

# Inkslingers Blended Session

11<sup>th</sup> March 2023

The Prompt from The Bag Was:

“Just Smile And Act Like Everything’s Fine”

And the Visual



*Beehive Cells Skellig Michael Co. Kerry*

## **A Country Divided**

**Gerard Byrne**

A country divided  
Two religions at war,  
Not even Saint Patrick,  
Can keep the snakes from our doors.

Politicians always fighting,  
But whose interest matters most,  
Money and power the incentive,  
Our long lost fallen suffer more.

Ghosts of the past haunt the thoughts of the future,  
Burrowing deep into their minds and never letting go,  
The sins of the few will damage the many,  
Their brightly coloured banners, flying forever more.

## **On driving in Dr Doherty's Jeep**

**Matthew Tubridy**

Dr Doherty says 'We're going to Balinrobe, Co Mayo'  
To visit my mother,  
She has herbs and lotions,  
Mother throws me in her fire,  
She takes my bones out of the fire,  
And grinds them down,  
She goes to the local school,  
Stands in front of the children,  
'Now children, if you fail in maths,  
You must eat the bones'  
The principal rushes Mother out of the school,  
'Do you not believe in science?'

## **A Rope Too Taut**

**Greg Fields**

For the boys on Matthew Cooney's block, the convenience store on the corner was a gathering place, an institution of sorts, a constancy as they grew older. Each day the lads would wander in, usually after school but sometimes in the mornings. No need to browse the aisles. They knew what was there. A candy bar, maybe a bag of chips, and then out to the curb to see who else would come by. There would always be someone, always be the chance for a challenge, or an adventure, or a dare. A chance for something new.

The clerks knew that the boys had nowhere else to go. For the most part they were harmless, just boys on the edge of manhood looking just for a while to be boys again.

On a Thursday afternoon Matthew sat on the curb that lined the very small parking area, and nibbled slowly on a stale bar of chocolate that had no doubt been sitting on the shelves far too long. He paid no mind to its chalky, grainy texture. Chocolate was still chocolate, no matter how cheap.

It was Johnny Duncan who was the first to show. "Anything happening today?"

"Not a damn thing," and Cooney took a small bite of the very bad chocolate. "Wish I could tell you different."

"So what can we do about it? Wanna go over to the park? Might be a game going on there."

"Nah, I don't feel like playing ball. You go ahead if you want. I think I'll just hang here and see if something comes up."

The two boys sat in silence, pecking at their food, until a red Corvette shot its way down the street, roaring in its sleek power, down a street it owned by right. At the next corner it spun a quick right turn and sped off. The boys heard its muffled power fade off in a new direction.

They looked at each other, and Johnny smiled, "Jesus, I'd love to have a car like that. Go as fast as you want, go wherever you want to go."

“You think you’ll ever own something like that, Johnny?”

“Why not? If I want it, I’ll find a way to get it. Make a lot of money, then go buy it.”

“As easy as that,” and Matthew chuckled, mostly to himself. “If it were that easy, everybody’d have one and it wouldn’t be special. Your dad would be driving you to school in a Corvette with the top down, and no one would even notice. Just smilin’ and acting like everything’s fine.”

“What the hell is wrong with you today, Matt?”

“Nothing. Nothing that wasn’t wrong with me yesterday, or the day before. I just don’t feel like chasing dreams today. A waste of time. Corvettes, or fancy houses, or a soft bed to sleep in. Just dreams.”

“Jesus, Matt,” Johnny stood up from the curb. “I’m going to go play some ball at the park. You comin’?”

“You go ahead. I’ll see you later.”

No place else to go, and the day drawing down. None of the others had shown up or wandered by. At the park, most likely, on a bright afternoon like this, with gloves and mitts and bats. Matthew stood and stretched to loosen a back that had been sitting too long.

The end of the day, and an empty night ahead, and so resentment bubbled up from some space deep inside. It travelled up his throat and perched on the edge of his tongue, although he could not speak it. It flamed his blood and made his muscles taut. Matthew Cooney became a rope pulled tight and straight.

He headed home, slowly, with head down and hands in pockets. A single block, but he would take his time. No hurry to go where nothing waited for him. His father was gone, had been gone for months, and his mother would be nowhere he could reach, sitting in a friend’s living room nursing a drink, or lost in her own bottle at the kitchen table. This he knew, as well as he knew that there was nothing he could do about any of it.

With his head down, Matthew did not see the boys coming toward him, talking and joking among themselves. They were a bit younger, perhaps 9 or maybe 10, and they showed no care for anything other than their

friendships. As they passed three abreast, one bumped Matthew's shoulder.

He turned to them and pushed the back of the one closest to him. "Hey. Watch it." The younger boy reeled from the push, and his two friends spun around. "Jesus, lay off, would you? Or are you some kind of tough guy?"

Cooney wasted no time. The wire drawn so taut snapped at once. His fist shot forward and caught the boy on the chin. The younger one fell to the sidewalk, and Cooney went to stand over him.

"Yeah. I guess I'm a tough guy."

The two others huddled around their fallen friend, who did not rise to pursue the fight. Instead, he crumpled into the arms of his friends, and began to cry.

One of the others sneered up to Cooney, "A real tough guy, beating up on a little kid," then wiped his friend's tears with a napkin he pulled from his pocket. "Real tough guy," and he, too, sniffled through wet eyes.

Matthew turned back to his walk. Over his shoulder he heard the boys tend to their friend. "Come on, Tommy. You'll be okay. That guy was nothing."

When he got home he entered an empty house. Just another day, hooked onto the end of all the others.

## **Clozapine**

**Matthew Tubridy**

Just take your clozapine!

The man walks down the corridor in St Louise's Ward,

He didn't take his clozapine,

We have a man walking who should be taking clozapine!

He made a nuisance of himself in the petrol station,

Bridget was trying to buy a loaf of bread and the man started growling at her!

She ran from the shop in the petrol station, jumped in her car and sped away!

'You get mad people in Ballybough!'

She thinks

Staff in the petrol station show CCTV footage of the incident to staff in St Vincents Hospital.

' Hmm' the hospital staff say

Where is this individual now?

He's striding along Clontarf Prom!

He's whacking women with buggy's!

He's getting dogs and holding them up by their hind legs!

No! Says the dog owners,

Then he jumps in the sea and tries to swim to Dublin Port,

The fire brigade are called and drive their boat out to the man,

He's out in hospital,

The police are notified.

