

Inkslingers Blended Session

22nd April 2023

The Prompt from The Bag Was:

"I Wanna Be Around..."

And the Visual



If Pigs Could Swim...

The Raw Stench of Sundays

Greg Fields

Always, even on quiet Sunday mornings, there was the stench to the city, that peculiar mixture of grit, grime and exhaust mingled forever with the scent of despair. It had been there forever, Cooney thought. It had wafted over the Capitol Dome and flitted through the filters that cleaned the air at the White House. It had drawn into the lungs of Lincoln and the Roosevelts. It had permeated the public festivals and the state funerals. And well before all this it had seeped into the tawdry shacks and tinroof settlements of Swampoodle, where the Cooneys and the Mannions and the Duncans and thousands of their forebears had found their way, then lost it again. The city had changed through the decades, families and lives scattered to disparate corners. But the stench remained, and nothing could cleanse it from the lungs and psyche of those consigned to sense it.

Cooney found Andrew Gentry in the square, his head back, eyes closed, to absorb the midday sun. Cooney went up to him and waited for Gentry to open his eyes. When he did so, Cooney smiled and spoke to him quietly.

“I believe the first thing I ever taught you was never to run away from a scene. Draws too much attention to yourself. Always walk, Andrew, as if you’re just taking the air and breathing in the world around you. No one ever notices a man out on a walk. But a man running. . . .ah, that draws looks and invites curiosity, no matter the place or time of day.”

Gentry replied with a smirk, “You’ve taught me a number of lessons, Matty. I’m grateful for the wisdom.” He paused while Cooney’s gaze held his eyes. “You seem to have a nasty bruise there, old man. An accident? Or maybe a fight you didn’t win?”

“Not an accident, Andrew. Something quite deliberate.” Cooney leaned forward, grabbed Gentry’s shirt and twisted it up to his throat, hissing through clenched teeth. “And now I’d appreciate you undoing your foolishness and giving me back what’s mine.”

Gentry leaned forward. He placed his own right hand across Cooney’s fist holding his shirt. He was unhurried in his reply. “Don’t really know

what you're talking about, Matty. An old man's fantasies, from what I can tell. Maybe a touch of dementia, is that it? I'll thank you to let go of my shirt."

Instead Cooney pulled the younger man to his feet. "If it's a test of strength you want, Andrew, I'll give it to you. Don't fight me, man, any more than you already have. Among the other lessons you've ignored is the one that says there's always to be honour among thieves. But I've never known you to be a man of honour, Andrew. You're just a thief, and a poor one at that." Cooney tightened his grip. "Now bring me back what you've taken, and I'll overlook the blow delivered in the taking of it. I want to be around when you settle your debts."

"The only thing I've taken from you, Matty, is your insults," Gentry spat back. "I have no idea what you're referring to. Now I'll ask you again to take your hand away before I'm forced to become violent. And I'd hate to have to strike down an old man."

With his hand still firmly gripping Gentry's shirt, Cooney brought his other forearm up and pressed it against the other's throat. Gentry squirmed, then took a quick pivot away from the pressure of the forearm. As he did so, Cooney stumbled, just a step but enough for Gentry to gain some leverage. The younger man's fist crashed against Cooney's ear, slightly below the bruise from the night before. Cooney reeled backwards, and Gentry was free. With a muted growl, Gentry drove forward and knocked Cooney to the ground. He was on him then, and delivered two hard kicks to Cooney's ribs.

"We're done here, old man," he panted. "Go find yourself a quiet place to die." Gentry wiped his mouth, picked up his backpack, gave Cooney one last half-hearted kick, then stomped off across the square. No one paid him any attention, and no one seemed to notice Cooney lying prone in the warm August grass.

He lay there a while, then gathered himself enough to stumble to a bench across the way. The throb in his ribs now echoed the pain in his head. In the distance he once again heard church bells, thinner and tinnier than those from the morning. No benedictions on this day. No blessings. Just another Sunday in the city. Another Sunday in the stench of it all.

