

# Inkslingers Blended Session

## 11<sup>th</sup> February 2023

“The Prompt from The Bag Was:

“I Can’t Believe I’m Going To Tell You This, But...”

And the Visual



*Tequila Car Wash*

## **A Taste of the Bottle**

**Greg Fields**

Cooney found his bench, the usual bench in the usual spot. He stretched and yawned, then sat himself down to splay across its slats. Over his shoulder the same morning sun shone onto the same grass before him. Around him the city edged into morning life. Buses choked out their exhaust, cars crept and honked, and the thousand-swarmed legs and arms of those coming and going moved past the square, heads bent forward to look at phones or to avoid even the hint of interchange with those around them.

There was a time when Cooney felt the freedom of detachment, the absence of responsibility or obligation to anything or anyone other than himself. A man of the streets, if not a man of the world, and wise in its ways. A younger man, capable of taking all that he needed and most of what he wanted, then sharing his spoils in whatever way his heart led him. He could shrug off the inconveniences, the uncertainties and the risks. Young enough to command the respect of strength, clever enough to navigate the currents and eddies of the peculiar personalities around him, Matthew Cooney felt his place. He belonged to these streets, or so he had come to accept.

There was a time when he held his world together and thumbed his nose at convention and duty, and all the sterile values that had been pushed his way. Now, though, on mornings when his knees ached and his back spasmed from another restless sleep on a cold ground or a hard bench, when his stomach craved something more than a city mission muffin, when the yearnings for human touch underscored just how alone he really was, Matthew Cooney watched those who shuffled past him with a tinge of regret.

And it was on one such morning when James Murphy appeared from a distant corner of the square and came to sit next to Cooney on the usual bench, in the usual spot.

“Mornin, Matt. A grand day ahead of us, it looks like.”

“And what makes you say that James?”

“A warm sun and a bright sky. Makes people feel good. And when they feel good, they feel generous.”

Cooney said nothing in reply. He leaned back into the hard bench and sought some level of comfort, but the slats seemed to cut into him more deeply this morning than he had noticed before. A hard place, this.

James offered a bottle from underneath his jacket, but Cooney shook his head. “Ah, all the more’s for me, then,” said James, and drew off a long swallow.

“How do we do it, James?”

“What is it that we do, Matt?”

“We live. We survive on these streets, then convince ourselves that we’re free of all the dreck and muck that these other fools latch their lives to. How do we do it?”

James pondered, then sipped again from the bottle. “We do it day by day, Matty. Just like them. But I think we’re ahead of the game. Did you ever consider that we might be happier? We have less to lose, and we’re closer in touch with the simple things that really matter. A bite to eat. A place to sleep. Even a bit of friendship. And no one to answer to. Not like them. Not like all these people chasing things that really give them nothing different than what we have. Maybe on a grander scale, but nothing so different.

“Ah, James, I’ve always thought that, you know. But now,” and he drew back on the bench and sighed, “But now.....I can’t believe I’m going to tell you this. Now I’m not so sure. I’m thinking we’ve been squandering our time. Surviving like sewer rats.” He paused again. “I’m not sure I can do this much longer.”

James laughed, then placed a hand on Cooney’s shoulder. “Matty, what else in God’s name are you going to do? You’re here now, man, and this is your life. We don’t get the luxury of regret. Not at this age.”

For a few minutes neither spoke. The sun grew higher, the morning warmed, and the sidewalks grew more crowded. A city on the make. On the chase.

Cooney stretched himself again. What, indeed, could he do? He felt the hard slats of the bench press into his back, a discomfort that he could not overcome. Nothing to be done.

At last he turned back to James, sitting next to him in equal silence. "James," he said softly. "Could you share a taste of that bottle?"

## **The Sheep and The Bus**

**Matthew Tubridy**

Suddenly there's a sheep in front of the bus,  
Suddenly sheep rears up,  
Becomes 1000 times bigger,  
Turns black,  
Shouts! Is there a Matthew on board?  
So I flow out the window and turn a 1000 times bigger,  
I say 'And who are you sheepy man?'  
We both fly under the water of the nearby lake, wrestle each other,  
'You stopped my bus carrying my chess team! I shall wrestle you to the  
bottom of the lake for this!'  
Sheepy monster just hisses.  
Eventually I slam dunk the sheepy monster into the lake,  
The waves smash against my bus but it needed a clean anyway!  
I go back to my normal size and get back on the bus.

## Tequila Car Wash

Ciaran O'Melia

"I can't believe I'm going to tell you this, but I hate car washes and living behind one is not the way you said to my parents when you ask for my hand in marriage. You said it would be a chain of outlets like Mr Clean."

"Well we all have to start somewhere." He said defensively.

"And another thing what's with the name?" Catherine was building up to something.

"It is a car wash."

"I'm not talking about that, it's Tequila, ye gobshite."

"Oh that, well it is Mexico and you know I studied marketing and all that." Raul felt the ball was firmly in his court now.

"Soooo, and what did that do for you, go on tell me."

"Well ye see everyone that gets a car washed here he gets free, mind you free Tequila."

Catherine was momentarily stumped at this. She said, "Who is going to give them free drinks?"

Raul did not know the next part, or in fact how to explain the answer to her question. He hymned and hawed, till he built up the courage to tell her.

"You will."