And he ends up in St Vincents Hospital Fairview,

Taking clozapine.

## Fiction - Take One

Fiona Deaton

This was to be a city break like no other. The two travel companions, best mates in real life were off another city break. Before they had graced, Lisbon, Berlin, Brussels with their Irish enthusiastic and friendly presence. Today as they sat in the departures lounge at Dublin Airport they were shortly to board that faithful 'Drop in, Drop out' airline plane once more. Tom and Mary had built up an extensive back catalogue of trips with the budget carrier and as usual Tom grumbled as Mary arrived back from the bar with her flying staple 'Jack Daniels' with tap water. 'Mary its 6.30am in the morning' Tom grumbled and received the standard retort 'The rain in Spain may stay mainly on the plane, but I intend on starting my holiday now'. Both passengers were in their mid fifties and although there was a youthful glow around Tom, Mary's lifelong smoking habit had induced many a wrinkle.

Time passed quickly, as Mary downed the drink and within 20 mins they were seating on the plane awaiting take off. Tom had carefully stowed the luggage in the overhead bins and the 'Drop in, Drop Off' hostess began her monologue to all on board with 'the safety instructions'. As the said hostess informed all the passengers of the location of the emergency exit door, Mary felt a drop of water hit off her arm. That was the moment the impending trip to Porto ended for the well travelled couple.

Mary glanced at the emergency exit door beside her and to her horror noted a river of water trickling down same.

'Fuck Tom excuse the language but its apt, the emergency exit door is not sealed properly'.

Tom mildly terrified of flying in the first place saw the river of droplets on the said door. Tom let out a roar

'the emergency exit door is not properly sealed'

drowning out the air hostess various instructions about jackets, oxygen masks etc. By now other passengers were unbuckling their seat belts and hovering around the said door.



Yells, of 'God save us', 'Help' and lot of 'well wholly God' reverberated throughout the plane.

Mary continued to shriek other further expletives whilst Tom fell to the ground suffering from a panic attack. The airline carrier had lived up to its names with several drops on that said door visible to all onlooking passengers.

The hostess managed to calm the passengers down by ordering them back to their seats, but by now Mary having never witnessed a panic attack before terror turned to Tom on the floor.

'He's having a heart attack'.

Another hostess identifying Tom's actual condition and simply stated

'its a panic attack, you stupid woman'

as she soothed the other passengers down once more. Mary was a lady who was seldom stressed out about things but it was deemed by the 'Drop in, Drop out' staff that in her current emotional state it best to escort both Tom and Mary off the plane. Once the duo were on the tarmac the faithful plane took off destined for Porto.

Mary and Tom's had to settle for a lot of explaining to the DAA security about their behaviour and suffered a cancelled holiday. They were interrogated for 30 mins and Mary was breathalysed due to the whiff of Jack Daniels emanating from her breath. It was not till a week later in Swords district court was Mary informed that the drops trickling down that emergency exit door were in fact a fault of the air conditioning. The Judge's ruling was as follows.

"The passengers reaction to the situation was perfectly understandable given the circumstances. If Mary Smith had known or had been informed by the staff immediately of the fault with the air conditioning system I am quite sure these two passengers reaction would have been entirely different."

He then went on to say, " Drop In, Drop Out must compensate the two passengers with two staycations in Ireland this year at a 5 star hotel and if Mary Smith can convince Tom Murphy to fly again a 1st class return

flight to any 5 star resort of their choosing throughout the world on another airline carrier".

He then ruled "Until this airline carrier can ensure there are no Drops of water in the plane they must state this clearly when advising the passengers of the location of the emergency exit, This ruling is effective immediately".

### Fiction - Take Two

Tom and Mary were sitting in the departure lounge at Dublin Airport. The well seasoned best friends and travelling buddies were of a seasoned vintage and had travel to many European destinations before with the 'Drop In, Drop Out' Airline Carrier. The fact that it was a budget airline facilitated those three trips a year.

Tom a health fanatic at the best of time grumbled as Mary downed her Jack Daniels with tap water in that airport lounge despite the fact that it was only 6.30am in the morning. Tom 6'2" who worked in construction and had cycled 80km earlier that week could never understand Mary's apathetic attitude to all matters that related to health and she merely responded to his grumbling with 'The rain in Spain stays mainly on the plane, i.e. this is the way I start every holiday and well you know it'.

Mary did always admire the gentle giant's strength within Tom's athletic build. However, she had a devil may care attitude to her health, and she did not consider observing the '5 a day rule' or abstinence from alcohol or cigarettes for that matter as any relevant part of her life.

Both looked forward to exploring Porto the chosen destination this time and as they clicked their seat belts shut had no idea that this plane trip was going to be any different from any they had taken in the last twenty years. Then Mary noted that drop of water on her arm that came out of nowhere. The engines had started to roar and as the plane taxied down the runway the air hostess started the famous safety instructions monologue. At the mention of the 'Emergency Exit door' Mary turned to look at it and saw the rivers of drops running around the supposedly sealed door.

Like a bolt of lightning mayhem broke out on the plane. The interior of the plane was enveloped in a blanket of darkness. Oxygen masks fell from above. An alarm and all the passengers with the exception of Tom and Mary shrieked.

'Oh my God', 'help' 'Well holy God' and words to that effect whistled throughout the cabin. All the said passengers and air hostess where in a torrent of panic.

Mary an inhabitant of D two 4 (let emphasis the D4) of Tallaght with the accent coming from same let out a yell that boomed over the panic and Mary ensured could be heard.

'Nothing to see here, will you all sit down for Fuck's sake apologies for the language but it is apt. Tom here has solved the problem. The emergency exit door was not sealed properly, I noted it and Tom managed to shut it properly as the plane was taking off.' 'Now he is normally nervous on planes but reacted on impulse with the strength God blessed him with so shut up sit down and will somebody get him a God Dam brandy to settle his nerves'.

All passengers, breathed a sigh of relief, the hostess checked the door was in fact closed and opted instead of to continue a pointless monologue of safety instructions got Tom said brandy. Once settled and with the seat belt sign off Tom was mortified by the many thanks he received from all the passengers on the 'Drop in, Drop Out' flight.

However, Tom and Mary were asked to remain on the plane on arrival and the owner of the 'Drop in, Drop Out' airline spoke him on the pilots mobile phone. Michael O'Lucky (owner) offered both Tom and Mary a lifetime of flights with his airline to which they refused. Tom a nervous passengers did not want to return from Porto on 'Drop In, Drop Out' and instead Mary suggested that two staycations in Ireland that year in a 5 star hotel were what was required. In addition, to tempt Tom back into flying a 1st Class ticket at a 5 Star destination anywhere in the world might ease his nerves.