I Wanna Be Around

Bernadette O'Reilly

In June a grandniece will join our family
Her paternal grandmother has bought
Pretty tiny dresses
Crochet blankets also
Wait for her arrival
Her maternal great grandmother was
A beautiful woman
Will this June rose be a beauty too?
I wanna be around
To see her grow up
Celebrate mile stones with her.
I wonder will she be a career woman
Or a creative.
I wish the world to be
A peaceful, beautiful place for her
Filled with love.
I wanna be around...

The Eye of the Sun

Zach Worrall

His naked feet touch the surface of the iridescent sun like a moth landing cautiously on the tip of a candle flame. Whirls of yellow plasma over a million degree's hot lick his bare ankles, dancing up a thin leg to wrap like golden cotton across his naked chest.

With his mouth open in a sigh, the bearded, gentle looking face is raised up upwards in a deep inhale. Bubbling plasma floats upwards, is inhaled into the man's cancer stained lungs, then exhaled like long held cigarette smoke.

The man sinks into the sun's surface slowly, having passing through the outer chromosphere of the sun as though sinking into mud. Now he starts to fall through the photosphere, on his impossibly fast journey to the core. Here, in the heart of this dying star, the man hovers with his arms outstretched. At twenty seven million degree's he starts to cry, his tears falling like drops of crystal.

"IS THIS IT!". His roar is whipped away by a endless thrumming of this G type sequence star.

"I MADE A WISH TO BECOME A GOD AND THIS IS IT???"

The star is silent, a passive observer that in its five billions years of existence has never had a being dare stand in its heart.

The silence of eternity is the answer. An endless, roaring emptiness that care's nothing for this human or his feelings.

He falls again, a million miles per hour, popping out the edge of the sun like a tiny firefly. This flaming speck heads towards earth like yellow pin. The sky flares and explodes in perfect circles of cloud as he breaks the sound barrier time after time. Leaving a trail of stabbed cloud circles the man gently lands on a beach somewhere on the coast of Galway.

His feet melt the sand to glass for a fifty metres around him, creating a perfect mirror on the beach where one could look upwards through a hundred stabbed clouds halo's into the eye of the sun.

Unharmred, at his feet, sits a strange, curved bottle.

“One wish” he mutters as he reaches down and lifts it up.

“You promised me one wish and it came true”.

The bottle stares at him impassively.

The tears start again.

“I don't want to be separate, to feel nothing. I don't want to be able to do anything, I wish I never asked to be a god. There is no pleasure”. He chokes this out with a scream, hugging the bottle to his chest.

“There is nothing in space but silence, nothing in the sun but white light.”

“I want to FEEL again! I want my daughter, my family, I want the horror of this cancer, I want anything but this NOTHINGNESS”, his hands are shaking now, shaking the bottle like a madman.

“I don't want to see the atoms within everything, I don't want to see the gaps between atoms. I can see the emptiness in everything, the holes in reality.”

He is on his knee's now.

“Please, please I wish I was human again”. His hands pound the sand but only the silence of gentle waves answer him.

Abruptly his face changes, the tears stop.

“Even this is taken from me, this emotion. It means nothing to me.” He looks around now, eyes suddenly cold like a dead iceberg. “Life means nothing now. I can see everything.”

He stares at the bottle and drops it.

“I see the gaps between protons, the empty void between the darting neutrons and the fragile dance of quarks.”

He just stands there, staring into the ocean while the world moves around him.

“I can't stop seeing, can't stop following the gaps, the holes in everything”.

Around him, people come and go, but he can no longer see them, his mind is lost in the spaces between reality, sinking into realms of impossible thought. He tries to make sense of reality, of how impossibly fragile the world is.

