

Stephanie Barnes

It's My Life but you're Welcome to it

Once again, I find myself slumped on my bed surrounded by all the familiar faces: Mr. Podgy, Zippo the Hippo and Missy – my rag doll. As usual, I am deep in my thoughts about what I would prefer my life to be like. I've only been in the world for 16 and a bit years and I already wish that I had a different life, even if it were a life of somebody else's, just as long as it's not mine. I would imagine that Paris Hilton has a pretty good lifestyle with all her money and fame; I can already see myself at all the hippest parties with my brand new Prada stilettos with my Gucci handbag (which will obviously contain my pet pooch – Fifi and even she will have a diamond studded collar) clutched in one hand and my tall, dark and handsome man fixed in the other arm! Then again, celebrities get hassled a lot by the paparazzi and don't seem to get any personal time to just be themselves so I may want a better life but maybe not a life of the rich and famous. Ah ha, I've got it! There's this girl in my year at school who is really pretty and seems to have all the latest gear because her dad invented Kickstarts- 'The trainer faster than an athlete's' (they're these trainers that have wheels that pop out of the bottom of them so that they can be converted into roller-skates 'in times of need'. Anyway, I'm pretty sure that she would have a great life but she's not a celebrity so wouldn't get run down on the street by buzzing fans.

I know what you're thinking: what's wrong with my life? Am I not wrong? Well, put it this way, nobody in the right state of mind would be envious of my life! Do you want to know why? Here's a brief introduction for you: hi, my name's Amy McAvon, I'm 16 years old but don't look it as I have such a round, baby face! I am also bigger than what a 16 year old girl should be as I am at least 11 stone but am only around 5' in height. According to my mum, "you're just slightly rounded" or "a tad on the chubby side." I wish I could be more like my friend Hannah who is stick thin

or even like Sandra who is curvy but in a nice way unlike me who just has big lumps and flabs of skin all over the place! My mum's even fits into a smaller size of jeans than what I do – it's shameful and embarrassing! I'm also not very blessed with looks; I have frizzy, brown hair, freckles and suffer with braces. I also burn in the summer rather than tan, it's so annoying – my freckles become more pronounced too! Hannah is lucky with her tanned skin and bouncy blond curls or Sandra with her flawless skin and silky, straight, dark hair!

Even if I couldn't get their looks, it would at least be nice to receive the same amount of pocket money as they do. I help a lot more around the house than what they do and I don't even get a single penny! Then you have my mum saying, "You should count yourself lucky because when I was young (here we go again), we had to help out all the time at home; I did the washing, the ironing and even had to help clean the house from top to bottom when I was younger than what you are now *and* we lived on a farm giving us lots of additional chores for our list. It was hard work but you didn't see me complaining." I hate when parents do that, you know, the whole guilt trip thing.

Anyway, what was I saying? Oh yeah, it's so annoying because I always have to ask if I want to get anything and when you're a teenager you don't always want to have to go through your mum first before you buy a pair of what you think is really cool jeans but then get told, "They're far too baggy and you'll trip over with the length of the leg. The seam is already torn enough with out you trampling all over it! I just don't get the fashion these days – they look like they're inside-out and everything that looks old, tattered and worn out seems to be 'in'! I just don't know what's happened to the world. What happened to wearing skirts and dressing smartly when you made an appearance at a friend's house?" So many people wear worse clothes than I do – you should see some of the weirdos in town! There are so many varieties of people now-a-days that I can't keep count. There just seems to be a name to fit every type of person (not that I know what I would be) and so many things are seen as acceptable now; I just wish my mum would open her eyes properly to see that.

Another thing that my friends have over me is something that they don't even realize because they don't think about it: they have one more parent living in the

house with them than what I do. It doesn't usually bother me that much. I mean, I do like living with my mum but sometimes it would be nice to have a third opinion in the house or just someone else to help out or to talk to. It's just that me and mum don't always see eye to eye but I just know that my dad my take my side (at least every once in a while.) I shouldn't complain as I know that there are plenty of other people who are even more unfortunate than I am as they don't even have any parents or maybe even no family left at all. I still can't help thinking of what it would've been like if my parents were still together. Life would be so much simpler; there would be no more jumping back and forth from house to house and life would just be blissful. However, as I said, I know that I am definitely not alone with this problem, especially in this country as the divorce rate is sky high.