"Me, in my arm pit, no way Jose, or whatever you call it down here." She knew it annoyed him that she made no effort to learn Spanish

"Now hear me out, when I married you, you said you were a champion on roller blades? Sex sells down here and there is nothing like a fine figure of a lady coming up to your window on roller skates, you will look taller."

He decided against telling her about the plunging neck on her blouse and leather hotpants

She decided against telling him that drink and driving was a no- no, and she was skipping back to Mammy and Daddy as quick as she could.

## Hatred

Matthew Tubridy

It's the hatred and being fed up,  
That you promote,  
You should be building apartments!  
You should be minding children!  
You must be keeping children alive!  
As a surgeon,  
Oh I get so much job satisfaction! I do!  
Or are you getting away from society being fed up of you?  
Giving out ice cream.  
Selling hats for the winter,  
Giving people Curries in a restaurant.  
Providing Irish people with the latest electronic gadgets.  
Saving people from madness,  
Giving them the right pills,  
Having 10 babies,  
Feeding 10 babies,  
But then the teacher frowns at you,  
Maths homework incomplete,  
Preventing a blood bath in a hotel,  
Keeping dangerous people away from society,  
I have a purpose! I have a use!  
I'm not a wonk!  
Then we have a specimen who saunters into school,  
I'll give him a grade!  
Once you go to university your lifted away,  
Your no longer a specimen,  
Engineering! Medicine!  
I shall dedicate my life to serving,  
You're a paedophile!  
Is the accusation,  
So then we spend our live trying  
to move away from that,  
How are you in relation to the children or puppies?

## **I Can't Believe**

### **davieinthevalley**

I can't believe I'm going to tell you this, well I hear the power of expression bursting from you, but hold it hold it, I already know, you hold too much for a tongue that is heard in other mouths of gossip,

you know so much but not how the word know was invented, sometimes our mouth is a mirror of the outer self expressing what is not seeing but imagined and becomes shape, some use the waves of the voice to carry small shots of tide that break a soul on the wild sea while others use a vibration bigger as a song to dance the waves back into shape and we begin to daily build in grieve and joy, and seek to find strength and I pray the next time I hear you won't believe what I'm going to tell you, may it come as a blessing and relief that something beautiful that's found on its way to the future,,,



## Camping

Matthew Tubridy

Walking along the Nephin Beg range,  
But you need a burger in Newport!  
As you go further than ever,  
But then I'm in hospital,  
3 meals a day,  
But I wanted to walk further than ever,  
Without a burger van behind me,  
In hospital you get 3 meals,  
I was going to walk the Nephin Beg Mountain range,  
With no camping equipment,  
Just a ripped up t-shirt on my back,  
My end to the walk is the doors of St Patricks Hospital,  
The understand I wanted to walk further than ever,  
The give me pills and tie my legs together so I can't walk,  
My family wanted me to walk further than ever,  
I boast to the other patients, or are they walkers?  
They suggest I bring camping equipment next time,  
Eventually I learn to walk around the garden in St Pats.

## Fornication In Knock

Sandra McCowen

Out in the countryside, Margaret drank in the sheer greenness of the scenery with her eyes. Her mouth stayed open as she tried to believe how much greenery she was seeming. The Dublin where she and John came from was grey and brown.

Still holding hands with John, she noticed that he kept twisting and turning as if looking for something over his shoulder.

“What’s wrong John?” She asked.

“Ma,” John replied. “She’ll be looking for us.”

“So she’s taking the train to Knock like we did?”

“No, Patrick has a car. She would have commandeered his car and ordered him to drive her to Knock. Of course, Dad will be with her. He’s not allowed leave her side.”

Margaret remembered that Patrick was John’s perfect elder brother who went into the priesthood. “So Patrick is going to pull over to the side of the road so that your Ma could give out to us for not going to Mass yesterday “

“I don’t know.” John glanced over his shoulder yet again. “She once said if Patrick ever brought scandal to the family, she’d have him killed.”

Margaret halted forcing John to slow to a stop. The country road suddenly seemed very narrow and treacherous to her. “John, what exactly happened?”

John faced Margaret. His eyes kept darting from side to side.

“Ma was having an argument with one of the neighbours and this neighbour said that Patrick liked men.”

“Was your mother always this crazy?”

“Yes,”

“Are there other members of your family who are not right in the head?”

“My Ma’s Ma, three of my sisters and some cousins.”

“Right,” Margaret had heard enough. John, like her was one of nine siblings. She reckoned that John had about seventy cousins like she did. Although she was no maths buff, she guessed that about 23 of his cousins would suffer mental health issues. Thinking about the children that she would have with John frightened her. “Let’s go.” She and John continued with their walk.

They saw cattle, sheds, a tractor and even a farmer smoking while leaning against a stone wall. John continued watching the occasional traffic as it speed up or down the road. He cursed and muttered about ‘no footpaths’.

“May be people drive everywhere around here.” Margaret said.

“Get over the wall.” John picked up Margaret and flung her over a stone-built wall. She rolled over into a field. John almost fell on top of her.

His mother had arrived. He and Margaret got up and started to run up a slope. They were heading towards a distant farmhouse. Their youth would help them outrun John’s parents and bookish older brother.

“Get them, get them,” John’s mother screamed.