More people come and look at him, at this ageless stranger standing on a beach. They build a statue to him in one generation. They poke and prod him in another generation with scientific instruments. A generation later the beach is wiped out in a nameless war. It is reforested in another generation. War and peace, cities and villages grown up around him. The land dries up, ice covers him. Years pass, then hundreds of years, then thousands. The thousand years turn to millions and then time moves on past this figure by billions.

The sun grows red overtime, as it starts to transform into a long fated red giant star. The sun's thermonuclear fuel die's, expanding its outer envelope until earth is consumed by the sun's new red hellish form.

If Pigs Could Swim...I'd Wanna Be Around

Angelina Kelly

If pigs could swim, I wanna be around,
And if they did, I wonder how they'd sound.
Would they squeak or grunt, as if they were on the hunt,
Or would they warble and moan, or even groan.

We thought pigs could fly, but that was a lie,
But to have them swim, well that is just a whim.
I think for now we'll keep them on the ground,
But if they ever do swim, I wanna be around.

I'd Like to be Around for That.

Ciaran O'Melia

I knew he'd be trouble as soon as he walked into the bar, with the roaring and shouting he went on with. Jesus, but he is a terrible man.

"Did ye see dat." He shouted to no one in particular.

As they were all on pints and head down, as if ignoring yer man, he said it again, only louder.

"DID U SEE DAT"

"What," I said as I was waiting till Danny brought over me pint.

I should say or describe the shouter. He was dressed in an overcoat, and dripping wet he was, with no pants, no don't get me wrong, he had underpants on. Grass and things were hanging out of his hair.

"What," I said again, although I was afraid of the answer from this wet rag.

As I was the only one who answered, he slid over to me, it was then I could make him out; his hand was under his coat, and there was a lot of movement as if he couldn't contain himself.

"This," he said, slapping a wee piglet out from under the wet coat.

Of course, they all gathered around with the pet pig. There were many questions, like

'What is dat' or 'Where did you get that.'

He ignored all the gawkers and addressed me.

"A lorry crashed on Binns Bridge with a load of his cousins in it". He nodded to the piglet. "Over on its side mayhem, there was. I saw my chance; it doesn't get any better than this. I say more to meself. So I got into the canal and grabbed what I can. This is it".

"You're soaking wet, be careful where you put that; whatever you do, you need to wipe up after yourself. The pool of water is following you."

He looked around the floor but said, "This place, sure, a bomb would have to go off before shifting this crowd."

“How are you so wet.”

“He or she jumped into the canal and swam to the other side, where I was standing. A great swimmer he or she is, great. I’ll tell you the truth, I never knew pigs could swim, I heard they could fly, but swim, never. Something to do with the sharpness of the hooves, ye know.”

“What are you going to do with that,” I asked.

“My Granny had pigs in the backyard, raised them and bought a big house. Why can’t I do that.” He started to dream here. “I’d like to be around for that.”

Shouldn't This Be Obvious?

Steve Huenneke

Thirty three years ago

In Denver Colorado
My nephew who was three
Was with me
In a car going to a baseball game
I won't say his name
Just what he had as a question
While we were stuck in traffic
"Are there people living on the sun?"
Now today
There are still children who are three
Perhaps living in the city
Of Denver, Colorado
Who still want to know
Things
Like, "can pigs swim?"
If they are hot and thirsty
If they possibly can think
They just might want to cool off
Or suppose they want to smash a stereotype
By washing up
In the river
Until that is
They see an alligator
And they don't want to be his or her
Meat store
If they possible can
They will swim to the shore
If they don't want to become
Parts of some
Or just bits of bacon
Who failed to learn a lesson
They, too, wanna to be around

Stay that way
Does that answer the question?
Maybe
I know, I know not so well done
As people who might have once been
Living on the sun.

A Walk Along the Canal.

Michael O'Brien

"Interesting that someone calls it a Junkies Grotto," Alan said, slightly amused as they both looked at the graffiti on the wall by the canal.

"Not Really," Dave replied looking with clear contempt at the needles strewn all around the banks of the canal.

