

Inkslingers Blended Session

18th February 2023

“The Prompt from The Bag Was:

“A Middle Aged Woman Discovers A Ghost”

And the Visual



Bloody Frogs Get Everywhere

A middle-aged woman discovers a ghost.

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.

The Ghost of Regret

Greg Fields

Before she died, before the last spasm of her troubled soul left the husk of a body worn by care and tattered by abuse of the bottle and the absence of hope, Emma Mannion spent her days in the past. If the speculation that our lives pass before our eyes when we die were really true, that review came to Emma in slow motion. It was not the telling of an instant that showed her the disjointed pathway from girlhood to where she now lay. It did not come in a flash. Rather, it unfolded leisurely, day by day, with nothing missing. She saw again the favored days of girlhood and her parents joy at a daughter they thought so perfectly formed and so evenly tempered. She saw the flash into womanhood, the friends, the adventures, the subtle and slow opening of possibility. During these last days it was as if each segment of her life, each year, each place where her footsteps once fell, came back to her in vivid detail.

And so it was that on a night before the end of it all, a cold night in October when a soft wind pushed leaves down the broken sidewalk outside her home, when the year itself turned with subtle mourning to the realization that all things must die, Emma Mannion saw in her mind the one visitor she had hoped would pass her by.

Years ago she had been a wife, and through it, became a mother. Once born, Donal Mannion had been her lodestone, the focus that she needed to pull herself together enough to forge what passed for a livelihood. He had been a dutiful son, as much as his own untamed temperament would permit, and for that she was grateful.

But she held no gratitude for the one who had brought it all on. And now, on this cold night, as she lay in her bed with a glass of whiskey on the nightstand, the fluttering form of David Mannion wafted into her imagination.

“Hello, Emma. It’s been too long, hasn’t it?”

She groaned her response. “Not long enough, David. I had hoped never to see your vision again.”

“Ah, but it’s the time for settling accounts now, Emma. Both yours and mine.”

“But no account for us together. You saw to that years ago when you left me. Left us. You had a son, David, and you didn’t give a damn. Left us to ourselves, and not a penny to help us. If your account is overdrawn now, it’s your own doing.”

“I confess that that was cold-hearted, Emma. But at the time I felt it better to run off. I’d have brought you down, with the drink and the women, and the lack of caring. You and the lad were the better without me, that I knew. So I left. A clean break, it was, and all the better.”

“We trade one family of demons for another, David. We traded your disinterest for a hardscrabble life, for missed meals and the dead time wondering if the bills could be paid or if Donal might be able to have a new pair of jeans this year. The demon of wondering if all the effort to keep our lives afloat was worth it. And I still have no answer for that last question.”

David Mannion looked down with a sad smile, saying nothing.

“So why is it you come to me now”, asked Emma. “What final measure do you want to draw from me?”

“No measure. Nothing but a wave in your direction. There’s nothing to fear, Emma. Nothing to fear but the echoes of a misspent past. And we create those echoes ourselves and give them credence. It’s our hearts that weigh us down, Emma. But in reality they’re no more substantive, no more important, than the breezes that blow summer into autumn. Images, all of it, wafting through us, and then away. I’m here to tell you that.”

And with the telling, the image of David Mannion faded behind Emma’s closed eyes. When she opened them again, she felt lighter.

She reached once more for the whiskey by her bed, and took her comfort from it. Now, in October, in the dying of the year, she breathed slowly, and struggled to let go as best she could the pounding, constant throb of regret.

Gremlin Attacks

Matthew Tubridy

The massive gremlin attacks the building,
First it comes up threw the floor,
The floor warps up,
You can see his eyeballs,
Then he changes tack and squeezes the buildings exterior walls,
His massive claws puncture the roof,
Tiles fall to the ground, one hits a lady on her head,
The Gremlin takes over the building,
And roars!
The politicians come,
This building is now part of Transylvania!
They moan,
We must reclaim this territory to Ireland,
They get in the artillery,
The artillery targets the Gremlin,
But most of the walls collapse as well,
Eventually they dislodge the Gremlin,
The politicians and Gremlin agree to a truce,
Outside the ruined building,
They play a game of cards,
To decide who wins,
Leo Varadkar takes over the pile of rubble,
They all trot off back to the Dail on the Southside,

Ghost Story

Laura Alves

A middle aged woman discovered a ghost.

