

*\*When the bomb went off, 297-9.*

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### Resolving Conflicts, or Bombing Conflicts

In the bombing scene of *High Dive*, while two teenagers, Freya and Susie, lovingly resolve their conflicts, the conflict between Ireland and England eventually results in the bombing, which hurts countless innocent people. Through this contrast, Jonathan Lee accuses the absurdity of political conflicts and implores nonviolent reconciliations between different political groups.

Before the bomb goes off, Lee depicts a warm-hearted reunion of Freya and Susie. Earlier, those two close teenage friends have heated altercations over whether to set a stink bomb in Prime Minister's room for Susie's political protest. However, in this scene, Susie bashfully acknowledges that she cancels the bomb, "well, that's what I hinted at (not using a stink bomb)" (297) Moreover, Susie chooses to throw "free range hard-boiled" eggs in the protest instead of raw eggs, so the hotel is less messy. Instead of using Margaret Thatcher's arrival as a perfect occasion to showcase her political opinions, Susie empathizes with the hardship Freya is experiencing and decides to cancel all activities that may further stress Goose tremendously. Susie's ability to sympathize with Freya might seem small; however, the IRA fails to have nonviolent discourse with the British government. Instead, the IRA converts its anger towards the British government into terrorist attacks, which cruelly take away people's lives. Lee posts a profound question: why can the IRA not look past their conflicts and believe in the possibility of peaceful negotiations one more time? For example, when Dan's mother was "hit" by an officer in the RUC, why can it only be resolved by escalating the violence to greater violence to make

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an unnecessary statement? If the IRA could be compassionate like Susie, a loving teenage girl, many tragedies in history could have been avoided.

Facing Susie's kindness, Freya reacts with warmth and love. She understands Susie's frustration of being unable to vocalize her political opinions during Margaret Thatcher's visit. To cheer up Susie, Freya agrees to walk with her, although she is not prepared from the clue of wishing for "her warm jacket to hand" (298). Earlier in the novel, Freya shows indifference towards matters not contingent on her interests, like whether making her "fancy tennis shoes" involves the sufferings of workers (61). However, this time, Freya decides to change herself for her friend. She makes "the kind of stupid walk Moose used to do to amuse her when she was small (and ill)" (298-9). Importantly, this stupid and funny walk might have always been locked in her memory since it involves her unhappy childhood, shadowed by her parent's divorce. But to cheer up Susie, she opens herself and embraces the positive moments in her life. Such openness might also seem insignificant, but it manifests Freya's willingness to see the world with compassion and positivity. Nevertheless, the British public can never care about matters not contingent with their lives, particularly the suffering of Irish people on the other side of the sea. When Dan reads the death of the officer who "hurt" his mother from the *Guardian*, a prominent British newspaper publication, there is a box beneath supplying information regarding the nature of RUC (88). It is absurd that average English readers must be provided with exhausting details about their main governmental machine in Ireland. Lee suggests that if people in England are less indifferent towards Irish people, whom their government cruelly treats, Margaret Thatcher's unfair policy towards Ireland may have never taken place. Consequently, there will be no suffering in Ireland, so no terrorism will happen.

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From all those small but lovely interactions between the two teenagers, Lee presents a solution for solving conflicts with love and empathy. However, the conflict between the IRA and the British government only leads to an agonizing tragedy.

The bomb explodes. It is utterly confusing for Susie and Freya, who are having a warm moment after resolving their conflicts. Suddenly, accompanied by some unusual “smell of the earth,” Freya and Susie are vulnerably thrown away by the explosion, like two leaves on the pavement (299). When Freya finds out that Susie gets seriously hurt, she yells “ha” in her mind, through which Lee addresses the vulnerability of innocent people who should have never been brought into the tragedy (299). It is absurd that innocent people like Susie and Freya, who can resolve conflicts using love, are severely hurt. Consequently, the large-scale conflict between Ireland and England will only grow larger after the bombing. Margaret Thatcher, the target of the attack, survives and will be heavily favored in the next election with harsher policy towards Northern Ireland. All the damage is received by innocent bystanders in either Ireland or England. Susie, who is portrayed as a loving person, will get an irreversible injury on her body for the rest of her life. Freya, who is on the right track to living a life with positivity, will never get a chance to fix her relationship with her mother, or her father whose life is brutally taken by the bomb. People in Ireland, who have already been mistreated by the England government, will only be persecuted to a greater extent. Lee accuses the irrationality of terrorism, which is created by conflicts that should have been resolved in a loving and human way.

### **Bibliography**

Lee, Jonathan. *High Dive*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2017.