Fact - Take three

What actually happened was as follows.

Mary had that fateful whiskey at 6.30am and herself and Tom boarded the 'Drop in, Drop out' plane. That drop of water and the subsequent river of droplets were on the emergency exit door. Mary is selfish and she had as always bagged the window seat. Her initial reaction to what lay beside her was 'Fuck' and a bit of panic. She held this internally, because to tell Tom could mean the end of the city breaks forever. Nervously, she did listen intently to the air hostesses monologue, knowing for once in this situation Mary would need to know what to do. Although, in a solitary panic she did not transmit those vibes to anyone around her.

When the seat belt sign went off, Mary simply unbuckled it and told Tom she needed the toilet and walked as passively as she could muster up to the top of the cabin. May informed the said air hostesses of the matter at hand with the emergency exit door and was promptly informed it was condensation from the air conditioning system. Mary was a little shocked when they continued their conversation having been dismissed almost immediately.

There were no free business class trip to a 5 star destination or any staycations for that matter. The reality was on the return flight home whether by mistake, or on behalf of the air hostess, in recognition of her passive approach on the outgoing flight was charged €15 for two rolls, a coffee and a glass of wine. We live in hope that on behalf of the 'Drop in, Drop' out airline carrier it was the latter.

## Education

Matthew Tubridy

Ms Craig sent me down to the lower class,  
But I shall rise up! To be a fireman,  
Your nothing the teachers would say  
Prove us wrong,  
And now we have this...specimen!  
Moriarty,  
Why don't you just go back to the bog!  
Make a few shillings out of the turf,  
You can see Moriarty with turf on his back,  
While his classmates are in Medical School,  
Hen teacher said to prove them wrong,  
They said I shall be a Doctor!  
Teacher is proud as punch,  
We have 4 doctors being educated  
Teacher looks out the window,  
At the sweep of the bay and mountain behind it,  
Suddenly he sees a figure in the distance,  
Its Moriarty!  
Walking into the wind,  
Moriarty whistles a song,  
The sheep listen.

## **From Annapolis to Armageddon (Part 3)**

**Gerard Keogh**

(Further entries from the personal war diary of LtCol Thomas B. Schultz, CO, 2/1 (under the command of 1st MARDIV and I MEF))

May 31

My battalion has failed to reach its designated phase line in Najaf, much to the irritation of my regimental commander. Col. Garcia is hearing it from the Commanding General, and he naturally passed his frustration down the chain of command to yours truly. When I pointed out that my Marines could not rely on time-critical, accurate, all-weather indirect fire support at crucial moments in the battle, the colonel conceded that the shortage of available M777 howitzers was a problem. However, he emphasised that as Marines, we are expected to adapt, use our initiative, and take the fight to the enemy. I knew that if I raised the thorny issue of a complete absence of tanks in my battalion's sector, the colonel would blow a gasket, so I executed a strategic withdrawal and kept my powder dry for another battle.

June 5

The battalion has been tasked with establishing contact with units from the 10th Mountain Division, which are advancing in a southerly direction through the city along Route 9. The principal cause of the hesitation on my part to push on to our phase line is the threat posed to my battalion's left flank by forces inside the Imam Ali Shrine mosque in the west of Najaf. Under the current rules of engagement, U.S. and coalition forces are prohibited from firing upon mosques or other religious sites with special cultural significance. The enemy, of course, knows this all too well, and routinely takes full advantage of this rule that we have imposed on ourselves (albeit for understandable reasons). Without a change to the ROE, we will continue to be hamstrung in our daily efforts to implement force-protection measures.

As a case in point, after taking mortar fire from the vicinity of the Imam Ali Shrine, a request was sent to the FSCC for a fire mission to neutralise the threat from that enemy mortar team. The fire mission was not authorised. I spoke with the weapons company commander, who is the

FSC in the battalion's fire support coordination centre, and I made my case for an artillery strike on the target area, to no avail. This makes no military sense. We'll probably end up dropping a 1,000-pound bomb on it eventually, so why not take out the trash now?

June 6

Well, that didn't take long. The Commanding General grabbed the bull by the horns and gave the order to suppress the fire coming from the mosque area. A HIMARS launcher took care of business, and my battalion pushed on, left flank secured.

June 8

The proverbial has well and truly hit the fan. In the wake of the fire mission on the Imam Ali Shrine, the leadership in Tehran has gone ballistic – literally. The IRGC has launched a medium-range ballistic missile at Riyadh, causing significant loss of civilian life. (It was armed with a conventional warhead, but the strategic implications are huge, nonetheless.) The U.S. administration is using every diplomatic tool in the box, trying to persuade the Saudis to stay out of the war and not to retaliate against their arch-enemy on the other side of the Persian Gulf. (This development conjures up images of Desert Storm in 1991, when Bush Snr. somehow managed to keep Israel from retaliating against Iraq, following Saddam Hussein's Scud missile attacks against the country, thereby preserving a broad coalition that included many Muslim-majority countries.)

The use of Saudi bases, permission to transit Saudi airspace, and maintaining the flow of oil exports from the region, are all vital to current operations against Iraq and Iran. Direct retaliation by the Kingdom against Iran would likely ignite the powder keg beneath the Sunni-Shia fault line. Thus far, there has been no official response out of Riyadh.

## Homework Matthew Tubridy

In school, noo I will!  
I will do my homework!  
And he doesn't,  
Did Sean Moriarty,  
In the staff room his name is on a blackboard,  
With a big circle around it,  
Moriarty,  
Teacher 1 slurps his soup,  
Moriarty he thinks,  
What I'd do for corporal punishment to be back...  
But Moriarty has a group of friends who he gives drugs to,  
That's a cushion against the opinion teachers have of him,  
Moriarty teacher 1 thinks, as he slurps his soup,  
100 times Moriarty is asked for homework,  
100 times he doesn't come up with the business,  
Moriarty goes to the anti-university,  
It's like a lecture theatre because it's underground,  
A few guards question Moriarty,  
The lectures just look at Moriarty,  
With furrows eyebrows,  
Moriarty is rolling a joint,  
'What can you do?' They ask Moriarty,  
I can paint a wall,  
'But that is what plebs do!' They exclaim,  
'I'll paint your house for ya Mr'  
All the Medical Students take his number for when they have a good  
salary,  
University students, leaders of the future,  
Wee only let them in Green Party HQ,  
Anyway we give Moriarty Army training,  
Being him up the Wicklow forests,  
Get him real disoriented,  
Eventually Moriarty gets to Blessington,  
Goes into Centra,  
Gizz a chicken roll, he splutters,



His Army commander finds out where he is,  
You should be in your bunker up the mountain,  
Eating sheep and berries,  
Moriarty goes back to his school,  
He has his full army uniform on,  
Bits of twigs on his helmet,  
Teachers still have the devastating memory of Moriarty,  
But he recruits a few students,  
At last they find something for Moriarty,  
He lives in a bunker in the mountain forests,  
He can see all of Dublin from up here.

