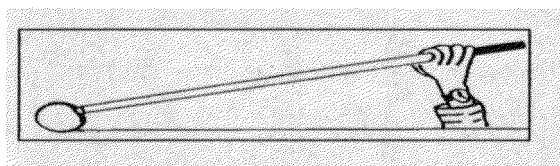


## Snooker



Now we are going to have a Modern Story, with a *Snooker* background. It is told in the First Person by the Hero, and is in dialect with slang, and although it is to some extent Romantic, it is on the whole Every day, with its plot centring round a young man's aspirations to score 147 at snooker. Questions for the Second Activity follow:

ME DAD'S got a pub an' that's how I started me snooker. I was twelve at the time. It would've bin earlier, only I couldn't reach over the table. Dad wouldn't get me a smaller one.

'They're rubbish, lad,' he said. 'You wanna play, it's got to be a proper table!'

Whenever I could I'd sneak into our snooker lounge an' really let fly. Cor I loved it. It wasn't long until I thought meself proper expert an' I could beat most of me pals. Down our road, snooker was all the rage now, what with the telly and unemployment.

'Just like when I were a lad,' Dad scoffed cynically. 'Them days there was more ado at social club than what we called the Labour Exchange! Life don't change, do it?'

Then he'd go on and tell me great stories of how fortunes was lost and won over the snooker table, an' while we watched the ball on the telly as it careered over a table ironed out till the error margin was nil, he'd scoff an' say:

These champions, they don't know what snooker's about! In our time, half the fun was playin' 'genst the table!'

An' he'd laugh an' knock back another half pint.

Anyhow I was getting' short of pocket money these days, an' I wasn't above walkin' into a pub an' saying:

'Hey, a quid on the next game, right?'

I'd not often leave without me drinks paid for, an' a spot of pocket money into the bargain.

But the more I played the more hooked I got. Suddenly I was obsessed with one thing. It was after the world championship when Stephen Hendry I think it was, he reached within a pip of 147 for his score. This is the highest score without yer opponent's assistance through lost points.

Now that 147 score got me! It seemed magical somehow. I used to set up the table in Dad's pub an' try like crazy to get 'em all down, but na! I got 35 one time, promise I did, but I never got to 50, never mind 147. Fact is only one player in 500 can get 50 at snooker, so 147? It's not worth thinkin' about.

Still the idea was fantastic. To think of blacks glidin' into the pocket, time and time again, cor it sort of kept me awake at night jest to think of it.

Anyhow like I said I was good, well okay at snooker, and able to make it pay too. Soon, as time passed, I got even better, till I could get 50 even, that is if all the balls was well set! When I first did that, it was a great day for me, an' it was the day I spoke to Sonia too.

It was in Dad's pub. I liked playin' there, well it was me second home like, and somehow the balls was goin' down that amount smoother on the old familiar table. That night the balls was set perfect, an' I knew nought'd stop me. Down they went, it was like shellin' peas. 50 came an' went! It was fantastic, an' I felt I was goin' to get the ton!

But, crikey, that sitter did for me, really! A piece of cake if there was anythin'; an' I **missed** it! I had to be content with 56. The lads gave me a cheer, and it was a great feelin', but deep down I felt I **should** have got the ton. You know how it is!

But this girl Sonia, she'd watched it all. I'd noticed her before in fact: she'd been comin' into the pub the past fortnight, an' I knew she liked me snooker. Least she'd been watching me on and off for some good time, an' maybe it'd been for her I'd been pottin' 'em like a good 'un.

Anyroad she was some cracker! Dark, slim, she was all a bloke could want! I knew she was called Sonia. She always come in with a real mixed gang, and they wasn't exactly quiet that lot. But Sonia stood out for me, and when I got me 56, I decided it was time to follow it up with a bit of the ol' charm!

'You're Sonia, eh?' I asked nonchalant.

'Yeah, an' so what?' she answered.

"Ave a drink on me then!"

Sofia looked me over, her dark eyes mocking, a smile on her lips that seemed to say: 'Who're **you** kiddin'?'

But all she said was: 'A sweet martini, iced!' an' turned away.

I got the order and handed it to her. She wasn't too chatty, but she said at last: 'Your snooker's good!' but still with that mockin' smile.

‘S all right!’ I answered, pullin’ at me pint. ‘I started young.’

Sonia said nuthin’, just took a sip at her martini. Then she went on.

‘You always play here?’

‘Na, I play anywhere. If there’s a table, of course!’

‘And where for instance?’

I thought! Fact is, there’s not so may pubs around with full size tables, most have bar billiards or pool, an’ I won’t play them, only if I’m desperate. But I know where all the full-size tables are the whole of Tyne and Wear. I told her of one or two places.

‘An’ where are **they**?’ asked the girl.

‘Some distance. But yer gets to know.’

‘Saw you had a quid on that game,’ Sonia went on. ‘D’ you make much that way?’

‘Beer money,’ I mumbled. I didn’t want to let on how much I made: might sound greedy sort of.

By now it was drinkin’ up time, an’ we had to stop. Even in Dad’s pub! Sonia vanished sudden, and I wondered if I’d see her again. I wished she’d told me more about herself, her telephone for instance.

I carried on with the snooker. An’ still that 147 preoccupied me! I got 50s from time to time, which proves me first was no fluke, but somehow I couldn’t get beyond. 59 was the best I could manage! Frustrating but there it was!

Come the spring, I got a bit more mobile. I went round the pubs over a wider area, an’ that way me harvest was the richer, specially if they didn’t know me.

One fine evening I was round at this country pub, lovely spot it was, great beer, gardens, a marvellous snooker hall with a table smooth as silk. I’d been there a few times before but not that often, it’s a bit far from me own patch.