John and Margaret scrambled over more stone-built barriers. They got more and more wrecked as they tackled the hill. The farmhouse crept nearer. It appeared new and occupied. Mouth open, Margaret somehow managed to stay ahead of Sean and Patrick Doyle. John stayed by her side.

A few hours later, a big heavy-set Garda stood between John, Margaret and a farming couple on one side and Aoife, Sean and Patrick Doyle on the other side.

The Garda, despite being the 1960s, did not care that Patrick was a priest. He just wanted to take down everyone’s details and keep the peace.

“So what started this trouble?” The Garda asked in an accent that mystified Margaret.

“My son John and his slut of a woman were fornicating all over Knock.” Aoife replied.

John and Margaret opened their mouths to speak but the Garda’s stance told them to keep silent. Meanwhile, the Garda scribbled in his notebook. “And who told you this young couple were fornicating all over Knock?”

“Mary Lally of Lally’s Guesthouse?”

“And did this Mary Lally see this fornication?”

“Of course, Garda, she saw everything.”

“And when did Mary see this fornication?”

“Last night,”

“And when did Mary tell you about this fornication?”

“This morning, she rang me on the telephone.”

“So what happened last night?” The Garda turned to John.

John told the Garda about kissing Margaret the previous night.

“If you did kiss, I’ll have to give you a caution for public indecency.” The Garda said.

“They did more than kiss.” Aoife grumbled. “They’re fornicated with everyone in town.”

The Garda stifled a snigger with difficulty.

“Do you think people fornicating all over town is funny, do you?”

“No, Misses Doyle,” The Garda faced Aoife. “Did you see your son and his wife fornicating last night?”

“No, Garda,”

“So your friend, Mary Lally of Lally’s Guesthouse saw the whole incident?”

“Yes, Garda, she saw everything.”

“But if your son and his wife were fornicating with each other and with several other people in Knock, wouldn’t Mary have had the time to stop

them? Mary Lally was never the type of person to let anyone engage in public indecency.”

“She tried to stop them, Garda but they gave her two black eyes.”

Margaret somehow managed to keep a straight face. John adopted a po-faced expression having heard his mother tell wild stories many times before.

“So Mary Lally went to the doctor after being assaulted?” The Garda jotted more notes in his notebook.

“Of course, Garda. She told me all about it.”

“What I can’t understand is why I wasn’t told about this mass public indecency last night. There’re a lot of people like Mary Lally in Knock.”

“They were all tied up and threatened with death and everyone else took part in the mass fornication.”

“That must have taken a lot of planning, Misses Doyle. You can’t just tie up half the people in a town on a whim.”

“But you never leave your station, Garda. You just sit behind your counter all day reading your books.”

“I was out on the beat last night and Knock was quiet as usual.”

## **This Christmas**

**Matthew Tubridy**

This Christmas, are you having a good time?  
Big bulgy eyes look at me.  
If you're having a good time I'll pick you up  
And hold you upside down,  
The Christmas interrogator is called Andy,  
He goes to every house in Ireland,  
With his bulgy eyes,  
He spends the most time with people who live alone,  
He looks at them with his bulgy eyes,  
And asks, 'Are you having a good time?'  
No no no a elders woman screams!  
Bulgy eyes picks her up and holds her upside down,  
He brings her to the world of no Christmas joy,  
But all the people sent there find comfort with each other at Christmas,  
One of them catches a rabbit and cooks it over the campfire,  
The sing Christmas carols, Deck the Halls!  
In the New Year, all those people are let out of that world,  
Back to selling sweets in the local shop,  
Juliet, Rosemary, Helen, Peter,  
Fix that burst tyre,  
They have forgotten the Anti Christmas world  
And are ready for a new year.

## **I'm Going To Tell you This**

**Angelina Kelly**

I can't believe I'm going to tell you this, but I'm going away and I don't think I'm coming back. I'm going to Gran Canaria to escape the unsettled weather and I'll be staying at least for the remainder of the Winter.

I'm fed up with all four seasons in the one day – all year round – I need consistent weather, preferably warm, and blue skies with day long sunshine. I know there is a price to pay for all preferences and the cost for this one is shorter days in summer, but it's worth it because in Ireland, in summer, the nights are short but it's too cold to sit out and enjoy them in comfort. In Gran Canaria the nights are longer but at least it's warm enough to sit outdoors and enjoy the heat. The days are 12 hours in winter and 14 hours in summer so they are more consistent and it's nice having long bright, warm days throughout the winter.

The song lyrics spring to mind, "I'm going where the weather suits my clothes". Well, my clothes are best suited to summer – and so am I – so "I'm leaving on a jet plane, I don't know when I'll be back again"

## Howling

**Matthew Tubridy**

You could go up a mountain and howl,  
Only a sheep would hear me,  
The sheep sits me down  
and gives me a latte,  
What's your issues?  
Sheep asks?  
Sheep is charging me 100 euro for the counselling session,  
Up the mountain,  
The wind howls down to us,  
But there's a barista coffee machine,  
Sheep makes me a coffee,  
My foot is in a bog hole.



## **From Annapolis to Armageddon**

### **Gerard Keogh**

(Entries from the personal war diary of LtCol Thomas B. Schultz, Commanding Officer, 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines (under the command of 1st Marine Division and I Marine Expeditionary Force).