**Just smile and ...**

**Bernadette O'Reilly**

Just smile and act like everything's fine  
Not easy when you're faced with a terminal cancer diagnosis  
But we did it.  
Did Mum know, we later debated  
It was spring  
By summer she would be gone from us  
We walked towards the ward doors  
Pushed them open  
Just smile and ...

## **Just smile and Act Like Everything's Fine**

**Angelina Kelly**

Recently I visited the beehive cells on Skellig Michael in Co. Kerry. Their ancient history fascinates me and I wanted to see them for myself. Walking around the site I found it hard to believe that people lived there, once upon a time, and actually thrived in the vicinity. The tombstones, gathered in two neat rows, are a testament to that. The small graveyard built just inside the wall looks out to the open sea and I wonder if the souls of the dead buried there are aware of the beautiful vista with the cells they used to inhabit, situated around them.

Skellig Michael itself is a craggy rock jutting out of the Atlantic Ocean, off the southern coast of Ireland and I fail to see what attracted the monks of old to place themselves on such a small and remote island. I'm told they wanted to dedicate their lives to contemplation and prayer without the distraction of everyday life which was, by all accounts, quite brutal at the time.

Having wondered around the settlement, in and out of each of the cells, and walked along the path, I contemplated taking on the 360 something steps, but decided that there were too many for my modern body to contend with so, I sat on a low wall looking out to sea and enjoyed the view instead. I cast my mind back to the history books and the accounts I had read about the monks who had lived there. The island had recently become a new attraction with its placement in a scene of a Star Wars movie. This is what the modern world knew it as and very few people nowadays were interested in its ancient past.

Over the gentle lap of the waves far below I heard a mechanical sound. Just then a modern drone came into view and hovered over the landscape. It flew over the graveyard and cells and the hill behind then swung around and drifted close to me and stopped just in front of me. It held itself there for a few minutes then came closer almost touching my face. It floated just above my head and one of the blades caught in my hair and chopped my high ponytail right off my head. I jumped, frightened now that it would injure me so I hunched down on the ground behind one of the low walls. I was so shocked by the sudden contact that I broke out in a cold sweat. I began to shake, and my breath

caught in my chest. I zipped my jacket closed and pulled the hood up over my head.

After a few moments the drone moved off, I presumed to wherever it had come from, and guessed that it was one of the Star Wars freaks having a look around without going to the bother of actually visiting the site in person. When I was sure it was gone I sat up on the wall, took a mirror out of my backpack and inspected my hair. It was now in a sorry state and looked hacked and ragged but at least my head and face were not injured. I put the mirror back into my bag, smoothed down my hair and reassured myself that I was okay. I tried to regain my composure by telling myself to “just smile and act like everything is fine.” I was glad I was alone and was spared the embarrassment of anyone else witnessing the event.

The helicopter returned to collect me and bring me back to the mainland. I kept my hood up for the entire journey so that I wouldn't have to explain. I knew that first thing in the morning, I'd be in the hair salon to fashion a new hairdo and tell my story.

## The Anti-Missile Gun

Matthew Tubridy

To see any incoming missiles,  
The Army have no idea who might shoot them,  
But they put Moriarty up there just in case,  
Sure who would want to attack Dublin?  
'You never know' the Army guys say,  
You might get a few terrorists in a bunker up the Welsh hills,  
They could say 'The Irish state made us learn Irish in school'  
So we emigrated to Wales,  
We live in New Irish Town,  
Where marijuana is legal,  
We live in a village up the hills,  
But our big project is to fire a few missiles on the Dept of Education in  
Dublin,  
knowing the Minister for Education Norma Foley will be there,  
So that's where Moriarty comes in,  
As the members of New Irish Town are hauling their big pazuca up to  
the highest point of Wales, Snowden Mountain,  
The Army guys in the city intercept the guys in Wales radio  
communication,  
They radio Moriarty...incoming missile!  
Moriarty can see the missiles flying across the Irish Sea,  
He has a anti-missile gun,  
He fires down the Missiles into the sea,  
A few weeks later Moriarty comes back to his old school,  
As a hero,  
His face is no longer on the blackboard for negative reasons,  
But as a reason to celebrate,  
Moriarty goes back up to the Mountain,  
He shuns the fame,  
Maybe there's someone else going for fire missiles on Dublin?  
He remembers the day he shot down those missiles,  
He still gets emails congratulating him for that day,  
Down in the city,  
The Army guys still listen in on radio communication,

Someone in London?

Someone in London thought that the Irish gave them too much to drink,  
The missiles are set to go to Temple Bar,

'Bloody drunks' they say

'We will rid the world of excessive alcohol consumption'

Moriarty is alerted to the danger,

He sees the missiles flying across the sea,

He shoots the anti-missile,

It strikes the missile,

And they fall into the sea!

Disaster averted!

Next week Moriarty is driven through the streets of Dublin to cheering  
crowds,

We still have Temple Bar!

Moriarty resumes his post up the mountain,

His salary has increased with all his successful shooting,

He buys a house in Foxrock,

He buys a Jeep to get up to his post up the mountain,

He has a wife called Jennifer,

They call him 'the shooter'

He gets honorary membership of Fitzwilliam Tennis club,

He tries to improve his backhand,

He drinks at the clubs bar,

They call him Dave 'shooter' Moriarty

He fully integrates into D4/ south Dublin life,

With his Jeep,

He's almost as famous as Conor McGregor,

He sends his kids to Blackrock College,

He retires from Army life,

Lives in his big house in Foxrock,

Sometimes he listens in on the radio communication of those who  
would fire missiles at Dublin,

But now it's young Moriarty up in the mountain,

With an anti-missile gun,

Old Moriarty goes to ceremonies in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham,

The Army gave him a suit with many medals,

He sits there with a smile on his face,

He thinks of young Moriarty  
To be a hero you need an enemy.

