

From a to b

Business



The novel *A Visit From The Goon Squad*, by Jennifer Egan, features and analyzes a multitude of characters. All of these characters have something in common, struggling in their journey to the Point B in their lives. At point A they were young and had big dreams in the big city, and point B represents the current crossroad in their lives after letting self destructive tendencies mask their aspirations and cause their current situations to be far from what they imagined. The main character in which the other character's seemingly revolve around is Bennie. Throughout the story Jennifer Egan exhibits how Bennie's self destructive tendencies negatively effected his relationships and selfhood.

Bennie's problems began after receiving a visit from an old bandmate and friend, Scotty. At this instant in Bennie's life he reached the top of the music industry, he recently married Stephanie, and has a three month old son. The visit from Scotty left Bennie conflicted and nostalgic when he asked him " I want to know what happened between A and B. A is when we were both in the band, chasing the same girl. B is now.

" (Egan, 101) This question seemed to stick with Bennie and he soon realized that this high point in his life was not necessarily his point B, and things would still change. A while after this happened, Bennie lost Stephanie following an affair he had with Kathy, and this resulted in a strained relationship with his son. Eventually he lost his job, and he questioned what caused him to break " the divorce from Stephanie? The battle over Christopher? Having recently turned forty-four?" (Egan, 21). His life seemed to model that of his mentor, Lou. Accordingly, Bennie always had big dreams of becoming a well known name in the music industry.

He learned a lot from Lou, in fact too much, as his life seemed to follow a similar path of destruction. Lou also had a divorce, and that seems to be where Bennie's problems, and destructive tendencies began. Bennie and his wife Stephanie had their future planned out, to live in a wealthy area in New York but the pressures to fit in became too much, causing Bennie to ultimately have an affair. Stephanie's brother Jules, who has had his own struggles over time, is the first to realize how things have changed, not only with Bennie and Stephanie, but in the world as well. " I go away for a few years and the whole world is upside down.

Buildings are missing.. And now my rock-and-roll sister and her husband are hanging around with Republicans." (Egan, 123). On top of his marriage ending, his relationship with his son also became strained as a result.

Furthermore, in order to keep a relationship with his son he started to use " betrayal bonding" to relate to his son more so than his ex wife (Egan, 24). His ways of betrayal bonding were letting Chris get coffee, or having the gold flakes, things his mother would never approve of and could not know about. Bennie used betrayal bonding as a way to salvage his relationship with his son. By doing things that Chris wanted to do, he thought he would feel a stronger bond with him than with Stephanie. This only leads to more problems with Stephanie, and will never make his bond with Chris as strong as he hopes it will. Consequently, the process in getting from one juncture in life to the next becomes grueling and everything seemingly falls apart.

This is all " part of the process," getting from point A to point B things begin to fall apart (Egan, 242). Bennie's life did fall apart while trying to get to the

next chapter in his life. When he thought he had everything his life started to fall apart. One day he tried to serve his corporate controllers cow pies, after that incident he was fired from his own label (Egan, 312). After losing his job he started back out from the bottom and began producing music that he used to produce. Bennie starting from the bottom could be seen as Point B or a new Point A.

After all life is a process and it cycles through, "time is a goon." (Egan, 127). Time escaped from Bennie and he lost a lot along the way. The effects from a divorce and a dwindling relationship with his son caused him to reach a breaking point and lose his job. Bennie is the prime example in this novel of a character letting his destructive tendencies bring him down and cause from a Point B different than expected.

Hence, the novel, *A Visit From the Goon Squad* revolves around a group of loosely connected people struggling with where they are at in life. In getting from Point A to B every character had some connection to Bennie and they all have something in common, destructive tendencies. The choices he made in his life, and the destructive tendencies he picked up along the way, had an impact on almost everyone in his life. The people he worked with, and his family and friends all had their lives impacted. It is easy to let destructive tendencies destroy or change the path one takes in getting from one moment in life to the next, and Bennie's character exemplified this most clearly.