At first she was really scared. She froze, she couldn't move. But then, neither did he - or she - or it... and she couldn't really tell what it was... she kept staring at it, and it went on staring at her back.

She slowly moved her eyes to one side - and the ghost followed her move. She looked up, and when she moved down again, the ghost was also moving down.

Ah, so you're playing, she thought. Copying all my moves! As she looked outside and the ghost looked inside she realized it was dawning. She got up and that is when she noticed the similarities between herself and the ghost: SHE was her image in the mirror!

Alligators Jaws

Matthew Tubridy

The guy in the writing group,
Was he in the Alligators jaws?
Trying to read a book at the same time,
He comes from Dublin Zoo,
Has a few gashes on his face,
He gets a cup of coffee but his blood drops into his coffee,
He walks up the stairs to the room,
Blood dripping,
He writes about the Alligator called Fred,
The zookeepers said 'Grrrrr off!'
And jumped on Fred,
Wrestle the alligator,
Subdue him,
Gives him a dead rabbit.

Bloody Frogs get everything.

Ciaran O'Melia

Yes they do get everything and it should be that way. Once I saw a frog on a Jumbo Jet, it took off from Dublin and landed seven hours later in New York of all places. Needless to say that put a stop to his gallop, that, and the sole of Patrick Wasasey's boot. At least he saw a bit of the world before he passed on.

Patrick's mother a fine middle-aged woman who discovered a ghost. She was in anguish over her son Patrick, ye see he was working at the JFK airport and just about the time the frog met the sole of Patrick's boot, she got a shudder down her spine. She knew something was going on hence her worry about Patrick. Now she was afraid to call him at work.

"Never call me at work, the bosses are funny about that."

So this middle aged mother say up for most of the night, waiting for him as he is out drinking and having a good time with his work mates, Ms Moran worried herself sick.

You ask why is he called Wasasey and she Moran, easy, she had a one night stand and Patrick was the end product of it. It was he, who decided to take his father name, but that was all he took or given.

In her state she eventually fell asleep and into a dreadful dream. She saw Patrick again but this time he jumped from his hind legs.

"Christ" she said and asked, "Patrick are you turning into a frog?"

"No Ma but I do feel funny."

Eventually he did turn into frog, but it was a slow process, first the legs then the skin and he followed up with croak. Which every mother understands.

She woke with a start, stumbled to get out of the bed and looked for Patrick, well he was asleep on the floor, his dreams were different than her's.

He was dreaming it was his round to buy the drink.

Frogs

Bernadette O'Reilly

We kids crowded into
A neighbours backyard
Word had spread
Their son had acquired a frog
He was eager to show his new pet off
I stood gazing at this frog
As he gazed back
I had never before encountered
A frog in my short life.
Now an elderly lady
I have never encountered
A frog door knocker.

A Bit Of A Cough

Matthew Tubridy

It's only a bit of a cough! He says
He goes to the Dail,
He coughs a lot,
The cough goes around the chamber,
They all get covid,
They all must stay home for a week,
As they leave the Dail the steward gives them all an antigen test,
And get the antigen test results by text,
YOU HAVE COVID!
On their phones.
Gaa! They scream! And go to Clontarf Baths and jump in the water,
Get off me covid! They scream!
The covid goes into the water,
It turns green!
Anyone who goes in for a dip like Donna Cooney
Donna Cooney turns green and cannot attend Council.
It's a new strain of covid...
That turns people green.
A division of the HSE which is secret and underground introduced the
new strain,
So it's easy to pick out those with covid,
Because they're green,
Sure Tom was walking down the street, his skin green,
A Garda jumps on him!
And says 'Just go home Buster!
Self isolate!
We're you swimming in the Clontarf Baths?

Encounter with a Pink Frog

Catriona Murphy

Alyssa was pissed drunk in Sin's nightclub lower floor.