March 9

The battalion entered the outskirts of Nasiriyah as the lead element of RCT-1. We immediately received contact from Iraqi forces on both sides of Route 1; my battalion sustained its first casualties of the campaign. Enemy fire was suppressed successfully and the RCT advanced further along the highway. Our objective was to secure the first bridge over the Euphrates, in the east of the city. I ordered combat engineers to advance ahead of the main body and disarm any charges that might have been attached to the bridge. In the event, the engineers saw an opportunity to execute a coup de main, and they secured the crossing after a brief firefight. The RCT executed an unopposed crossing of the Euphrates and entered the city of Nasiriyah itself.

We encountered stiff resistance from the Iraqi army, as well as from irregular forces. One can't help but wonder if the decision to disband all Marine Corps tank battalions in favour of precision fires was a gross act of irresponsibility on the part of the leadership of the Corps. The fact that I was in the position of having to request heavy direct-fire support from the Army units that were attached to the RCT, is one that really sticks in my craw. In the event, close air support from the aviation combat element, as well as air-interdiction and ground-attack sorties flown by the Air Force, helped quell any serious opposition from the Iraqi forces in and around the city.

With the spectre of the coming war with Iran looming on the horizon, it is imperative to expedite the advance through Iraq and to achieve our objectives without getting slowed down by Iraqi resistance. For this reason, it is necessary to employ a level of force that would have been considered unacceptable during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. Our next objective is the capture of Al Diwaniyah.

Not long after crossing the line of departure at the Kuwait-Iraq border, we were subjected to attempted vehicle-borne suicide bombings by

irregular forces. These, and other VBIED attacks, were easily repulsed. However, the undeniable religious aspect of the present conflict was on full display in southern Iraq. Jihadist insurgents from elsewhere in the region and from other parts of the Islamic world joined local Shia militias in their attempt to slow our advance on Baghdad. All unit commanders, from the division level down to rifle platoons, are under strict orders from the leadership at I MEF to attribute enemy action to something other than being a part of the wider global jihad. I have no doubt that Lt-Gen Hoffman himself knows that this order is total BS; every Marine in this area of operations is fully aware of the true nature of this conflict. The public back home are being lied to.

It was obvious to any cynical observer (of whom I am one) that the Islamic Republic of Iran had no intention of complying with the terms of the JCPOA. Frequent bellicose statements from the Ayatollah, the president, the leadership of the IRGC and others, made no secret of their ultimate aim of wiping the State of Israel off the face of the earth. The acquisition of the technology and the materials necessary for the development of nuclear weapons was the means by which they would achieve that aim. So here we are: Marines, sailors, soldiers and airmen, sent to disarm a nuclear-capable Iran, openly threatening to nuke Tel Aviv.

March 14

Nasiriyah proved to be a tough nut to crack (contrary to my earlier optimistic assessment of the tactical situation in the city). Enemy fighters (regular and irregular) put up tenacious resistance. Many of the city's buildings were heavily booby-trapped with IEDs of various kinds. Company commanders reported that several of the fighters were especially hard to kill; it was not unusual for our riflemen to have to empty a magazine into some of them before they finally fell to the deck. As with the fighting in Fallujah during Operation Phantom Fury, I suspect that these jihadists are taking stimulants – most likely methamphetamines – before they engage in combat.

Sadly, I must report that my battalion suffered six KIA and fourteen wounded, three of them seriously. The fatalities have been taken by helicopter to the local field hospital, to await repatriation at a later date. MEDEVAC helos took the wounded to facilities in Kuwait City for

treatment. I expect some of them to return to active-duty service before too long; others, I fear, have suffered life-changing injuries and will be going home on the next available C-17.

It is inevitable that I will lose many more of the Marines under my command as this campaign progresses. I can't help wondering, however, if their sacrifice will be considered by future historians to have been worth the signing of a bad nuclear deal with one member of the "Axis of evil."

## **Plane Journey**

**Matthew Tubridy**

Plane needs to go all the way down the coast of Portugal,  
To Faro,  
Plane does a few loop da loops!  
'We are experiencing a high level of turbulence!'  
Pilot says...  
'Hold on to your seats!'  
I clutch my knees,  
'Who is this pilot?' I ask.  
Freddy is his name,  
He's flying around a 100 people.  
He did flying lessons over the Curragh,  
Talking off from Balldonnel Airport,  
Wheee! He would say,  
He would do loop da loops,  
In his 1 man aircraft,  
His instructor gives him the thumbs up.

## **Fireball**

**Gerard Byrne**

It was a normal morning for the staff at Tequila car wash, until Josephine cut through one of the gas lines while building a new counter for reception. She turned to her younger sister Jill and quickly blurted out, "there's something I have to tell you"

But before Jill had a chance to reply, the whole place turned into a fireball. Their bodies were torn apart by the explosion. Sending flailing limbs into the nearby playground to trauma the local school kids, who would need years of psychological help to get over the trauma.