"Not the Junkie part, I mean the Grotto," Alan was amused as always by his friend's cynicism.

Dave just grunted as he surveyed the litter and drug paraphernalia,

Alan continued his point, "grotto's can be very spiritual places, if there's a nice stone arch in the side of a mountain, a statue of the Virgin Mary, maybe the sound of running water from a stream flowing past it, some people have had beautiful experiences in places like that, and I'd say some of the people who come here have had beautiful experiences, maybe a bit of escapism from the hardship of their lives"

Dave was having none of it, "Yeah it's called hallucinating my friend, deluded by the shit they put in their veins, just like those idiots at the catholic grottos seeing the statues move, do you remember all that nonsense in the eighties, no doubt some of the junkies here see pigs flying"

Alan laughed, "Well now you heard that story"

"What story?"

"One of the junkies here one night did see a pig, except it wasn't flying, it was swimming here in the canal".

"Piss off," Dave was smiling now.

“Honestly, it had escaped from the abattoir further up the canal and swam down this way, so he rescued it and refused to give it back to the abattoir, and kept it as a pet.”

“A pet?”

“Yeah”

“So, he named it?”

“Yep”

“What does he call it?”

“Houdini “

Dave nodded as they both continued walking down the canal, “Jesus if you come up with these stories on our way to the pub, what will you come up with when we’re coming home?”

If Pigs Could Swim

Mark L'estrange

A couple weeks passed without any word from the Guards about Paddy's new job, until one day he was having a chill out day at home, when the phone he was given rang, it was the Sargant he met.

"Paddy how are you getting on."

"Yes, all good thanks, do you have something for me to do?"

"Something very unusual has been happening the last few weeks there has been a few robberies, and we would like your help to investigate them?"

"What is unusual about it?"

"The people who are the victims say that they find pigs in their garden and see no sign of anything else." "Whereabouts are these break-ins not far from where you live Paddy."

"Funny you should say that I was out for a run yesterday and I saw the strangest thing I saw two pigs swimming in the canal." "That's strange I have heard the metaphor and pigs will fly but swim takes the biscuit."

Paddy headed down to where he saw the pigs swimming to see if he could figure out the connection with the pigs and the robberies, when he got there, he noticed a few more pigs in the water and they were causing a lot of attention from the local neighbourhood people.

He also noticed a few suspicious looking characters hanging around the canal, Paddy rang the Sargant to give him an update.

"Hi, there is a few pigs in the water down here at the moment, and also there is a few suspicious blokes hanging around here as well" "Keep an

eye on them and see if you see them doing anything odd and let me know but don't let them notice you if you can thanks"

He saw one of them with what looked like a remote control that made him very curious, he approached him and asked.

"Do you have a remote what is that for a boat or something, just wondering because it's a hobby of mine." "Yes, I do have a boat and I was sailing it and now I can't find it hope one of those pigs hasn't eaten it."

He didn't believe a word he got to thinking these could be remote control pigs in the water to distract the people from their homes while they break in, he went over and told the people what he was thinking and said.

"Go Home and make sure your homes are ok and any problems, here is my card and I will spin around and help you."

He then rang the Sargant back to bring him up to date and ask for further instructions.

"Good work Paddy I never would never have thought of that, if you wouldn't mind staying around the river and I will send a car around the neighbourhood to see if we can see anything going on." "Ok thanks for that"

One of the guys holding the remote dropped it and ran off toward one of the houses which made one of the pigs hit the wall." Paddy flew after him with smoke coming out of his runners he ran so fast, he found him trying to break into an empty house when the thief saw him he said

"What do you want?" "You to get away from this house" "What are you going to do about it?" then he felt so dizzy that he wasn't going to be fit to break into any more houses.

Swimming Pigs

Miguel Angel Rivera

As he tried to shield himself from the sun with a makeshift umbrella crafted from palm tree leaves, Earnest Winchester the 3rd could feel the latest rumbling in his stomach. He looked around at his fellow passengers, yet again, taking careful inventory of each. Who was useful, who was injured, who was indispensable, and perhaps most importantly, who was a potential candidate for “the menu”.