Her eyes focused on some new manifestation materialising in front of her, to the ignorance of everyone else in the dark room.

Boom speakers blasted out some new Rihanna song and the year was 2005.

It was supposed to be 'her year'.

The year she'd get that PHD and rub her new research finding's in Greg's face. The nerd who watched her surreptitiously from across the lab, wondering if she'd found to cure to cancer yet.

She was supposed to wipe it in her ex-boyfriend's face too, and show her daughter who the real breadwinner was.

And her lecturer too, Mrs. Gaffney, with her doctorates and other qualifications lining her stupid office walls.

Alyssa watched some first year tumble over the banister, and fall onto a table forested with Smirnoff Ice, Bacardi Breezer and Fat Frogs.

These new breeds didn't even know how to drink. It was pretty offensive.

She watched Mr. O'Brien fondle some undergrad, his tie loose and his eyes blurred.

That was the problem with age, the older you got the less likely you could handle. This was the underworld of Trinity college, the masked underbelly where all the vices and debauchery of humanity surfaced for one night of the year.

There was no secret handshake to get in - you just had to have peculiar tastes and be invited.

Alyssa's attention refocused on the manifestation.

It started as a bright orb and she thought it was the beginning of a stairway to heaven. It simmered down, though, to a pink frog.

'Ribid,' it said, sarcastically.

'Ribid,' it stated again.

'You don't need to sound so miserable, just act like a stupid frog,' Alyssa scolded, unsure why she'd gotten so irritated and why she was talking to something that didn't exist.

The fuck was in her drink?

'I'm just bored,' he complained. 'My sole purpose in life is to just appear to people when they're in a heightened state. I don't mind interdimensional travel, it's just, I've lost my zest in life. I blame Covid. Y'know I was so fuckin' busy, cause everyone was getting blasted to escape from the world ending. I just got burnt out. I just don't care anymore.'

Alyssa had had many trips in her time, but this was the first one where they actually fuckin' spoke back to her.

'Er - have you tried getting a life coach?' She asked, feeling suddenly responsible for the destiny of her pretend frog. It had to be some part of her unconscious perhaps, breaking through the lowered barriers in her mind to send her an important, life-changing message.

'No, they don't take drugs enough,' the frog humphed and wilted.

She felt a little sorry for the pink frog.

Then he perked up. 'I manifested as a ghost this one time, to some middle-aged woman going through a mid-life crisis. She screamed and all that but she said something that stuck with me. She said, 'the cave you fear to enter, holds the treasure that you seek'. It came from some random dude and she was going through psychosis, but she was so right.' The frog hopped onto her lap and bubbles started coming out of its rear end.

'And I just think, I could be anything right?'

'I mean, yeah, sure fuck it,' Alyssa said, backing her Vodka and hoping the yolk will disappear. She began to think the pharma students had gotten into the water again. 'I be a bird and fly anywhere.' His black eyes danced.

'World's your oyster,' she replied, and drained her glass.

Some professor stumbled past.

The frog looked around. 'What is this place anyway? Who are these people?'

'Nerds with too much time and questionable interests. Run along Mr. Frog, find your destiny and yourself. Whatever.'

Getting an ice cream

Matthew Tubridy

Getting an ice cream could be complicated,
There's a truck parked between you and the ice cream,
Sure the guy selling scoops of ice cream
wants to sell you them!
He's called Paul,
You went to school with him,
He shouts 'Matty, Matty!
What flavor do you want?
Strawberry or Pistachio?'
But the driver of the truck revs his engine,
'Your not getting past me matey!
You went to school with truck driver as well,
His name is Rob,
You can't go around the back of the truck because of the fumes,
And your afraid to go around the front because your scared
he will drive over you,
But Paul the ice cream man shouts
'I've got Strawberry flavour!'
So I turn into Spider-Man and jump over the truck,
Ah ha ha ha ha!
I say,
Rob in the truck groans,
He was being paid to do this,
Rob in the truck drives off and into a lake,
I sit with my friend Paul, licking ice cream,
Strawberry flavour,
We talk about Ms Craig, Geography teacher.