## Literary Extract

Declan Cosson

As the elevator door opened, Tyke felt a huge weight in his heart as he walked out across the plank that lead to the shuttle. He felt the cold breeze of the morning as he turned to look back at the city of London that he had known for most of his life. From what he could see, the city seemed to stretch out for miles and miles. But then Ralph tapped him on the shoulder as he said

“Hello, Tyke come on, we don’t have all day.”

He followed Ralph towards the shuttle, passing by its pilot who tipped his cap as he said

“Good morning.”

As the two climbed into the shuttle, the crew helped them buckle into their seats. Looking back, Tyke could see a vast bunch of crewmen already buckled in and chatting to each other while the pilot did the final checks in the cockpit.

As all of this happened, Tyke asked Ralph

“Ralph? It’s been a while since I last got shot into space! Should we be scared?”

“Don’t worry, Tyke, shuttle flying is a normal thing these days, these boys know what they are doing.”

“Yes, that is reassuring but accidents can happen right?”

Ralph sighed as he said

“Trust me, try not to think about that, even when the craft rattles, just smile and act like everything’s fine! It’ll make the voyage slightly easier for you when you do.”

Tyke tried to smile as the countdown to lift off began. Then the countdown ceased and suddenly, Tyke felt as if the whole craft were rattling while a loud rumbling could be heard outside. As this happened, Tyke felt his back pushed against his seat. The shuttle was now lifting off and darting up towards the clouds. As this happened, Tyke continued to



feel the rattling as he heard the engines roaring from behind. Ralph having been in shuttles more often was able to keep his calm as the shuttle burst up through the clouds till it reached the atmosphere. Then when that happened, the shuttle came to a sudden silence and all of the rattling stopped. Baffled by this, Tyke turned to the window that was beside his seat, gasping as he saw the vast expanse of space in the distance. As he turned to look back, he could see the milky blue planet that was Earth. He could also see other shuttles leaving the planet's orbit from all around the globe.

As Tyke looked on, he could see that the shuttles were all headed to a vast gigantic industrial complex that was brightly lit up and just above the earth's orbit. Tyke presumed that such a facility was the Orion star ports from which the fleet of the UFER's space going navy deployed from. Sure, Tyke had known, heard about and seen these facilities since he was young but that didn't stop him from being impressed when he saw the Orion docks.

## **Ninth of November**

**Steve Huenneke**

The Ninth of November  
This was the thing that I couldn't get  
The thing I won't ever forget  
Everyone looked the same as always  
On the street, in stores, they didn't look like Zombies  
No one had put on the bumper sticker on their car in town  
No one had put out the sign on their lawn  
Then everybody would know who they were, what they were for  
They all went to the rally  
But behind a closed door  
In the dark, a crowd  
Where everyone there could and did descend into something lower and  
less  
Where everyone could still remain anonymous  
Hardly anyone  
Put their name out there with their opinion  
And then behind a curtain  
When no one paid attention  
They voted  
And this was the horror  
There was a lie inside of their secret  
What was it?  
They were ashamed, in some important ways  
On Armistice Day -- of all days!  
They called a meeting in my town  
Us and them, we were supposed to gather round  
It was not a meeting of AA  
Not a meeting of the new KKK  
The flyer said Bridging Our Differences  
Someone big in town decided  
This election had been way too bitter  
Maybe too one sided  
And we'd all better  
Come back together

Just like we used to  
For what it's worth  
I thought I would have sooner gone to a party at the centre of the Earth  
I thought  
If this is now the city  
If this is now the land  
I had shared in  
That was called Little Dixie  
Then it must be  
What it now must  
And I must be a cityless man.

## **A Woman With Anxiety**

**Matthew Tubridy**

The RLNI man says 'We have a woman with anxiety!  
He looks around the corner of the boat...  
She's sitting on the boat,  
She thought the boat would sink!  
Or be swept out to sea,  
What will we give her?  
Valium?  
We bring her back to the station,  
Then there was that stupid guy who bought a yacht and got it stuck on a  
sandbar,  
The Woman with anxiety,  
Sit down there now! We are the volunteers,  
Breathe slowly,  
You're on dry land now.  
In a Yorkshire accent,  
All right love?  
Have a cup of tea,  
We don't need the Valium this time.

## **An Oscar Winning Smile**

**Fiona Deaton**

A simple statement from a close friend at an impromptu party 'Just smile and act like everything is fine' but I doubted I would be able to comply. That morning, I had discovered unknown to my new fiancé that he was having an affair with his boss. The same boss that had actively sought him out on LinkedIn, offered him a generous salary and excellent terms and conditions. Above all else, it would pay for yet another round of IVF treatment on our journey to become parents.

It had been a long road, littered with the hard terrain of many obstacles not just financial, emotional and physical, it had tested us as partners to the Outer Hebrides. We were all set to go for another round of IVF on his 1st new pay check, but the sun had cast a ray of hope on us and I had become pregnant. The doctor explanation for same, was stress relief. This past week we lived in bubble of joy and earlier this morning my partner had asked to marry me. In a single heartbeat I simply responded yes unaware of what was down the tracks.

An impromptu party was called shortly afterwards before the sun had shone for the last time. I was in a Nordic darkness since I read the email. The party set for 6pm that evening, my partner decided it would be romantic if he choose the ring. He left our apartment and then I opened his laptop to look at wedding venues and then I saw it. My jaw dropped, I shook violently and then vomited. The cause of so much pain was an email from his boss.

His boss 10 years my partners junior was trim and an athletic built man. I considered him handsome with dashing looks and an endearing smile. However, reading the email I discovered so did my partner to. To put it simply the email contained a love sonnet that even Shakespeare could not out do. Once, the initial shock passed I rang my friend and told all. She arrived within 10 minutes and she could not believe her eyes. There was nothing effeminate about my partner and no telling signs that he could identify himself as anything other than a man. But the sonnet was addressed to his boss and so lovingly drafted with the heading 'I want to share the rest of my life with you' there was no other possible explanation.

My friend assured me that there was a way out of this, but not today. My partner and I had a 15 year relationship under our belt and we could get through anything. So we made the preparations for the party, my partner and his boss arrived back and I just smiled and acted like everything was fine.

At 6.30pm my partner got down on one knee, I painted a smile on and he read me the sonnet that unknown to me he and his boss worked on.

