

# Fifth business

Business



These elements of a story are very Important in creating suspense and excitement. However, the plot of a story would not be carried out successfully If It were not for a " fifth business" character. A fifth business has no rival to the other characters, which makes it the odd one out. He or she often holds secrets about other characters and is indirectly involved in all the problems that occur throughout the story. Also, the fifth business is the character that often carries the twist in the plot.

In dramas and operas, " Those roles which, being neither those of Hero nor Heroine, Confidante nor Villain, but which were nonetheless essential to bring about the Recognition or the denouement, were called the Fifth Business" (Monk). Duncan Ramsey is the fifth business character in the novel " Fifth Business" because, like the tiny pebble, his character seems small and insignificant. However, throughout the novel, Duenna's involvement with other characters leads him to realize who he truly is and he eventually progresses out of his fifth business role.

The three characters that expose the true Duncan Ramsey are: Mary Dumpster, Percy Boy Staunton, and Paul Dumpster. Mary Dumpster suffered a pre-mature birth of her son, Paul, shortly after being hit by a snowball which contained a rock. The snowball, thrown by Percy Boy Staunton was originally meant for Duncan who, moves out of the way at the last second. After the ordeal, Mary could no longer live in society without someone supervising and taking care of her. Duncan develops a growing and overwhelming sense of guilt towards Mary because he knows that the rock that hit her was Intended for him.

As a result of his guilt, Duncan would often take care of her and help her with miscellaneous chores around the house. After spending countless hours with Mrs.. Dumpster, he realizes that he has fallen in love with her when he says, " Looking back on it, I know I was in love with Mrs.. Dumpster" (Davies 24). As time passed, Mar's husband, Mamas, died and her son, Paul, ran away with the circus. After Mar's aunt passed away, Duncan, under his own will, transferred Mary into a hospital, where she would live.

Duncan would visit Mary weekly at the hospital but it became a " Sense of duty rather than from any feeling that she missed me" (221). Duncan begins to realize that taking care of Mary Dumpster seemed strange and an unnecessary expense even though he felt that he " Should have regarded it as my good work" (171). When she passes away in 1959, Duenna's childhood guilt comes back to him and he blames himself in thinking that " I had not been loving enough, or wise enough, or generous enough in my dealings with fifth business with her.

He learns that his actions and feelings towards her were ruled by guilt and a sense of duty to her. " Guilt causes Duncan to live a life on the sidelines,... His isolation is occasioned partly by the secrecy that guilt fosters, as well as by the time and energy required to take care of Mrs.. Dumpster" (Browsers). Duncan can now begin living his own life without being held down by Mary Tempter's guilt. Percy Boy Staunton is Duenna's " lifelong friend and enemy" (Davies 3). Duncan has always felt inferior to Boy in physical appearances, social status and financially.

In addition, Boy marries Leila who is the prettiest girl in their town and whom Duncan admired. Duncan however, holds the secret that it was Boy who threw the snowball at Mrs. Dumpster causing Pall's pre-mature birth.

Duncan keeps this secret because he is worried that he will also be blamed for stepping out of the way when the snowball was thrown. In keeping this secret, Duncan becomes a fifth cuisines with Boy because from then on, he is constantly involved with Boys life. Duncan is insecure and does not have confidence to tell Boy or anyone else the true story behind Pall's birth.

Duncan also feels intimidated by Boy because he is a very wealthy and attractive man while Duncan comes from a poorer family and is not very satisfied with his physical appearance. Throughout Duenna's life, he observes how Boy ages and how he is " A man who does superlatively and without obvious effort something that most people cannot do by the uttermost exertion of their abilities" (143). Even though Duncan does not always agree or like Boys behavior, he puts up with it because of his duty to keep the secret. After the death of Mary Dumpster, Duenna's guilt is gone and so, he feels that he can no longer keep the secret of the rock.

When Duncan, Boy and Paul are all having drinks one night, Duncan overcomes his insecurities when he says, " Either I spoke now or I kept silence forever" (253), and tells Paul the real story of his birth. Duncan displays the rock that he has kept all this time and Boy responds by explaining that he has forgotten about it and that Duncan has, " Brooded over it" (254). Duncan is finally tired of Boys inability to take responsibility for the rock and realizes that Boy does not care when he says to him, " It's time you tried to be a human being.

Then maybe something bigger than yourself will come up on your horizon" (254). Duncan is now moving away from being a fifth business now that the secret is exposed. Paul later kills Boy in his car by using his magician's talents. This incident reflects back to Duncan because he was the one who first taught Paul how to do magic and therefore, he indirectly causes Boy's death. Exposing the secret of the rock and Boy's death both release Duncan as the fifth business. Duenna's role as a fifth business in the life of Paul begins with Duenna's sense of responsibility for Paul.

Duncan feels responsible for Paul's pre-mature birth and his physical weakness. As a child, Duncan would help the Dumpster family take care of Paul, read to him and teach him magic tricks. Duncan had developed an interest in magic but he needed an audience, which then he realized that he " Found one readily in Paul Dumpster" (31). Duncan became a very influential person to Paul and then realizes how quick of a learner Paul is, " Taking the coin from me and performing the ass perfectly" (33).

Duncan was the reason why Paul ran away with the circus, lessons, Paul would have had no future because he was not very intelligent in school and his parents did not support his magic. Later, when Duncan coincidentally runs into Paul at a circus in Austria, he is amazed at his magical talents and he says, " He was very good-excellent, indeed, but too good for his audience" (137). Duncan realizes how much of an influence he was to Paul Dumpster and how he was the one person who Paul admired. Without Duncan as a fifth business in his life, Paul would have remained a below-average boy in his village living with his insane mother.

When Duncan finally tells Paul the secret of the rock, he loses the sense of fifth business. Duncan does not have to worry about keeping the crucial secret from Paul anymore. By releasing this burden off his shoulders, Duncan is no longer a fifth business in Pall's life. He can now move forward with his life without being tied to the past. Like the tiny pebble in the pond, Duenna's involvement with other characters causes many ripples in all their lives. The death of Mary Dumpster releases him from a life-long sense of guilt and duty for her.

Exposing the rock secret and Boy's death release Duncan from keeping the secret and finally living outside of Boy's shadow. Lastly, Paul Dumpster makes Duncan come to the realization of how influential he was in his life and career. Duncan is released from feeling responsible for Pall's life. In the novel, Duncan is referred to as a fifth business because he is incidentally involved in various conflicts as a secondary character. The fifth business does not play the major role in a story but rather plays a character that is crucial in successfully carrying out the plot.