Elaine Reardon

Our Last Outpost Neighbourhood

Dirt road runs through forest,
traces Moss Brook and two swamps.
Our handful of homes tuck into six miles
of Brush Mountain where our two towns meet.
We came here with young children, watched
them grow and leave. We shared potlucks,
helped each other cut down trees,
repair fencing, and prune back gardens.
We called each other to ask do you have electricity,
can you use some apples? In summer we met
for potlucks suppers at Laurel lake. We were all
more comfortable talking with tall white pines,
or singing to the moon, rather than being social.
It's almost early spring. The ice melts and we listen
to Moss Brook run. Next month frogs will sing,
followed by of dragonflies and honeybees.
For now, each late afternoon the barred owl
hunts to feed her babies, hoots when the sun
lowers. Wind pushes the pines to sway.
Sun warms our roofs so we hear drips of snowmelt.
And this week we grieve for Anna, the first
of us who will walk away from her body, soon.
How to you say goodbye a friend who
is leaving? What could give her comfort now?
A soft custard, broth? Holding her hand?
Would any last thing be an intrusion?

I bring her raw milk from a local farm. Anna
grew up on a farm with fresh milk each morning.
It's thick and coats the glass. Could milk fresh from
this morning's milking bring her comfort, loosen
what still ties her here?

Ghost

Nieve Nichol

"What do you want". I said.

"Don't be so rude". He said.

"I'm not being rude. I am trying to get ready to go to Dublin to the writing group and you expect me to sit and chat.

I'm tired of you arriving here telling me the deepest secrets of my past."

He vanished. That's what he does when I get really annoyed with him.

It began a year ago. I was sitting reading and there he was. He said his name was Nigel. At that time

he looked like a young man.

Each time he appears he looks older. Six months ago he was in his 40's.

Now he looks in his 60's.

I asked him why. He shrugged his shoulders and said he didn't know.

Sometimes, I enjoy his company but I have lost my peace and privacy.

He just arrives when he feels lonely.

I know that he and I have to part which means I have to move home. But what if he follows me?

Sleeping on a Doorway

Matthew Tubridy

It's better than sleeping on a doorway,
When all you have for comfort is beer,
Your manager is shouting at you...
You shouldn't storm out and leave your job behind...
You have 10 euro in your pocket,
Your work colleagues look up from behind their computers,
I hate you! you shout at your manager,
I want to quit!
But then you think of the doorway you would have to sleep on without a salary,
Your manager would still be there in your head,
And the can of beer would be the only way to forget him,
Eventually the Guards come,
Your manager sent them,
Because I shouted at my manager which doorway
I would sleep in,
'We're here to help' the Garda says.

Middle Aged Woman sees a Ghost

Clíodhna Joyce-Daly

The wind walloped against the pined glasses windows making her song her squeeze through the poorly insulated cracks of the stone structure. The house was still as the wind continued to howl outside. The only light in came from the sitting room where Méabh sat curled up in her flowery red chair reading a book while the television blared silently in the corner. The smell of turf still lingered in the room as the last bits of the fires warmth began to disintegrate. She had been frugal with the energy used in the house as the rising cost of gas, heat, and electricity placed a constant worry on her mind. Her frow began to furrow at the very thought of having to fill the tank again this winter. As the fire began to die down, she appreciated the warmth of her dog's body resting against her feet, despite having a pair woollen socks on.

It was the first frosty night Méabh was alone in the house and although, it never seemed large before, the dark night began to unsettle her. The past summer, Maebh's husband passed away from. While she told herself that she could grapple with the house on her own, as time passed she was finding it exceedingly difficult to be in there without him. Even so, although she was not a spiritual person, she wondered if he would ever appear to her, even in a dream. No such luck.

Her children were grown and had their own lives now and she did not want to be a hindrance. Her son was s financial analysist – whatever that meant and spent most his time at work, with the lads, or drinking. Méabh had a sneaking suspicion that he indulged in the latter far too often. He rarely rang and when he did the conversations were short and to the point. "How are you?" "Alive" and so on. Her daughter was another story, rang all the time – too much in fact. Her daughter like her late husband was an artist in her own right and managed a gallery in London.