The end

## The life of an adult

Matthew Tubridy

Save the baby,  
Do all the shopping,  
If you don't do all these things...  
In Ms Craig's Geography class,  
What's a U shaped Valley,  
Oh yeah you really need that,  
It's a lesson in how quiet you can be,  
The chirruping students,  
I sit in my desk in the public service,  
Just like I sat in the classroom,  
My name is Fred,  
I drew a U shaped valley,  
But there were the messers, Jack and Jock,  
Throwing chewing gum around,  
They both become electricians,  
While Fred got a job in a public service office,  
Ms Craig draws a meandering river on the blackboard,  
Fred draws it on his page. He  
watches Jack and Jock,  
School is a test on how compliant you can be,  
I'll dance to the tune the teachers play,  
But the music is in silence,  
The students try to play their own music,  
Huh Huh Huh,  
And when they go to University they must have danced to the teachers  
music,  
Maths...  $x$  plus  $y$  equals  $t$ .  
It does, it does,  
U shaped valleys and meandering rivers,  
I'll tell you what to write,  
Teachers brain is right behind yours,  
You're a puppet,  
Can you dance with teacher?  
 $X$  plus  $y$  equals  $t$ ,

It's like a dance on an ice rink,  
You skate to  $x$ ,  
Then  $y$  at the other side of the rink,  
Then come back to the middle for  $t$ ,  
 $x$  plus  $y$  equals  $t$ ,  
Teacher said it so we believe,  
In the playground,  
The students dance,  
Teacher is the composer,  
But then there's Jack and Jock and half the class,  
Playing their own music,  
Yeah! Riff that guitar!  
Whack those drums,  
Get lost in the music,  
Lose the teachers dance,  
Once you've downed 3 vodkas,  
Guns n Roses, yeah,  
Where do we go now?  
I'll get away from drawing U shaped valleys and meandering rivers,  
Tick tock the silent clock.

## Heading home

### Magda Velloso

Ella leant her forehead onto the windshield of her car as she watched the dark clouds turn darker and she knew the rain would pour down in a minute.

She had driven since five in the morning, hoping she'd reach home in the early afternoon, but she hadn't expected to drive under heavy rain just when she was about to face the last 60 miles and the worst part of the road.

The last storm had had large holes dug on the road and one had to be very careful how one chose which side of the road to drive along, never diverting one's attention from the oncoming traffic. Now, under heavy rain the clouds were announcing, it would be impossible to go on.

She was reminded of days of old, when she was a little girl, when her parents would take her and her siblings to a faraway beach resort, and the road was so bad they'd drive for hours on end, when nowadays you could reach that same spot in just a few hours. She thought to herself "if my father could drive under such bad conditions, why can't I brave this storm that's coming and make a push to get home earlier?"

"Well, I can't believe I'm telling you this, she said later, and I know you'll call me a coward, but I didn't dare go on and stopped at the first car wash I found by the roadside to wait for the storm to come and go. Meanwhile, I went into the diner right next to eat and had some cappuccino and some pancakes to while away the time."

She might as well have pushed home because the clouds did not take long to disperse and not a drop of rain fell on her way home hours later.



## On a Doorstep in Ballybough

Matthew Tubridy

Stuck on a doorstep in Ballybough,  
No food or water,  
Gizz us some change?  
He asks,  
His name is Tommo,  
He went to Mount Temple School,  
Giz some change!  
A past pupil from Blackrock College walks past,  
Tosses Tommo a few golden coins,  
Hey! says Tommo,  
Didn't we play a hockey match together!  
The Blackrock boy, says oh yeah!  
You were in goal! And I scored 10 goals on you!  
Then afterwards we all got orange juice and a Mars bar,  
On Tommo's team there was Iffer, liffer, Gogger, Ploggger, Mogger,  
On the Blackrock team was Ralph, Steven,  
And the coach was Montgomery,  
Tommo was in goal,  
The Blackrock boys run rings around the Mount Temple boys,  
Scoring 10 goals,  
On the bus on the way home,  
The whole Mount Temple Team were crying,  
10 goals!  
A few weeks later their coach fecks off to the Canary Islands,  
He coaches the team remotely,  
The next day Tommo is in Geography class,  
Flicking bits of paper around,  
At iffer and liffer,  
Ms Craig geography teacher looks sternly and Tommo,  
One day you will end up sleeping on a doorway,  
She remarks,  
'Now Tommo' she says 'time to go to the lower class'  
In that class they chat a lot and don't learn much geography,  
Tommo is in his element!

He doesn't need to open a book!  
So the Leaving Cert comes around...22% for Tommo,  
The students in Ms Craig's class get Higher B,s,  
Ms Craig rejoices with them on results day,  
And spits at Tommo,  
After school, Tommo gets a job on a refuse truck,  
He collects refuse for Greg, who was in Ms Craig's class,  
Greg is now a barrister, went to Trinity College Dublin,  
Tommo knew that so he threw a few banana skins outside Greg's front  
door,  
Hope ya slip on that! he shouts, ya miserable prick!  
Tommo soon realises it's all barristers living on that road,  
It's called 'Barrister Terrace' in Blackrock.

## **I'm Telling You This**

### **Laura Alves**

I can't believe I'm going to tell you this, but I can't think about what to write! It usually might take a few minutes and then words come rolling down my brain!

But it has been a while since I was here last. In fact, last time I was trying to write something here was last year and we are fast approaching halfway into the first quarter.

Each year seems to go faster and faster, and this one seems to be no exception!

They say time flies when you're having fun and staying with friends and family at a sunny beach town for more than a month has been doing me a great deal of good.

I am gathering energy enough for the whole rest of the year and hopefully over the next few weeks my inspiration and creativity will come back with a bang!