Their supplies were exhausted, their water down to a bowl or two and they hadn't eaten in three days. Three days since their small plane of 50 had come down in the waters off of a small island somewhere in the Pacific. Here he was. A Wall Street Tycoon's Son, accustomed only to the best private lear jets, the best food, the best clothes, the best of everything!

This flight on a regular airplane had been a step down, “slumming” was what his fiancée had called it. He was incensed that she had flown ahead and was probably on her fifth martini by now, while he sat on some uncharted beach, starving and covered with bug-bites, while storing a fair amount of sand up his ass.

He waved his assistant over to his side for a final review of their survival options. Her once proud hairdo was now a ball of mush and her business attire was soiled and ragged from sitting on the sand for days on end, awaiting a rescue that might never come.

“Okay Meagan, let's review.”, He said. She tried to gather herself. She'd competed against hundreds of other girls to win the coveted spot of being Mr. Winchester Junior's personal assistant. She didn't mind the all-night parties and week-long coke binges or his insatiable “other” appetites. For a girl who grew up in the blue-collar, Iron-bound district of Newark, even bending over his desk once in a while had been a small price for the luxury of traveling the world in style.

“Well Sir, the two passengers that are unconscious are in the running, the elderly woman traveling with her chihuahua are also to be considered, and Mr. Melzer is morbidly obese. He would most likely

provide the most sustenance for the greatest number of people.”, She said, as if providing the latest stock report.

“Well done, Melzer it is”, Earnest responded. He fished for the sharpened seat buckle in his pocket and gave Melzer a warm grin. He then turned to his assistant with a smile. “If pigs could swim, I wanna be around.” He said.

The Sage Of Shanleys'

Stephen Brady



J. J. Shanleys' Bar sat on a lonely road facing out on the grey Atlantic. To the south lay the bare tundra of the Burren. And all around the hills, a funeral country on the ragged edge of the old Continent.

J.J. was leaning on the bar, studying the funerals in the paper – "Who's Who In The Underworld," as he liked to call it. The door to the bar popped open, admitting a squall of rain and the roar of the sea. He glanced up, and saw two strangers in the doorway.

"Come on in, folks. Shut that door behind ye."

The door was closed, and the newcomers advanced into the bar.

They were a couple in their thirties, both tall, sandy-haired, athletic. They were wearing expensive raingear and matching baseball caps. The man had a Nikon slung around his neck. They both wore rimless glasses, through which they peered in the taproom's gloom.

"Come on in," he said again. "Pull up there and warm yeerselves."

"Thank you sir," said the man, and the pair climbed onto barstools. The woman looked down at hers as though it might give way beneath her.

"Now." J.J. closed the paper and straightened. "Welcome to Shanley's. Last stop before the Hudson Bay! I'm J.J. Would I be right in saying ye two are new to the parish?"

"That's right," said the man, blinking at J.J. in a not-unfriendly manner. "I'm Todd Garrity. This is my wife, Shanice."

"Hi," she said.

"Are ye from the States?" asked J.J., a little sardonic.

"That's right, sir. Milford, Delaware. Go Eagles!"

J.J. didn't know what to say to that, and a pregnant pause ensued.

"So...! What can I get for ye, folks?"

"How about some tea?" said Shanice. She was looking at J.J., but she seemed to be looking through him, at the same time. "You guys always have tea, right?"

"Right y'are. Two teas coming up."

He went into the kitchen, leaving Todd and Shanice alone.

"I'm telling you," she said in a low voice, "we took a wrong turn. That old woman at the post office was making fun of you. That Kilfana place, it's not out here. There's nothing out here. Except this place." She looked around at the bar, and shuddered a little.

"It's fine," said Todd. He laid his Nikon carefully on the counter. "We'll get our tea and use the restroom. Then we'll get out of here."

