

# 1968

Brett Nelson | Short Story

*My name is Richard Morrison.*

*I was born in 1944.*

*I live at 765 Main St.*

*I am 24 years old.*

Richard continued writing until the page was filled with facts about himself. He leaned back when he was done, satisfied. He laid the pen down on the table and began to stretch his aching back.

“What are you writing there?” Richard jumped at the voice. He hadn’t realized Joey had already shown up. His friend pulled up a chair at the table, sitting himself down with a thump.

“Christ, Joey. You startled me. Let yourself in, why don’t ya?”

“Did I?” Joey asked. There was a hint of amusement in his voice.

“Sure did.”

“Well, what are you writing?” Joey asked again.

Richard looked down and frowned. “I’m not really sure,” he said. “Just something I do every now and then, I suppose.”

“I see.”

“I forgot you were coming over today.”

“Did you?” Joey asked. He sounded surprised. Richard shifted in his seat.

“You’re here every day as it is, I should’ve known,” Richard grumbled.

Joey grinned, shaking his head. He stood up from his chair and walked over to the fridge. He opened the door and began rummaging inside. Richard rolled his eyes.

“Make yourself at home, I suppose,” he said.

Joey gave him an odd look, then continued to dig around in the fridge. He returned to his chair with a tub of yogurt after fishing a spoon out of the drawer next to the fridge. He shoveled the yogurt into his mouth while he leafed through the newspaper sitting on the kitchen table.

“Bit late for you to be up tonight, no?” Joey asked. He kept his eyes down, reading a story in the paper.

“What are you talkin’ about? We’re picking those girls up in a couple hours are we not?” Richard replied.

Joey looked up, clearly confused. “Are we?”

“I told you that the other day,” Richard said.

“Guess I forgot,” Joey laughed. He turned his attention back to the newspaper, turning the page. “Where we taking ‘em?”

“I figured we’d go to the Ovaltine, get a burger, maybe a milkshake. You know, the usual.” Richard shrugged while he spoke.

“Don’t you work tomorrow?” Joey asked through a mouthful of yogurt.

“Oh well,” Richard said. He shrugged again and Joey laughed.

“Guess you’ll deal with it, eh?”

“I always do,” Richard growled.

They sat in silence for several minutes. Joey leafed through the paper some more and took big spoonfuls of yogurt. As he flipped one of the pages, Richard saw a name he recognized from its prominence in the news.

“Crazy about Pierre Trudeau winning the election, eh?” he said.

“Yeah, he won by a landslide.” Joey seemed elated by this. Richard couldn’t think of a reason why he would be.

“Did you vote Liberal?” Richard asked.

“I didn’t vote,” Joey replied. “I volunteered to cover other people’s shifts so they could.”

“Nice of you, I suppose,” Richard said.

Joey shrugged. “You don’t like Trudeau? I think he’s a fresh face.”

“I don’t have much of an opinion, to tell you the truth,” Richard grunted. “If he can fix some of the problems in this country than I’ll approve. Vancouver isn’t affordable, wages are too low, there ain’t enough jobs, and our dollar is weak. He needs to support the Canadian economy and find ways to lower housing prices.”

“That would be good,” Joey said.

“I’ll say,” Richard continued. “He’s a flashy man, to be sure, but I don’t know if he’s got any substance. His little act with the rioters was sure something though, wasn’t it?”

“The protesters?” Joey sounded confused.

“Yeah, the way he sat there and faced them head on I mean,” Richard replied impatiently. “Didn’t you see it? It was all over TV.”

“Must have missed it.” Joey put the empty yogurt container down on the table. “Are you sure you want to go out tonight? I was hoping to stay here and relax. I don’t get a lot of nights off.”

“I told the girls I’d call them,” Richard said.

Before Joey could answer, a woman walked into the kitchen, an apron tied around her waist.

“Hey mom,” Richard said.

She looked at Richard, then at Joey, who laughed and shrugged.