As the fire began to become extinguished, Méabh her a loud banging noise from the attic. As she was rearranging furniture earlier in the day, she remembered she opened the window to let the air clear out the hidden dust that collected under unused pieces. As she was a tidy

person, she imagined the dust swirling around the room landing on the sideboards and heater covers, that she would later have to clean.

As the noise continued to persist, the swooshing gradually became another sound – a animal perhaps. ‘Christ’ Méabh thought, the last time she had the window open a bat flew in and she spent the rest of the night screaming and hiding behind the doorframe until the Gardai came only to tell her she needed to ring another number to get the animal out. By the time all, the chaos had settled – the bat flew out the open window. The thought of it made Méabh shiver.

To conquer her fear, Méabh made her way to the attic. The only light came from the reflection off the light walls which guided her to door which lead up to the attic. In her concern for the potential bat that loomed upstairs, she hadn’t noticed the dog standing under her feet staring pensively up at the attic stairs. ‘What is it Ollie?’ she asked as his eyes glanced from the top of the stairs to hers. His golden hair illuminated the dark room with warm and safety. His brownish green eyes held there for a moment carrying with it a tang of sadness. ‘Why you sad?’ she asked again as if the dog would reply.

As she glanced back up at the steps, she saw something a figure, a man maybe. Méabh screamed and bellowed ‘Who are you?’ The figure did not move, it stood perfectly still as if it were a piece of furniture that did not notice her sound. Even though the presence of a strange person in her house frightened Méabh, she felt somewhat at ease.

In the midst of her angst and confusion, Méabh grabbed hold of her phone flashlight and reflected it up the stairs. The light revealed something strange, a smaller figure than she imagined. The figure was her neighbour’s house cat who got stuck in a spider web.

Even though, she expected to see the spirit of her late husband, she knew he would joke about something like this. “Well James, at least you came to me in some way!”

Dancing in the Shelbourne Hotel

Matthew Tubridy

Those dancing in the Shelbourne Hotel,
In their fine suits and dresses,
They look out the window and see Fred,
Looking in the window,
His breath steams up the window,
The kitchens affected give Fred the leftovers from dinner,
Fred comes onto the dance floor,
He smells and his clothes are rags,
He does a boogie dance,
He asks one of the fine ladies for a dance,
He gets mud on their fine dress,
Eventually its time to go home,
The people in their finery get taxis back to Dalkey and Blackrock,
Fred lies down outside the Shelbourne,
Eventually the hotel l gives Fred a job,
They give him a big knife and say to him
'If anyone tries to break in here you waves the knife around?'
They give Fred a tiny room at the top of the hotel where he can sleep
during the day,
By night he stands outside the front entrance,
He growls at passers by,
And waves his knife if they growl back,
Eventually Fred gets a place on a Creative Writing Course in Inchicore
College,
It's paid for by the Shelbourne Hotel,
He writes and writes in his tiny room at the top of the hotel,
The manager of the hotel looks in on Fred,
Sometime Fred recites his writing to the guests,
He is dressed in finery like they are,
He makes enough money to buy a Porsche,
'Fred the wit' he is called
He drives around to posh hotels around Ireland,
In Galway, Cork, Limerick, and Belfast,
'Fred the wit' he is called.

A Middle-Aged Woman and a Ghost

Angelina Kelly

I don't believe in ghosts – though I possibly should, given my leanings towards alternative medicine, thinking and practices! However the other night, during a particularly restless sleep, I was awoken with a sense that I was not alone in my room and that I was being watched. I lay in bed with my eyes closed telling myself that it was an irrational thought and attempted to breathe myself back into sleep. Unfortunately, the feeling grew stronger so I opened my eyes and saw a faint glow at the end of my bed.

