

## **DÚN LAOGHAIRE RATHDOWN IN THE GRIPS OF THE PANDEMIC.**

By Killian Oman aged 13

Tom was 13 years old, with short, black hair. His blue eyes contrasted from his hair quite a lot. He was quite tall for his age. He had only just woken up, so his voice sounded husky, and tired. His skin felt dry from sleep. He finished his breakfast and had a shower after he brushed his teeth. By the time he had finished getting dressed, it was time for school. He sat into his swivel chair at his desk, and powered up his computer.

Finally, the computer loaded up and clicked into a folder labelled *school*. It contained all his e – books and the school app, Edmodo.

Tom thought back to 3 months earlier. The year was 2020. The month was May. The date was the 15th. The day was Friday. The time was 3:10 PM and the government of Ireland was facing a problem. The Covid19 virus pandemic had ended and schools were set to resume normal services in September. But two months of sitting abandoned had not done the old school buildings any good. The government had sent in hazmat teams to check the buildings for any traces of the virus, just to be safe. What the teams found, however, was just as bad. The damp Irish weather had taken its toll on the old school buildings, and weakened them, making them unsafe for the resumption of normal services. It was no surprise, considering that most of the buildings were around half a century old.

Faced with the problem of schooling over a million children with no schools available, the government had to find a solution. It was going on the assumption that most children had gotten used to online schooling and saw no harm in keeping the online schools open. But the

country would need to streamline its platform, or it would be unorderly. They settled on Edmodo. Those teachers who hadn't already, were made set up an Edmodo account, so all their students could have their online lessons in one place.

So, a referendum was held, the proposed plan won, and the government passed the law, rewrote the constitution, and made it official: All schools must carry out their schooling online, on Edmodo.

Tom clicked into Edmodo, and waited for it to open. Suddenly, a window popped up:

YOU ARE OFFLINE

YOU NEED INTERNET CONNECTION TO USE EDMODO APP

PLEASE TRY AGAIN WHEN YOU GET INTERNET ACCESS

Tom groaned and got up and walked to the top of the stairs, "Mum!" He shouted, "the internet's gone again!"

"Oh, I meant to mention it to you, but we need to get a new modem for the internet," she shouted back up, "I have to watch the dinner, so I can't pick up a new one at the Eir store in Dundrum. Here, could you cycle down and pick one up, I'm sure you can fit the box in your bag."

"But I don't have any money!"

"Here, I'll give you some, come down," she offered.

"Just let me turn off the computer," he replied.

By the time he got downstairs, his mother had already got the money.

"There should be enough in the bag to pay for it," she explained, "and if not, or there are any problems, you know, just ring me."

"I know"

He shouldered the bag. It weighed a ton. He was fortunate that the shops weren't too far away, but even so, he wasn't sure if he could make it all the way to the shops. He went to the shed and took out his bike. He swung his leg over and pedalled down to the shops.

When he got to Dundrum, he locked his bike to the bike rack, and went past some shops, looking for the Eir store. He went inside and went up to the man at the till. Another man was showing off the latest phone to a family, all wearing masks. The place was an eyesore; pink pieces of furniture clashed with the white of the floor and wall. The tables were slightly sticky even though food wasn't allowed and the whole place smelt of cleaning fluid. The babble of voices, both inside the store and out, combined with the other factors, turned the shop into a breeding ground for migraines.

The shop assistant had a bored expression, like he could be doing something else, but wasn't bothered to. He was resting his arms on the countertop. He looked up as Tom approached and moved over to the cash register. "What do you want?" he asked, in a bored tone.

"Do you have a modem for sale?" Tom asked.

"Yea, sure. Here you go," the man answered, and pulled out a modem box from underneath the table, "that'll be €100."

Tom unshouldered the bag and unzipped it. He counted out 10 rolls and put them on the counter. "Let's check these are proper 3 – ply," said the man, "you never know who might try and catch you out."

He took the rolls behind the desk and called over a colleague, "do these look all right to you, Bob?" He asked. Bob took a pair of tweezers from his pocket and peeled two layers apart. He did this with all 10 rolls. When he had finished with the last roll, he turned to the first man and said: "Seems in order."

“Ok, here you go,” said the first man, handing the box to Tom, “come again.”

“Thanks,” replied Tom and put the box into his bag. He shouldered it and went back to his bike and cycled home. It was easier now that there wasn’t all that money in his bag.

When he got in, his mother asked: “Was there enough?”

“Yes...,” he replied, “but was it wise for me to be carrying that much money around?”

“Probably not, but it’s not like we have a shortage of toilet paper!”

THE END