“I just wanted to know if you guys wanted a cup of tea?” she asked.

“Nah, I think we’re good,” Richard said. He looked at Joey, who shook his head as well. She shrugged and left the two men alone once again.

“She’s a sweetheart, isn’t she?” Joey laughed.

“You sweet on my mom?” Richard asked with mock intimidation.

Joey put his hands up in surrender. “Of course not,” he said.

Richard sighed. “I suppose I could stay in tonight,” he said.

“Atta’ boy,” Joey said absently. He picked the paper up again and began leafing through it.

The two sat in silence for a while after that. Joey leafed through the paper some more, even though he’d already read all the stories, and Richard worked a toothpick between his front teeth. It was silent in the room, but it was the sort of silence that isn’t noticeable between two people who have spent a lot of time together.

“I suppose I should move out soon,” Richard said finally.

Joey looked up from his newspaper, then closed it again. “I suppose so,” he said.

“I’m 25 now,” Richard said. He was still working the toothpick, so his voice was slightly muffled. “I should be worried about settling down into my own place. I would’ve already, if housing prices weren’t so high.”

“Could always move away from Vancouver,” Joey said quietly.

“Nah, I love it here. I want to have kids here one day too, so they can enjoy it as well.”

“Oh yeah?” Joey asked. He sounded surprised.

“Yeah,” Richard said. He shifted in his seat. “I want to have a son one day, I think.”

Joey was silent for a while. “What would you name him?” he asked finally.

“Jacob, I think. I always liked the name.”

“Makes sense. You have to get a wife first,” Joey laughed.

Richard frowned. “I’ve been seeing Marissa for a few years now. I think she might be the one, honestly.”

“Huh?” Joey looked confused at first. “Oh, right. Well, if you think so. Are you gonna’ pop the question?”

“I’d like to, but I can’t afford a ring yet.”

“Maybe you should get a better job.”

“I need to.” Richard sighed loudly. “She is beautiful though, isn’t she?”

Joey smiled as he looked down. “Yeah, she really is.”

“Well, I think it’s almost time for bed,” Richard said suddenly. He yawned as if to reinforce his statement.

“Yeah, you better get some sleep,” Joey said. He stretched, twisting right and left.

“Are you gonna’ crash here tonight?” Richard asked as he stood up, grabbing the dishes off the table and putting them in the sink. He also grabbed the paper he’d been writing it on, crumpled it up and threw it in the trash.

Joey looked down at his watch. Richard hadn’t noticed it before, but it was an expensive watch. He wondered how Joey had afforded it.

“I don’t think so,” Joey said. “I’ll just head home for the night.”

“Suit yourself.” Richard shrugged.

They said good night to each other and Richard shuffled out of the kitchen, leaving his friend alone. The man he called Joey sat there for several moments, tapping a finger on the table. He picked the newspaper up one more time, where Justin Trudeau’s face was plastered on the front page. He glanced down at the date.

October 20, 2017.

He walked over to the garbage can and fished out the crumpled piece of paper Richard had been writing on. He smoothed it out on the table and read its contents, then shook his head.

“His doctor makes him write that.” The female voice startled him, and he jumped slightly. “Says it’s to keep his mind sharp. But, he gets everything wrong, so I don’t think it’s such a good thing if you ask me.”

“Joyce, I didn’t see you there.”

“He’s been getting worse. I see him every day and I notice it. I can’t imagine how much more you must see it,” she said. Her voice was sad.

“Yeah, I suppose I should have him moved to home eventually, the sooner the better.”

Jacob Morrison stood up, crumpling the paper once more and throwing it in the garbage. He made his way to the exit, grabbing his coat off of a hook in the doorway. Joyce followed him, leaning against a wall in the foyer while he put his shoes on.

Once he was set, he kissed her on the cheek and opened the door. He clicked the fob on his keys and a car outside beeped sharply.

“Take care of my father, Joyce. I really appreciate it.”

Joyce said nothing as he left, shutting the door behind himself.