Sitting up and wiping the sleep from my eyes I became aware of a shimmering form standing in the room watching me. There was no aura of malice or bad intent surrounding the form, if anything, there was a sense of sadness. Looking at the apparition, I asked "Who are you? How are we connected, and why have you come to me?" Gently, the ghost took on a more solid form, and I saw a robust man with shoulder length greying hair, dressed in a dark, ankle-length travelling cloak, and soft leather boots. His tanned face was etched with deep lines of age and wisdom, his striking blue eyes held me in a strong stare.

"You look tired." I said. "Sit a while, you look like a storyteller, so tell me your tale." Inwardly I marvelled at my use of formal language, normally I don't speak like that.

Sitting on the end of the bed he replied, "I am Paedur, a Druid of the old school! A long time ago we were... friends. Well, rather teacher and student." He shrugged. "You were young back then but have grown since, and, if I am correct, are of middle years, and older than I was when I was taken from you. Do you remember me?"

Surprised at his sudden appearance, I nodded. "Yes! I remember!" I whispered. "You took me from my poor life - the only life I had known – trained me and tried to teach me things I did not want to know. I believe I was a reluctant student and made you angry many times."

His sadness deepened. "Indeed you were, and there were times I questioned my... need for you at the time. Our time together was short

and did not end well. I suspect you have your own tale to tell, about what happened afterwards.”

I nodded. “Yes! But, in spite of my reluctance to learn, you did teach me what I needed to know. My own time did not end well either and I do not wish to visit it’s memory.”

Paedur nodded silently.

“So, why have you appeared to me tonight?” I asked.

“I heard tell that you are ailing and I sought to reassure myself about your well-being.”

“There are some health issues at the moment, I admit. But nothing that the modern doctors cannot handle, and I will be recovered soon and back on my feet.”

“Then I will not detain you any longer. I shall take my leave and wish you a long and healthy life.”

He stood up, turned his full attention on to me for a moment. At his feet a frog appeared and croaked. Picking it up and cupping it in his hands he smiled, “Bloody frogs get everywhere.” Once more he turned his gaze to me then faded into the night.

His sudden appearance unnerved me, but not wanting to revisit those memories I shook myself, took a few sips of water from the bottle on my bedside stand, and snuggled back down under my duvet, and sank into a peaceful sleep.

Bus Driver

Matthew Tubridy

Ah haha...
But not a nice haha,
It's the bus driver,
But he wants to drive them all over the cliffs of Moher,
But first he stops in McDonalds,
All his passenger get out,
They have their last burger,
They know they are going over the cliff,
After their burger they get back on the bus,
They start singing
'cum by a ma lord, cum ba ah'
They're all old ladies on the bus,
From Cork City,
They thought they were going on a nice tour on the bus,
But they didn't factor in the maniac driver,
He laughs and laughs,
One of the old ladies called Pamela,
Jumps out the door of the bus,
She skids on the road surface,
Gashing her head and arm,
The other old ladies watch in admiration because they know where
they're going,
Over the he Cliffs of Moher!
The bus driver keeps laughing and swerving the bus around a herd of
cows without slowing down,
Suddenly Peggy has a good idea,
She puts a rock in her handbag and whacks the bus driver over the head,
The bus swerves into a ditch,
A few goats watch on from the field,
Billy and Bolly,
The old ladies take over the bus!
They drive it to the ferry to France,
And all the way to Biarritz,
They get some sun.

A few ghosts

Deirdre Powell.

It could be said that Alice had discovered a few ghosts in her time. Middle-aged and still unmarried, she relaxed in her comfy chair complete with footstool and cushion and a cup of hot chocolate. She sipped the warm drink, savouring the chocolatiness of her beverage and contemplated the past. It was just after Christmas, and she reflected on the ghosts of previous festive seasons. Almost like Scrooge, she thought to herself. When she was a young girl, she liked to go dancing in December. She grew to especially like ballroom dancing and was delighted when she had mastered the art of the Viennese Waltz. When she was in her late teens, she met a man from Austria called Hans and she was thrilled because he was able to waltz Viennese-style very beautifully. Hans told her so many stories of Vienna that she felt that she knew the city intimately. She longed to go to Vienna in order to attend a ball there and to show off her good dancing steps, and she also longed to see the State Opera in that city. Hans had told her all about it. They became, as she thought, firm friends and as things progressed, he promised that he would take her back to Vienna with him and that they would visit the Opera together.