Two kids later, a new house and a good friend (his boss), I and my friend often laugh at what would have happened if I had not flashed the Oscar winning smile and acted like everything was ok.

## **The Bricks of this City**

**Matthew Tubridy**

The bricks of this city go flying around,  
You try to avoid them...  
It's the anxiety that made the bricks go flying like a bomb,  
A huge light, caused the bricks the explode,  
Now we must contend with them,  
They have got the ability to fly around, whacking into people,  
Nasty bricks,  
They were born in bad vibes,  
So they fly around in bad vibes,  
They smash into shop windows,  
And bus windows.

## **Principal Wagner's opening speech**

**Heloisa Prieto**

(Excerpt from The Storytellers)

Welcome folks! Thank you so much for coming!

Every time I give a speech I stop and try to go back to the beginning. This is where true secrets lie. Let's think about the biblical account of humankind's first collective project: The Babel tower. Genesis 11.1.

Previously, the whole earth only had one language and the same words. Ambition and vanity inspired people to build a tower so high it would touch the skies. "Let's make a name for ourselves," they said. God did not approve of the reasons why the tower was built and confused people's languages, so they would not understand one another's speech.

Whenever I think of this biblical narrative, I realize the importance of being aware of one's foundations. So I must ask you: why are we building our cultural centre now?

Please, don't take me wrong, but I believe we are telling the Babel tower myth in reverse. I mean you guys, coming from different walks in life, who can speak different tongues, are gathering here to share the same dream of a peaceful life.

Dreams have a way of expressing themselves through art. So this is how we intend to touch the skies by sharing stories, secrets, pictures, dance, whatever.

Yet dreams can also become nightmares. As the Babel tower, a dream that turned into an eternal nightmare that still haunts us all.

How can we place ourselves beyond a good dream and a horrible nightmare?

How can we appreciate the beauty of minds which don't abide by conventional rules?

I loved Magda, your mother, Kadu, who could see Greek gods everywhere.



I love Zeke, your brother, dear Jenni, who believes himself to be an alien.

Where lies the frontier between reason and insanity?

Art can welcome and shelter both sides. Not only that, by making art one can break the chains of an unreasonable pursuit of reason.

So, please, keep on coming, keep on sharing.

This is a safe space.

But, of course, if you want to go deeper into yourselves, all you have to do is to call upon our psychology team, just let us know.

Now, let's celebrate and feel gratitude for every single brick in this cultural centre of ours. More importantly, let's build our centre with inner bricks of love and knowledge placing it in our heart's timeless space so that no one will ever be able to destroy it.

Thank you!

## **The Raptor**

**Matthew Tubridy**

The raptor goes into a bank,  
He has big, long talons,  
He fishes into their safe,  
There's wads of bank notes in there,  
Raptor stuns the bank staff,  
So they can't call the Guards,  
Raptor even grabs the bank managers sandwich,  
He was looking forward to it,  
Because it has cress in it,  
Raptor gets into the computer system,  
That's the most damaging he can be,  
He hacks into many bank customers accounts,  
He has a bank account in a Swiss bank,  
So he transfers 1000's from some accounts,  
Raptor sits on the floor,  
The bank customers must walk around Raptor,  
He is very big,  
Raptor came from the spaceship on that film,  
Independence Day,  
He flies back to his spaceship,  
He alerts all the other raptors  
That they have a bank account in Switzerland,  
The raptors fly down to a town in Switzerland called 'Unck'  
They are very sophisticated so they can withdraw all the money they  
robbed,  
They have a good life in Unck,  
They produce offspring.

## Just Smile

### Mark L'estrage

Simon and Julie were out for a walk in the countryside, they bumped into Mary and her new boyfriend it was the guy that you might remember who Mary left Simon for but pretended he didn't exist when he won the lotto. Mary started to shout and Simon saying, "There is my husband with that bitch from the lotto office you owe me and I want it back" Julie said, "Just smile and act like your fine and she will get bored and bother someone else."

Simon was embarrassed and didn't know where to look he just said. "Just leave us alone you never gave a shit about me you only wanted me when you knew I had money." Julie said, "Come on don't worry about them don't let them spoil our day lets walk around and see this lovely place." "Your right lets go." They walked off and got some lunch at sat down on some rocks overlooking the sea.

Simon was enjoying a nice sandwich when a stone hit him on the head, he turned around and he saw Mary's boyfriend throwing stones at him and Julie Simon let a roar. What are you doing if you don't stop, I am calling the guards." He shouted back "We are throwing stones in the water not our fault you are sitting there beside the sea." Julie said, "They are not worth the energy let's find another spot."

So, they found a nice bench beside the restaurant and Mary sat down with her chips and drinks Simon said "Lucky they seem to be gone thank God" she barely got to finish his sentence when next thing that happened made things worse Mary ran by and robed Julies chips. Simon said, "This really is taking the biscuit" "More like this is really taking the chips." he ran after Mary shouting "Give me back Julies chips Mary let them fall on the ground on purpose.

They said to each other let's just get the car and go home these guys are not worth it they are so childish.

They went to Bray and had a great day.

## Gizzbo

Matthew Tubridy

Gizz us some change,  
He sits on the street,  
His name is Gizzbo,  
His mother kicked him out of their house,  
Gizzbo wants to get a burger in McDonalds,  
Just across the street,  
He looks in the window,  
Fogging up the glass,  
He goes around the back of McDonalds to the bins,  
There's lots of food left over,  
He grabs a half eaten burger,  
And a half full milkshake,  
100's get attracted to the back of McDonalds,  
They come from all over,  
Ghostly figures,  
Those scammed out of money,  
With 3 cent in their bank accounts,  
Those who argued with their boss and threw coffee over his head,  
Those waiting for government support,  
He was working for Price Waterhouse Cooper,  
But he jammed the lift,  
His boss was stuck in there for 3 hours,  
He approaches McDonalds,  
But you can go to other places, like supermarkets,  
As long as you don't mind a wonky carrot,  
The negative thing is these ghostly figures had no way to cook,  
To make soup,  
Eddie Rockets, has good chips, the word goes around,  
They come from Swords,  
He was living in a nice house,  
But the Landlord, turfed him out,  
Jim, Jim walks down the road to Dublin,  
His shoes are worn, a single toe protrudes out,  
He gets some chips,