## **Tequila car wash**

### **Clíodhna Joyce-Daly**

The ground felt damp, wet even, as Pádraig rolled onto his back soaking the dampness into his spine. He was not sure how he ended up on the floor. Whether it was arguing over beds in the early hours of the morning or pure laziness, he questioned why he would be agreeable to the callous surface inflicting further damage into his office hunched back.

Metallic was the taste that lingered in his mouth and he desperately wished he brushed his teeth before he decided to sprawl across the floor. “You’re only as old as you feel,” were the words that consumed his mind. In this moment, he thought “I feel 100.” As the pain in his back and the horrible taste overwhelmed him, he figured it would be best to peel himself off the ground and go on a quest for a lone toothbrush.

As he dragged his body onto to the side of the bed to hoist himself up, his eyes fixated on the state of the remembrance of the night. The bed sheets were unslept in – yet in between the pillow cases that were thrown in array and smashed cans that somehow ended up in the bed, it looked as if the party was occurring in the 10 ft space.

The ringing in his ears persisted as he managed to slowly sit up. He wondered how he ended up beside the amp last night with some girl was crying to him about her ex-boyfriend.

At his age, he could not fathom why his friends wanted to go to such loud places with limited space to chat, speak or have a laugh. But maybe that was the point, no talking. Throughout the years, life got in way of the planning or meeting up. So many things had changed and as the years passed, the group got smaller and smaller as the lads moved, got married, or had children. Times had evolved and so did the conversations they had – in fact they became few and far between and more about the challenges life presents – unpaid bills, work stress, and rent. In those brief moments he realised how much their relationships had shifted. It saddened him in some way. He grappled that while he was good craic, and extremely reckless when he was younger, he had

responsibilities and now a night like last, took a toll on him despite being reunited with his comrades.

Jumpers, towels, and a bath mat laid strewn across the bedroom floor. "Did someone have a shower in here?" he thought, as he glanced down at two empty water bottles that were crunched up under someone's foot. As he made his way to the bathroom, he found the pizza box he carried home.

After the noise consumed his sanity at the club, he decided it was time to find some food to quench his hunger. Unfortunately the crying girl, he was desperate to get away from, followed him into the pizza shop that was connected to the club. While he could think of nothing worse than being stuck with the painful stories of this random girl, he was a bit concerned her friends were nowhere to be found and she glued to him out of the sea of people she could have chosen.

Padraig sighed and briefly asked, "Do you not have any friends looking for you?" She tilted back and forth on the tips of her shoeless feet. The words pierced her and she began to tear up again – obviously he hit a sore spot. In a way, Padraig felt sorry for her, she was alone in a foreign country and stalked a random man out into a pizza shop in the state of her drunkenness and confusion.

"Right well do you want something to eat then?" He certainly wasn't going to share his pizza pie with her, but sure, he could get her a slice.

She rubbed her eyes further into oblivion, her mascara began to form blackened patches under her eyes and her hands matched. The air was sticky from the blazing summer heat, a feeling that neither him or the girl were used to. Sweat marks formed along the side of her blue dress and were growing in the poorly ventilated shop. As she opened her mouth an aroma of booze and fags roamed from her mouth. Padraig wondered how he could help this girl whose mouth smelled like a ginmill floor.

By the time he tried to obtain an answer from her, a gust of wind picked up on his ankles.

Although it wasn't the wind, it was another girl standing in the doorway, with a crazed look in her eye.

“Jesus Emma” she exclaimed “you had us all worried” the girl exclaimed as she pulled off her abnormally high heels and flicked back her matted extensioned hair.

“Who the fuck are you?” she asked, glaring at my horribly mismatched summer outfit of checkered shorts and linen top.

“I was trying to help her, and yourself and her friends were nowhere to be found.”

“Stay away, you creep” and with that she dragged her half asleep shoeless friend off with her.

For the rest of the evening, Padraig avoided contact with other human beings and sat on the side of the road with his pizza box contemplating why he even agreed to allow the girl to follow him in the first place.

The chaos of last night consumed his mind as he stared blankly into the broken bathroom mirror, oblivious to the sound of his electric toothbrush. While the night replayed in his head, he seemed to miss the persistent knock at the front door.

As it appeared no one was awake or even obvious to the banging, Padraig put down his toothbrush and made his way to the door. He feared that it could be the neighbours rectifying a very well needed noise complaint or worse one of their mother’s coming to the door as none of them had been responding to texts while they were on their trip.

To his surprise, the opened door exposed a young woman in a blue linen dress who, while well-groomed held tiredness on her eyes and dark bags were highlighted under her limited makeup. Her hair was done up and was pulled back from her face. She held a large coffee cup in her left hand and a sortation of eyes in the other. As he began to settle himself, he realised that the woman standing in the doorway was the same woman from last night.

She looked meek as she spoke “I’m terribly sorry” she mumbled as she fumbled with her keys and flicked the lid of the coffee cup back, “I got mixed up on which apartment was mine that I was staying in, and in the process of searching for my correct accommodation, I began to feel sick

and noticed the silver car that is parked out front passenger side door was open.”

Padraig didn't like the sound of that, the silver car was his rented car.

“I can't believe I am going to tell you this, but I think I gave the inside of the car, a tequila car wash.”