It happened that the next Christmas, Hans went back to Austria to stay with his parents in Innsbruck and he promised that he would return and that they would continue to improve their dancing partnership. Three weeks passed during the festive season, and then another week and another one and still Alice had not heard from him. It occurred to her that she did not know his home address in Innsbruck. He had been working as an intern at Leeson and Harwell's, a firm of solicitors in Dublin, and when she decided to call in to see him one day at lunchtime, the receptionist told her that his internship was over and that he had returned to Austria. The firm were not expecting to see him again.

Alice was devastated – she was sure that Hans would get in touch with her, but he did not do so ever again and she never knew what happened to him. He was a ghost of Christmas past in her life. And, she reflected, sometimes, you have to kiss a few frogs – it was a pity that Hans did not turn out to be the handsome prince!

Motorway Trip

Matthew Tubridy

McDonalds straggle the motorway,
100's of cars are queuing to get through the McDonalds,
To get threw you must buy something,
Like a milkshake, chips, or burger for trucks,
The children who get threw laugh gleefully,
They have a milkshake and chips,
They continue to Athlone,
Suddenly men with pitchforks appear,
They say 'We won't let people who aren't local
go past our town!'
They start throwing petrol bombs in the car windows,
All for Athlone, glory to Athlone!
The motorway is littered with burnt out cars,
The men with pitchforks build a wall across the motorway,
The Minister for transport, Eamon Ryan gets involved,
Put down your pitchforks! He says,
Eventually the Minister resolves the protest,
A man with a pneumatic drill gets rid of the wall
that was across the motorway,
Traffic flows freely,
The Minister gets a pat on the back,
But there is seething discontent in Athlone,
A meeting is held,
But only locals are invited,
They ponder putting massive concrete blocks
over the train line,
So all trains to Galway must stop,
The concrete blocks are put over the train line,
In the dead of night,
The next train is forced to stop,
An Athlone clown gets on board,
Goes through the carriages singing songs
And juggling,
But the passengers say

' Hey! Your from Athlone!
We've had a lot of problems from you!
The clown tries to laugh it off...
Says 'I'm from Killiney!'
Where'd ja get that stupid accent then?
The Minister for Transport gets involved again,
He gives the people of Athlone free and unlimited supply of
marshmallows for a year,
The man with the pneumatic drill comes back,
'I come in peace' he says
'I come in the name of swift affordable public transport!'
He breaks up the concrete blocks over the train tracks.

The Ghost

Gerard Byrne

The old door creaked open slowly to reveal a long dark corridor with a dirty window at the other end. The walls were lined with wooden panelling, that had seen better days. Maeve found that the cute little knocker on the door, didn't match the apartment in led into to.

Maeve had recently inherited the place from her grandmother Eva. Eva had been renting the place out for the last thirty odd years and the last tenant had died a month ago. Correction, he had been found a month ago, but his body had been lying there from six months to a year. No one had bothered to check on him until a gas leak on the street meant that emergency services broke down the door and found a dissolving mess on the sitting room floor. Maggots and rats had eaten a good part of the body. Thankfully Maeve hadn't seen any of that, but she still didn't like coming into this place on her own, but what choice had she got.

"Hello, anyone here?", Maeve felt stupid asking that, but she still had to ask all the same.

Thankfully there was no answer, so she flicked on the hall lights. It didn't do much to help, but it was better than nothing. Maeve cautiously stepped inside the front door and made her way down the creaky floorboards. Each one seemed to purposely make more noise than necessary.

Suddenly, Maeve thought she could hear a television from a nearby room. She peeked in to see an old, battered television in one corner of the room. It was switched onto Judge Judy. She looked around each corner of the room to check for any interlopers. Thankfully there was none to be seen. She then rushed over to the telly and switched it off before sighing with relief to herself, "it's all in your head Maeve", she told herself.

"Can you put that back on please", came a withered voice from behind her.