Now he sleeps beside the river Tolka,  
In his tent,  
He goes into Great Outdoors,  
He meets an assistant called Nick,  
'You smell, get out' Nick says,  
Jim sees his Landlord buying ski shoes,  
He's off the Austria next month,  
Jim stands in front of his old Landlord,  
'How much are those ski shoes?'  
Jim asks  
The tag says 200 hundred euro,  
'Get out of my way' Landlord says,  
The assistant Nick overhears the conversation,  
He says to Jim, you may have a top of the range tent, sleeping bag and  
other essentials for camping,  
Then he turns to the Landlord, I'm taking these ski shoes off you,  
Jim goes back to his wonky tent beside the Aviva Stadium,  
And puts up his brand new one,  
He chops the wonky carrots he gets at the back of the supermarket,  
He makes soup, with the equipment given to him by the Great  
Outdoors,  
He sits, looking at the flow of the river,  
In the dark, drinking the soup,  
There's a rugby match on,  
The Leinster supporters walk past Jim,  
And pity him,  
But they don't know the Great Outdoors provided all his equipment,  
Jim goes to sleep in his state of the art sleeping bag,  
It says it goes down to -13 Celsius it says,  
He has a woolly hat on,  
He talks to passersby on how to be an upper class homeless man,  
He shows them his shiny penknife,  
The Great Outdoors take a photo of Jim and put it up in their window,  
He has everything he needs, food from the back of supermarkets and  
various other food establishments,  
Equipment to live from Great Outdoors.

## Beehive Cell

Ciaran O'Melia

"Is there any chance of getting a pint around here? Peter asked.

"Sorry the barman is away today; he goes to warmer climate for the winter."

"Where's that."

"That, what."

"No, I asked where he is gone."

"Oh I get you now, you had me confused, he's gone to West Cork, Ballinageary."

"You said he gone to a warmer climate, sure that is Ireland."

"Have you been around here when the wind and rain are lashing the island?"

"No and I don't want to be, I came out this morning on the ferry."

Peter was running away from the Garda and the drug barons, in fact he was running away from the wife and children. He was a hopeless wreck of a human. But he had rented out a Beehive Cell on the Skelligs, just for the late spring and summer. Not a day in the place and the thirst got to him.

Earlier back in Dublin the monk if he was a monk said, "I have the perfect spot for you."

Peter went down to the Quays to jump in the river, to drown himself, it was early in the

morning, and he saw the brown habit and sandals and long beads hanging off the white rope he had to keep the habit in place. The monk said, "I tried that many years ago and failed."

"Ye failed, did a monk stop you as you are trying to stop me." Peter asked.

“No the tide was out and all I got for me troubles was muddy sandals, the sh one te they throw in there is only unbelievable. But I am not here to tell you of my problems, I have a solution for you, but before I do I need to promise not to tell anyone. If the wife or drug barons ask you, just smile and act like everything is fine.”

## **I Feel Like We Have Met Before**

**Fiona Deaton**

It was a simple statement, but as an elusive traveller it is never a welcome one to my colourful character. I have spent years travelling not the US but in same manner as Jack Reacher. My mode of transport a little different EURO RAILING across Europe. I am way beyond my teenager years but what a way to squander ones inheritance.

I am currently residing in a small hotel in the south of France. I have been here 3 days and nothing has spurred me to travel any further till now. I am the daughter of a famous snooker player, my birth place being the lush green, emerald isle. I let those shores 5 years ago and no one has tracked me yet.

Unlike Jack Reacher, I do not beat people up or help them solve intricate crimes. I keep a journal to track my many journey's and I travel light my rucksack, trusty notebook and pen amount to all my worldly possessions. I travel with no judgement and I listen intently to the many people I meet. However, I have omitted my debit/credit cards that fund these travels.

The speaker who passed this comment is not Irish but is of Swedish origin and I feel like the Vikings have invaded 5 years of my tranquil life. Rooted to the spot my brain is whirling with those 70,000 thoughts plus more that we all became aware of looking after our mental health in the pandemic. 'Dam, dam and triple dam. I was enjoying the sunshine and the crowd at the hotel. I did not want to be ran out of town.'

All this solitary life, was borne out of the need for privacy. My life had become to complex with many an Irish soul, close friends, family or the media interested in how I would squander my inheritance. Growing up as a child, even though shielded to some extend by my mother, I hated the media attention.

As I was about to leave that town in France, the waitress solved all my issues immediately by simply stating she had met me at the train station when I arrived in the said French village.

Once again I could relax drink a glass of wine and include this in my journal for today.



## The Snake

Matthew Tubridy

Your just sitting in your home,  
And a hole appears in the ceiling,  
A big snake comes out of it,  
Wraps itself around you,  
The snake has come for the custard,  
Snake looks up your bank account,  
Snake grows fingers,  
Types away on your laptop,  
And swallows custard as she types,  
You were just sitting there,  
And a brick falls from the ceiling,  
Hits your head.  
The snake loosened it when she came in,  
You were watching Top Gear,  
You slump onto your bed,  
Blood dripping,  
The officer for the maintenance of peace in homes arrived,  
The snake opens the door to him,  
Do you own this house? The official asks  
The snakes shows the official her bank account on the laptop,  
It has 50 grand in it,  
Transferred 20 minutes before,  
The official does a search of the house,  
He sees the man collapsed on the bed,  
Snake says, 'This is my house!'  
Snake starts to lick the blood from around the man's head,  
'Join me' she says to the official,  
Th official declines,  
So the snake lunges at him,  
Straight to the neck,  
The officials radio keeps making noise,  
It's his colleague wondering what's going on,  
They call the police,  
5 squad cars arrive,

'I own this home' says the snake,  
'You may not enter!'  
The Army are called,  
They plant a big bomb in the house,  
When it detonates, it causes a massive cloud,  
Snake flies up into the air,  
'You don't mess with the Irish Army' they say,  
The police start a campaign, if any snakes come into your house while you  
relax,  
Tell tow snake it's your house and it will reduce in size until it's the size  
of a pin.

## **The Rock Queen**

### **Miguel Angel Rivera**

Andrea opened her eyes and immediately she knew what'd happened. She knew these Irish beehive cells and what they meant. A trial!

"What the hell happened? Where are we? Andrea what is this place?", The questions poured forth from Betsy, her best friend and confidant in most things. Betsy was however not privy to the secrets of Andrea's family life and to whom she was related. That explanation would take days if not weeks. How could she explain that her Aunt was a woman named Rachel McCullen who was literally part of another world and society. Andrea would have to give her a crash course in off-world politics.