Ah, Northern Ireland – that's another one of my favourite topics to complain about! Good ol' 'Norn Iron', what can I say....it's a dump. It's such a tiny part of an already small island and just seems so far from the rest of the world. I would love to go to somewhere foreign and exotic like Spain but the closest I ever get to Europe is going to room 31 in school to go to my French lesson or perhaps if I'm lucky enough by going to Luigi's – the pizzeria down the road for a 'real Italian pizza'. Maybe I should get a pen pal and go on a foreign exchange trip – that would be so awesome! Oh but what am I talking about a *pen* pal for when of course everything revolves around the internet now-a-days – I should be saying an email buddy!

I have to stop day dreaming! I can't help it, I just start to think about something and my head is away in the clouds fantasising about the good things in life that I seem to miss out on. I was telling you about Northern Ireland. Well, it is very green...and there are a lot of cows and sheep. The reason that I don't like it is because it is very unclean and polluted! Have you ever walked down my street? (Well, of course you haven't unless you are Mrs. Jones from across the road or one of the many hooligans that live in this trashy area.) Well, if you are one of those unfortunate few, you would notice that there seems to be litter everywhere you look and chewing gum stuck to every place possible; I even managed to find a piece stuck to my shoe once! How gross is that?

There is also a lot of crime over here. Actually, it probably has the same amount as any other place but it just seems like there is loads because every time the news comes on I hear something about crime whether it be rape or robbery. On top of actual crime, there is also lots of vandalism as there is graffiti all round the place and you see broken glass quite often, whether it is from a beer bottle or the glass from a bus shelter. Personally, I think some of the graffiti is quite cool and some of it is also very artistic but I still don't understand what drives people to treat the environment this way. I have always found that there is lots of pollution and fumes here (no wonder with the amount of cars on the roads blocking up the system and making me late for school every morning.) Although, I must say that we are improving now that the smoking ban from public places has been put in place – I am now able to breath in at the bus station on Saturday mornings! We also have a lot of nice country side with clean, fresh air and good scenery so I guess Northern Ireland isn't too bad.

I must say that I do hate the weather here though because when it is not raining, it's windy and it is always cold. I swear that we didn't even have a summer this year. According to Mr. Brooks my geography teacher, we have a 'variable climate' meaning that we can never predict what Mother Nature has in store for us next. My mum practically has a full scale debate in the morning about whether she should hang the washing out to dry or not. The only good thing about our weather is that we don't get 'extreme weather' (as Mr. Brooks would say.) I would hate if we had floods and hurricanes – it would be so awful! Another thing that we don't get a lot of over here is much variation of race or 'ethnic diversity' (the phrase has been drummed into my miniscule brain) which I think is a pity as I think it would be interesting to a learn a bit more about other cultures from an actual person rather than a text book.

All this geography talk reminds me that I haven't mentioned school yet. Well, its not very interesting but I go to this trashy high school just a twenty minute walk away from home (and yes, I did say walk because I am made to walk to school every day despite the fact that it is freezing outside – I will end up with frostbite one of these days.) School is a very depressing subject for me so I won't even bother boring you with the topic as the only good thing to do with it is that my friends are there and oh yes, the new young, hunky art teacher: Mr Caldwell! School is just so hectic at the

moment because we are doing our GCSEs this year and the teachers just love to constantly remind you. Therefore we have lots of revision to do on top of our everyday homework, not to mention the coursework load that we have at the minute. Every teacher seems to expect so much out of you and always consider their subject the most important so forget the fact that you actually have nine other subjects that you also have loads of homework for.

There is so much pressure and expectation when it comes to school, especially now that I am about to sit my exams. It can be so stressful sometimes and I don't think that adults realize that all the time, I quote "Don't be so silly, stressed out at your age." I actually think that teenagers have plenty of things to stress about. Especially teenage girls as we have to try and 'look good' (especially for the cute guys at my school); it takes me a full hour to get ready for school in the morning (even though that despite my efforts to straighten my hair, it will probably go frizzy with the rain and my mascara usually runs anyway.) We have to make the effort though because in the modern world, you are nobody unless you are a stick insect with slap on. I can't read a fashion magazine without getting jealous. On the serious note, there are a lot of pressures for teenagers in society today between sex, drugs and alcohol! However, I do have some self control so have never gone down that road because I don't want my life to completely spiral out of control. So for the time being, this is my life; I was born with it and cannot change it so all I can do is accept it.