As I went out into the hall, there was quite a crowd round the table. I ordered some beer and looked on. They didn’t seem up to much an’ I wondered if it was worth a bet. I hadn’t won much recently, and a spot of cash adds a bit of edge to a game! I drank on and bided me time.

They finished the game an’ I moved forward.

‘A fiver on the next game!’ I said.

They looked at me and grinned. I grinned back.

'A fiver?' said one of them, a little bloke with a tash and a neat haircut. I'd noticed him. Not so bad, but not so very good either. I fancied I'd be a match for him.

'A fiver!' I repeated.

The others scattered a bit, they didn't seem too keen, but the little bloke stayed on.

'I don't play for less than ten,' he said. I jumped a bit, and mentally checked me wallet. 'S all right, I'd got enough to get home, **if** I lost, and I didn't think that too likely.

'You're on,' I grinned.

They set up the table, and we tossed to start. The little chap won, and broke. A good shot brought his white into baulk, plum behind the green! Snookered already!

But I did a marvellous shot off the cushion, hit a red, and again the white was in baulk, this time in my favour; Tash missed leaving me a sitter. From then on it was all my way, an' it wasn't long before I was piling up a break fit for a king - until I made a mistake - again on a sitter - Tash had yet another chance. His pals by now were gathered round and started urgin' 'im on; I wasn't so happy about that, but fair enough, I should 'ave brought in me own supporters...

Tash by now was scoring steadily, and soon had just caught up on my 37 when for some reason he went and made a bloomer - the sort of cock-up I am renowned for. I jumped for joy, in me 'ead of course, not right there in the snooker hall! I hadn't dreamed anyone but me could do a thing like that - miss a black when it was just about sittin' on the pocket! It duly went in and the game was won - Tash handed me the tenner without any fuss; his pals had the grace to give me a bit of a clap. I turned to go, feeling with relief it had been a good evening's work but I'd be better off enjoying the proceeds elsewhere...

But to my surprise Tash was holding onto my arm.

'A rematch?' he was saying still with a grin.

I froze. I could hardly believe this and was about to go off with a polite headshake, when something made me change me mind. I was saying to meself:

'To hell with it, why not? If you've got a glutton for punishment here, only too anxious to throw away his cash, why **not** take advantage?'

Something in the pit o' me stomach made me hesitate; but the devil won the round and I was lost:

'Why not?' I said with a nonchalance I didn't entirely feel. 'I c'n play snooker all day - and night!'

Immediately we reset the table - and no one had the nerve to say it was their turn!

By now the rumour had got round and not just a handful was watching the rematch but the whole bloody pub - it was great -though I have to say I really hoped I wouldn't let meself down as I was wont to do from time to time - on this great occasion!

It was a good match - but tough. Both of us played with razor blade caution cos we knew full well one slip from one and the other'd win!

And the errors started creeping in - sitters we missed, and we started going in for negative play - a bit of a bore for the audience. Then suddenly I had a chance - it was a long pot -but to hell with it I was fed up with all this and decided all or nothing, I'd risk it and see what happened - it worked!

The ball went clean in an' there was a cheer all round - and not a sarcastic one either. This set me up and now I was potting in my usual style - 30, 40, 50, I felt I could get the lot; till the usual sitter eluded me! I cursed - and it was Tashie's turn.

He had a difficult pot to get but somehow he did it - and his supporters were goin' spare. I had to admire him as he just went on potting - and I looked at the scoreboard - the game was close but I was still ahead - though he was about to overtake me - and did. I moaned - he'd won I said to myself - it was goodbye to my tenner! But wait - another sitter'd been missed, **now** was my chance - I went to the table. The silence was electric as I looked at the scoreboard, hardly anything in it! I managed to pot, great! And then missed - curses! It was a black ball game -the whole bloody thing now rested on the black!

We sparred with each other, slowly, painfully - and then I missed a ball I should have potted; Tash got down to the table for a long shot across and diagonal I didn't think **anyone** could sink.

Here the tension became unbearable, certainly for me. Tash was leaning over the table, and, slowly, carefully, he took aim, then, oh no, the black was in the pocket!! I'd lost, the match and my winnings!

But to compensate the cheering was fantastic - and for both of us - not just Tash, I could see that all too well. I handed over the money almost willingly, a rare thing for little me!

'Thanks,' grinned Tash. 'And look at the score, mate!' I did, it was 147! Not as a break admittedly but at least he could tell his pals he'd scored 147.

I shook hands with him - and was about to go - for the second time - when a familiar voice stopped me in my tracks.

'A sweet martini, please.' It was Sonia!

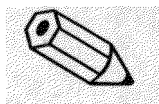
'You!' I gasped.

'Yes, me, you just played me brother, an' me Dad owns this pub. Where's that martini?'

I hadn't won the match, but it was the beginning of a beautiful friendship!

## Activity 2

Please Answer the Following Questions on 147:



Rewrite the following sentences from the Story in 'Correct' English:

You wanna play, it's got to be a proper table

Them days there was more ado at social club than what we called the Labour Exchange

The ball went clean in an' there was a cheer all round...

His supporters were goin' spare

The silence was electric

A familiar voice stopped me in my tracks

2) Answer the following questions in your own words:

Does the story teller have a name? What do you think he is like?

What evidence is there Sonia liked the lad?

Who won the match between Tash and the story teller?

Give the meanings of the following:

Snooker was all the rage

I wasn't above walkin' into a pub

The more hooked I got

It was me second home like

It was like shellin' peas

Tell the story 147 in your own words in not more than 300

	words (write in 'Correct' English, without dialogue...)
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