefits' when I got into
Uni. But I don't qualify for...

He watches Mags march right out the door. Tony stalls for a second as it dawns on him. He tries to hide his hurt.

TONY (CONT'D)

For... fuck... butchered it. Eh...
(flicks notebook)

Shit... like welfare, I don't...
qualify for... ah... what was it?

(head buried, panics)

Shit... that's a different set...

CROWD MEMBER

This is fucking shite!

Some laughs. Tony's eyes flick out at the Crowd Member.

TONY

How about fuck off, mate?

Oooohhhs erupt. Tony notices some people have been recording. The lights burn. He spots Sorcha sat in the back. Tony tries to compose himself, but he's disoriented. The crowd on edge.

CROWD MEMBER

BOO!

TONY

(scrambles)

Boo? That you, Da? Only took you
seventeen years to finish off that
game of peek-a-boo.

Tony forces a laugh. But the audience are dead silent. Then-

VOICE (O.S.)

CONSEQUENCES!

A MASSIVE LAUGH. Stunned, Tony opens his mouth to a come back, but nothing comes... He looks at the audience laughing AT HIM. His choking up makes them laugh more. They've turned.

The mic crashes to the floor. MORE LAUGHS. Tony rushes off. The crowd CHEERS, happy to see the back of him! Sorcha sinks into her chair as people chant: CONSEQUENCES! CONSEQUENCES!

SIDE STAGE: Tony's head is in his hands. *I've fucked it all.*

9

EXT. CELLAR BAR - NIGHT

9

Sorcha, hood up, leans by the wall. As people exit, she hears them talk shit about Tony. After a moment, Tony rushes out.

SORCHA
Hey, Tony... Tony!
(off his glance)
Can we talk? Please!?

Tony stalls. Sorcha approaches him and glances around to make sure no one sees her. Tony shakes his head -- *unbelievable*.

SORCHA (CONT'D)
I didn't think the video through.

TONY
Then, take it down.

A beat. Her eyes drop. She won't, afraid of the reaction.

SORCHA
I just saw your show... it was--

TONY
Safe?

SORCHA
Shit.

Tony is taken aback. He nods in agreement -- *total shit show*.

SORCHA (CONT'D)
Your original stuff was-

TONY
Triggering? Offensive? *Violent?*

SORCHA
Brave.

She watches him as he struggles with the mind fuck.

TONY
Do you have any idea what your video has done? I've been asking myself why I do this at all.

SORCHA
...Why do you do it?

TONY
Cuz - I don't know - it's better to make people laugh...
(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)

than feel sorry for me... What is it you're doing with your *influence*... sat there in your ivory tower?

SORCHA

It's not like... I'm not like that.

TONY

Really? Cuz you say you're out to help people like me... but to be brutally fucking honest... I think you're out to help people like you feel better about people like me.

Sorcha is speechless. With that, Tony walks off.

10 **INT. MAGS' APARTMENT - NIGHT** 10

Mags arrives home. Tony is asleep, phone in hand. It lights up. **SUPER:** "*Disgusting. His Mum defo turning in her grave.*" Mags locks the phone and gently puts a throw over Tony.

11 **INT. MODERN APARTMENT - NIGHT** 11

Sorcha watches her video. She zooms in on her face. Seeing the inauthenticity. The veneer. She clicks an icon. Option to delete. Her thumb hovers. A massive decision. Clicks delete.

12 **EXT. MAGS' APARTMENT - DAY** 12

Tony wakes as Mags, dressed for work, hands him a coffee.

MAGS

Freshers' gig tonight. Look last night--

TONY

You walked out on me.

MAGS

Cuz it was upsetting seeing you like that, Tony. People love your comedy because it's real. It's Raw. And, yeah, it's fucking dark, but that's life for some... You've to ask yourself, who are you gonna be?

With that, she gets up and heads out. Tony sits alone. Then, his phone. A notification. A memory. A video. Presses play.

A GIDDY LAUGH. TONY'S MUM, (24) with TONY (7). Places the phone to capture them both.

She follows his improvised dance, clearly designed to make her look silly. She snorts with laughter. Birthday bunting hanging. She stops recording on--

TONY'S MUM

Always making me laugh, kiddo.

Last frame a close-up of her smile. He wells up a tad but soon evolves into a little laugh. He sits in contemplation.

13 **EXT. UNIVERSITY - CAMPUS - EVENING** 13

Tony shuffles across campus, headphones on, eyes down.

14 **INT. UNIVERSITY - HALL/BACKSTAGE - EVENING** 14

BACKSTAGE: Tony sits listening to headphones. His notebook opens with the heading "FRESHERS MATERIAL." Pensive, Tony stares at his phone. "MY APOLOGY." His thumb hovers over the post. Applause echoes from the stage.

AUDIENCE: Charlie and Hettie sit. They see Sorcha coming down the aisle and wave. She ignores him and sits on the other side. They look at each other. *WTF?* A small act of defiance.

BACKSTAGE: Tony looks up, surprised to see Mags appear in the doorway. ORGANIZER taps him. Time. Tony glances at the video. Then to Mags... *Fuck it.* Posts it. He marches past Mags, focused. She looks down, disappointed, sensing he's sold out.

AUDIENCE: As Sorcha scrolls her feed, she notices Tony's post: "MY APOLOGY." She puts in an earbud. Presses play.

TONY ON SCREEN (V.O.)

Hi. I just wanted to say to everyone offended by my jokes. I've had time to reflect. I see why people were upset. It's fucked up.

CUT TO: Behind Tony as he marches down the hallway, focused.

TONY (V.O)

My life. It's hard to hear, and I know people want me to apologise, so here it is... I'm sorry.

CUT TO: Charlie holds a sign '*Stand with the Working Class.*'

TONY (V.O.)

Sorry, I grew up in one of the most socially deprived areas in Belfast.

CUT TO: Sorcha is on the edge of her seat as she listens.

TONY (V.O.)

Sorry, my Ma couldn't raise me cuz
she was too busy trying to deal
with her own trauma.

CUT TO: Tony as he approaches the stage.

TONY (V.O.)

Sorry, I joke about my life in an
attempt to turn tragedy to triumph.

CUT TO: Mags joins the crowd... stood at the side.

TONY (V.O.)

Sorry if the way I express my
truth... offends you.

CUT TO: Tony steps on stage. SLOW-MO booing crowd. **CUT TO:**
Tony's eyes down and stepping up to the mic.

TONY (V.O.)

So yeah... I've reflected... and
I've realised... I'll be fucked...

CUT TO: Sorcha's eyes flit from the phone up to. **CUT TO:**
Tony, centre stage, divides the crowd as he adjusts the mic.

TONY (V.O.)

if I'm rewriting my life to make
you feel better about yours.

CUT TO: Tony's eyes land on Mags. Slowly, a mischievous smile
grows. Mags light up, proud. Tony smirks. **SUPER:** *Insta & X*
following 1,325 / A Comic with nothing to lose.

Tony takes a breath... **SMASH TO BLACK.**