## **East Wall Link Road**

### **Matthew Tubridy**

You get through,  
Being on a tricycle on the East link road,  
The trucks, scrape against the wall  
And there's an ice cream van,  
Plays it's childish music,  
There's motorbikes, electric scooters,  
There's boys on their skateboards,  
Go zipping before the trucks,  
And the scrambler bikes make a grinding sound,  
Then the elves fly in from the Wicklow Mountains,  
They land gracefully on the East link road,  
Thy stop the trucks by raising their hands,  
The boys on skateboards stop in awe,  
The elves start to sing,  
Grass begins to grow, on the tarmac,  
The elves 'If anyone wants to go through over the East Link toll bridge  
from now on, they must fly, like us, just watch us!'  
The elves fly across the Liffey and swoop down to Spar  
for some Dr Pepper,  
From then on the elves make it their business to fly people across the  
Liffey river,  
Managed by Elderon, chief elf,  
He drives a van around,  
Elves on demand,  
We fly cats caught in trees.



## Spinman

### Mark L'estrange

Paddy was about to leave when Dragon Girl said. "Can I ask you a big favour my dad owns a carwash, and these lads keep coming a breaking into the shop is there any way I can ring you if they show up again, please?" "Yes, I can help with that," "Thanks so much you're a legend" He was in his car when he noticed a boat outside the carwash shop, he went over to have a look at it, a man came out of the shop and asked, "Can I help you sir?" "I was talking to your daughter I think, and she was saying someone keeps breaking into your shop?" "Yes, that's right, and who are you please?" "I'm someone who can help you with your problem, let's say they will be spinning their way home." "That's very good of you to help us thank you." "No problem, can I have a look at that boat please is it for sale?" He pulled the cover off the boat and said "Yes, it's for sale it's a fishing boat do you like to fish?" "Yes, my favourite is fly fishing spinning is my favourite as you can imagine." "I gather that!" he said with a big laugh.

"Can I ask you one thing about your daughter?" "Yes, work away" "She said when she was younger, she whenever she was annoyed about something she would have fire coming from her mouth is that true, because after she said she said she was making it up?" "Yes, that is true she doesn't want anyone to know it she gets very embarrassed about it, and she would always hide she can do this."

Then a car flew into the driveway and four lads stormed out of the car with weapons the man said, "We don't want any trouble." "Well then just give us all the money from the till." Said one of them with a very aggressive voice. "I will give you one warning just leave now." "Who are you are we supposed to be scared?" He hardly got to finish their sentence and Spin man got them spin as well as their weapons, while the shop owner called the police.

When the cops got there, they were giving out to Paddy saying you should have rung us first you shouldn't take things into your own hands.

Dragon girl arrived home and saw the gang spinning and the police giving out to Paddy.



## **Sports Cars**

**Matthew Tubridy**

Mr Scott and Mrs Scott,  
Live in Sandymount,  
They have 30 grand between them,  
Mr Scott has a sportscar,  
He goes to the local gym,  
Mrs Scott works in a green grocers,  
They have 5 children,  
Rupert, Linsey, Matthew, Bob, and Rob,  
Thy go to the gym too,  
And play tennis,  
Mr Scott works in intel,  
He drives his sports-car there every day,  
On Sunday the Scotts have roast duck,  
The 5 children eat a lot  
Mr Scott yearns for the day the children will be raised and gone,  
So himself and the wife can go to the Canary Islands,  
One day Linsey is playing hockey and so, some on the other team  
whacks the stick off her leg, breaking it in 2 places,  
Mr Scott gets in his sportscar and rushes to the scene,  
Linsey is being packed into the Ambulance.

## **Kindness.**

**Elaine Reardon**

The dirt road follows the contours of Moss Brook, and our individually built homes tuck into hollows and hummocks. The forest at lower altitude begins with white pine, hemlock, and cherry. Oak and ash show up as the hill climbs. This road was a path that went north before the English settlers came. It was a place of plenty, close to where tribes from all around New England gathered to hunt and fish for the summer. That's another story, not the one I tell today, other than to say one by one we came, the new settlers. We felt the history in our bones, we acknowledged kinship with all that grew and lived here, seen and unseen.

We stumbled, one by one, into this quiet road, didn't know we'd stay for so long, for our lives. We didn't know how much we'd love the quiet, sometimes preferring to chat with the brook, to the Tree Aunties, and others, rather than people. And we understood that about each other. We listened to the frogs in the early spring, at snowmelt. We'd marvel that the first warm, over freezing, night of rain would bring out cavorting frogs. We'd hear the cry of some caught prey in the night, or the screech of hungry baby owls. We watch bear, moose, coyote, fox, otter, and hare from our windows.

Now we have grown old in this place Our children grew, and began their own lives, their own families. The web of life is resilient, like the spider's web, and can communicate so much when there is quiet, when you deepen into a place, and become part of it.

Life evolves, Even the Earth changes. This year's weather, a microburst during the summer, the recent heavy snow, followed by another storm, knocked down many aging trees, They in turn knocked down electric lines. We were without power or phones for four days. We couldn't leave home for the first three, because of all the still falling trees and electric lines. And the same sort of things are reflected in our bodies.