Maeve swivelled around to see a naked old man sitting in the decrepit armchair behind her. His face had rotted away in several section and his

stomach was bloated to the point that he looked like he was about to explode. Maeve screamed the room down and ran for the door.

Unfortunately she knocked over a glass cabinet that was filled with all manner of ornamental frogs. They scattered all over the floor and she lost her balance on one and fell in a heap as well, hitting her head on a corner table in the process.

The old man got up from the armchair, “bloody frogs get everywhere. I’d throw them out but my dear old Natalie loved them so. Was collecting them up until her death”

Maeve was trying to get her head together as she crawled for the hallway. This couldn’t be happening, was all she kept thinking to herself. The nightmare would surely end soon. But as she crawled out into the hallway, the daylight that beamed in from the open front door was quickly dwindling as the door creaked shut, until it banged loudly. Maeve’s nightmare was only just beginning.

Trench Coats

Matthew Tubridy

The men in their trench coats pass on O'Connell street,
Tim and Tom,
Yup! Tom says,
Yip! Tim says,
Would. You like an ice cream? Tim asks.
Would you like a deck of cards? Is asked,
Can I direct you to a coffee shop?
Out of the cold?
Can I give you a contract to build a motorway?
Tim asks Tom,
Can I give you a large house in Foxrock?
Tim and Tom become great friends,
In their trench coats,
They sit on O'Connell Street just giving people things,
Eventually the politicians hear about them,
Leo Varadkar comes and they give him a lollipop,
Tom and Tim,
There's should be a Tom and Tim in every city of Ireland,
Like Galway City,
Tom and Tim have been cloned,
They give people lollipops,
They even have clones in New York,
In Times Square,
Giving out lollipops,
Their clones are in Malaysia, Singapore,
Beijing,
They make statues of Tim and Tom in Beijing,
Out of wood,
But it's actually a vending machine where
you can get lollipops,

Cottage

Michael O'Brien

There is something alluring about the little cottage by the sea, the breeze seems to ease me toward it, as I get closer I am more coaxed inside by music and laughter. The tiny house is crowded with people who are drinking and loud, there is a young Irish dancer with hard shoes doing a hornpipe on a sheet of hardwood, her toe tapping has a primeval drive to it. But why are they singing and dancing? What's the reason for this strange bawdy gathering?. Further into the cottage there's crying, a heaviness in the air and people are gathered near a corner slightly bent looking into something, some bend a little deeper and are touching their face against something prostate in a box, I'm drawn closer to the scene and no one reacts as I approach, as I gaze down I see a person lying with their hands clasped together on their chest with rosary beads between the fingers. The sight of the body in the box along with the crying is having an unsettling effect on me, I feel a heaviness drawing me toward the body almost pushing me down, but I have a strange bouncing feeling as I attempt to touch it, yet as I'm deflected off the body I'm again drawn back down to it, frightening. I feel a gaze fall upon me and I turn to see an old woman staring straight into me, she is the only one in the room not ignoring me, she sees me clearly. I don't know up from down, I'm trying to walk on air as I fall from a cliff.

"Its ok son you can leave now, it's all perfectly natural, you can go now, to the next place", the crowd completely ignore her, she seems to be talking only to me and her words have a soothing effect, I find I'm being carried back through the cottage by a beautiful softness, the old woman's gentle smile soothing me on my way. I feel unburdened and not weighed down by that thing in the box that in recent times had been nothing more than heaviness and pain. I am settled now, she is right, this is all perfectly natural and everything is as it should be.

On the Scrambler Bike

Matthew Tubridy

On the scrambler bike,
The jumps and turns,
At a ferocious pace,
The clay of the track,
Spurts behind him,
Your whole world is the ferocious pace of your scrambler bike you drive,
Turn left, turn right,
You feel the wind of another scrambler bike,
You imagine crashing into the other bike,
The wind whistles past your cheeks,
The Ambulance crew are on standby,
They only had to treat 5 crashes that day,
The scrambler fly by,
The paramedics get the ketamine ready,
And the stretcher,
Soon enough comes their first job,
Micko tried a overtake on the inside
and collided,