"Betsy you're gonna see some things here today may upset you. Things that the average person on earth has either never seen or wouldn't believe. You see my aunt can do these things..", Her words were broken off by a sudden flash. Before them now was a stone table with five people seated in front. In the middle sat her aunt in that odd black armour that was somewhere between a Samurai and Iron man. Her face, and especially her eyes, had that calm but deadly reserve. The kind of look a person who's killed thousands and expects to kill several thousand more without shadow of a moral compass, has. The people sitting to Rachel's left and right wore similar battle gear, but their faces were covered with odd black helmets.

Andrea stepped forward, came to attention position, and saluted her aunt as she'd been taught long ago. Betsy sat on the ground petrified and close to the edge of soiling herself from fear and shock.

Rachel returned Andrea's salute and then began. "My beloved niece. I've let you stay on this wretched planet and endured your many escapades but that will cease today.", She unleashed.

Andrea's mind raced. She knew Rachel could kill her with a thought and would cheerfully do so to protect their family name as well as the Realm secrets that were a part of their family's DNA. She blurted out a confession "Okay, okay! I stole that damned lipstick! I was broke and there was a nice get together on campus that day! Please don't hurt my friend, she was only a bystander!"

## St Louise's Ward

Matthew Tubridy

O'Doherty,  
Whishes around St Louise's Ward,  
A suicide attempt there, extreme psychosis there,  
Dr O'Doherty goes into the Activity Room,  
She's looking for Pauric,  
Pauric ordered some scissors to his bed in St Louise's Ward,  
And cut his wrists,  
Dr O'Doherty asks Pauric 'What needs to happen for you to not want to cut your wrists?'  
'More dessert after dinner!' He replies!  
Just after he cut himself a nurse called Paddy jumped on him and wrestled the scissors off Pauric,  
Paddy got a medal and extra dessert,  
Paddy was given the afternoon off to see the greyhound racing,  
He put on a few bets too,  
So O'Doherty sits down beside Pauric and looks him in the eye,  
Pauric had ordered the scissors from a catalogue,  
He courier threw them in the window of his room on the ward,  
Pauric had major plans for those scissors,  
He was going to stab Dr O'Doherty in the neck, run rampage around tree wards,  
Stab Nicky because Nicky told Pauric he looks like a slug,  
So Dr O'Doherty responded to Patrick's request for more dessert after dinner,  
Pauric was a but pudgy,  
He likes his dessert,  
They took the catalogue from Pauric too,  
In it you could buy machine guns, various types of knives for the catering trade, various tools for carpenters,  
Eventually Pauric breaks down in tears and is hugged by Dr O'Doherty,  
He says 'It's all the psychosis! The mice running the corridors told me to do it!'  
At the end of the day Pauric gets more dessert and he turns his back on violence against patients and staff,

As it says on a poster on the wall  
This Hospital will not tolerate any violence to staff,  
There's a ceremony in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, attended by  
Michael D Higgins,  
The hospital staff are there in shiny uniforms,  
They present Pauric to Michael D,  
Say that he has left his violent past,  
Michael D pats Pauric on his head,  
But then Pauric gets his chance,  
He takes out a cleavers knife from under his trousers and stabs Michael  
D in his heart  
Pauric's little army drive into the square and open fire,  
Revenge for the dampening anti psychotics!  
All the staff die, including Dr O'Doherty.

## **Skellig Michael**

### **Gerard Byrne**

Skellig Michael, county Kerry. Seems like a nice place to end it all. Barbara always loved this spot. Said that it reminded her of a time when life was simpler. You could be a faceless person in the crowd back then. Make no waves in life as you try to get by from day to day. Didn't really know what she meant by that at the time. We were a lot younger on our last visit to this beautiful place. Now it's popularity has increased thanks to that stupid Star Wars movie and it's so called spin offs. More like rip offs if you ask me. Anything for Disney to make a quick profit out of.

I spot a crowd of American sightseers coming up the poorly constructed stone path towards me. How do I know they're American?. The bright tracksuits and colourful backpacks give them away from a distance, soon followed by a loud "gee whizz" coming across the air. It's easy to see that they're only here to see the film location and not bask in the wonder of the history of this wonderful place. Go figures.

I just smile and act like everything's fine. Don't want anyone asking me if I'm okay, or even worse, they might want me to take a group photo of them. They'll probably pull out their own homemade lightsabres for it and all.

Thankfully they just stroll past and leave me to my thoughts. It's only then that I notice how tightly that I'm clutching Barbara's urn in my hands. My fingers are actually going white from the pressure I'm applying. I thank a god that I don't believe in for not letting the urn crack. If there was a god, he must be one sadistic fuck. Why pray to a man who let's so much suffering happen in the world.

It's funny really. I'm calling god a man. Probably thanks to decades of being brainwashed by the church. But I hear people these days wishing to refer to the almighty as a woman instead. Do they really wanna go there?. Do they really wanna accept that the all powerful being that allows thousands to die every day. That lets children be tortured, sexually assaulted and murdered. They really wanna see that person as a woman. Up to them, that's what I say. Whatever floats your boat.

I take Barbara's urn and tip it out into the breezy air. The ash quickly disappearing into nothing. The Atlantic Ocean has her now. Now it's my turn. I take another step forward and shut my eyes. The final drop is something I really don't wanna see. I arc the upper half of my body out and let gravity take me.

Suddenly something hard slams across my chest. I open my eyes to see one of the Americans standing next to me. He's holding his toy lightsabre in his hands in a stance as if he's about to attack. The glowing red length of it is across my chest. I'm speechless.

"Looks like I've just saved you there friend", announces the bearded American with a big smile that shows off a set of perfect teeth that he probably paid for.

"Thanks for fucking nothing", I blurt out, before lamping him in the face with a right hook. Strangely it actually makes me feel better.

## **Jude's Holiday**

### **Magda Velloso**

Jude was on Holiday and had explored all the sights she though were worth visiting. The last one she came to took a lot of effort, for it was a steep climb into a hill through narrow paths sometimes looking directly down into the rough sea – one could not dare one misstep or else one would be no more.

But she finally reached the top and smiled at her companion, the friend who had gently obliged her in the climb, although he had told her he had visited the site before and thought it was not that important.

When she came to the top, breathing with difficulty on account of the climb as well as of the height they had reached, which made the air more rarefied, she had to sit down on one of the stones to get back her air and stop painting. Her friend smiled knowingly and said:

“Just smile and act like everything's fine.”