Most of us built our homes here when we were young; It hadn't been a settled road since colonial times, and the cellar holes in the forest told their own stories. There were several old homes left in the 6 miles of road, several old dam sites, and one old small pox cemetery of a

secondary dirt road. When I built my home I'd come out from Boston. My home is built from trees that were cleared from the forest to make space for the house. I knew nothing about home building and hired a small crew to build with me. Others helped, too; There were several work parties where all the carpenters in town came to work for a whole day, and other neighbours cooked, made vats of soup; and my house went up. This happened for several more families, one by one. Often we helped each other build during a weekend work party to get a good start.

One of the old farmhouses was owned by a man who was quite famous for doing spiritual readings. Because of his readings, one family moved from New York City, another from Chicago, and someone else from Ohio by way of Boston. Elwood's readings were powerful enough that people left good jobs to come in live in a small area that most people didn't know existed.

Back in time, when my daughter was young, we'd wander through the forest for hours, off the road sometimes. We'd find old cellar holes, the home, the barn, and sometimes the dug well. In a couple places we found lilacs or day lilies still grew

Yesterday I visited my friend Anna, from three miles up the road. Anna is in hospice now and getting tired. We believe that the land spirits have supported her life force, have transfused us all with energy during difficult times. I want to give Anna fattening food. I imagine whipping up puddings and custards, but refrain; I understand what it's like not be able to eat, but I wish to wrap more life around her bones. I took her flowers instead, early spring flowers to brighten the room against the snow outside.

Later I checked in with another neighbour, Judy, and we talked about the large size of her house, and how she could share a section for a younger person to help her out with tasks and keep her company sometimes, so that she could 'age in place', rather than move. Margie is now having work done to make her home easier to live in.

At my own home the wood pile has moved next to the house to make it easier to fetch, and I've got a new mini split system to heat and cool efficiently. There is solar on my roof. And still, when the electric lines

goes down, I can sled down the hill to the stream for water, and heat with wood. We alter our lives to accommodate the changes that aging brings. And we wait for another spring, just around the corner.

## **The boat**

**Deirdre Powell.**

There's nothing like messing about in boats, thought Brian. He really liked boats – his first experience of a boat as a boy was the ferry that sailed from Rosslare in Co. Wexford to Le Havre in France. It was the experience of a lifetime, he thought – there were decks upon decks to be climbed and the experience of a cinema and a smorgasbord that hosted all possible culinary delights were joys to behold as far as his childish mind was concerned. He liked to feel the wind in his face, as the seagulls cawed and flew overhead – the seagulls seemed to know that there were fresh food pickings to be had on board and so it was to their advantage to sail with the ship all the way from Rosslare to France.

Brian liked to watch the foam trail from the boat extending into the sea. It was a simple pleasure that made him happy. He felt much the same as an adult, and now, as he made the trip the other way, from France to Rosslare, he reflected that he could never have predicted as a boy what would happen in the intervening years. He thought back to the time when he was on board the boat for the first time – he had been looking over the edge of the ship's railings, when his father came to stand beside him. His father was a tall man, majestic in his way, and protective of his boy. His father started to chat sociably, asking what Brian thought of the ship and how he was looking forward to his holiday in France.

Presently, his father said, "I can't believe I'm going to tell you this, but I've some good news. I bought a raffle ticket at work. I never thought anything of it – I've bought hundreds of raffle tickets and lines and so on in my time but I've never won anything. The prize was so fantastic that I thought I'd never win it. Our family has won a chateau in the Loire valley – the raffle was open to anyone across the globe. A baron owned the chateau and he ran the raffle, profiting from the raffle sales. How do you feel about it, son – are you ready for the adventure?"

The young boy's eyes glowed with excitement – never in a million years did he anticipate that he would live in a chateau. “Does this mean that we'll live in a castle with turrets and a dungeon?”

“We hope so,” his father replied. “We'll all have to improve our knowledge of French but I expect you'll do well in school.”

Brian remembered how, as a boy, he had been thrilled at the news. But now, as an adult man, all he wanted to do was to retire to the ship's bar and enjoy a tequila.



## **St Louise's ward**

**Matthew Tubridy**

The grumpy nurse in St Louise's ward,  
What specimen today?  
Does he want to chop of your leg?  
Is that what he's thinking?  
Or chop off your head?  
We have more muscle then them,  
Does he want to take out your eyeballs?  
Then you'd be a nurse without eyeballs,  
No legs and no head,  
In St Louise's Ward,  
Or maybe that's a dream,  
Thought up by a psychotic,  
Chop off all the feet!  
The psychotic can see all the feet walking past his bedroom in the ward,  
He sings 'Chop off the feet!'  
At the lunch time Mr Psychotic wants to pour the custard,  
over another patient,  
The nurse scowls at Mr Psychotic,  
West's he gonna do?  
What's in his head?  
Chop off the feet!  
Order a black n Decker from Amazon!  
Get it sent the St Louise's Ward  
And let the fun begin!  
One night, St Louise's Ward is quiet,  
The nurses are playing cards in the Nurses station,  
All is quiet,  
Then an ear splitting nose occurs,  
Mr Psychotic got his black n decker delivery!  
He runs up the corridor,

All the other patients wake up,  
Mr Psychotic has a mask on,  
He Heads straight for the Nurses Station,  
This was my fantasy!  
He shouts and  
cuts off a leg,  
He cuts off a hand,  
And a thumb,  
Mr Psychotic barges his way out of hospital,  
Wielding his chainsaw,  
He heads to Fairview,  
He goes into spar,  
And gets a packet of crisps,