"The sooner the better. There's something weird about this place. And I don't like the way that guy's looking at you."

"What guy?"

Shanice made a minor motion of the head, and Todd followed it.

There was a man there, sitting at the far end of the bar. Todd could have sworn he wasn't there when they came in.

The patron was barely visible, and seemed to be solidified from the shadows. He was ancient, a mountain of a man, wearing dirty brown clothing, a shapeless felt hat squashed down on his head. A rich, loamy odour issued from him. His face was a mass of wrinkles and weather-raw skin, from which a pair of narrow eyes glinted.

"There ye are," the patron rumbled. His voice seemed to make the windows rattle.

"Good afternoon, sir." Todd's Mom had always told him there was no excuse to forget your manners, even before Saint Peter. "We didn't see you there."

"No," the denizen growled. "Ye wouldn't have."

Silence ensued. Shanice was scrolling intently on her phone. Todd was starting to wonder where their tea was. And he was acutely aware of the denizen's eyes, heavy upon them.

"Very windy out there," he ventured.

"April the 12th, is it?"

"Um... yeah. Today is April 12th."

"Well then." The customer raised a glass of black liquid to his face, took a pull, and set it back down with an air of satisfaction. "That's the reason for that."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Always a big wind April 12th. Every year. 'Tis to do with the craters, out in the sea."

"Really?" said Shanice, without looking up.

"Indeed. Big wind April 12th. And it always blows in a couple of strangers."

Another silence followed that remark, punctuated only by the wind and the muted roar of the sea.

"This place is not so bad," said Todd, drumming his fingers.

"I'm telling you, we took a wrong turn. Oh for Heaven's sake." She was trying, without success, to pull up Google Maps. "Can't get a darn signal in here."

"Did ye come out from Knocknagrealish?" the patron enquired. It took Todd a moment to make sense of the question.

"Oh yes, that's right. A very helpful lady at the post office gave us some directions."

"On the wrong wrong," muttered Shanice.

"Not at all," came the reply. "That road out from Knocknagrealish is the best road ye could be on."

"Oh yeah? Why's that?"

"'Tis a perfect circle, that road. Follow it long enough and it'll take ye anywhere."

Shanice was looking hard at the barfly now. But she could detect no humour: the crumpled face remained unreadable.

"Where's our darn tea?" she muttered.

They glanced toward the kitchen. The sounds of tea-making were faintly audible, but there was no sign of J.J.

"Say," said Todd. "when we were coming out on that road, we saw kind of a stone circle. On the hill, a few miles back. Would that be what you guys call a 'fairy fort?'"

The sage put his glass down, hard.

"No. That would not be what you call a 'fairy fort.' There is no such a thing. This 'fairies' lark was concocted by the conquerors, to make the natives look backward. Flim-flam is at all it is. 'Fairy fort' me eye..." He drank, grumbling.

"Hey, if I offended you, I apologize." Todd raised a hand, palm out. He was in Human Resources, and had a number of gestures on call to defuse tense interpersonal situations. "But I guess you'd be the right person to ask. What is the significance of the stone circle?"

"'Twas the house of the Banshee."

Another silence descended. Shanice returned to her phone. From the kitchen still came faint sounds, shifting and clanks.

"Won't be long," Todd said. "We'll be on our way soon."

"Good."

"Still, this place ain't so bad. It seems kinda... I don't know... familiar?"

"Please. Next you're gonna tell me you feel some ancestral connection to this dump."

"Well, maybe I do."

She looked up, and her gaze was hard.

"Well I just hope you remember whose idea this was. It wasn't me who wanted to come to this crappy country."

This was true. Since Todd's father had passed the year before, he had talked of little else but finding the land of his forebears. Shanice guessed it was a mid-life thing, and had tried to hook him up with a life-coach. But he wouldn't let it drop. He'd started talking a lot about his Grandma (whom Shanice had always thought a dismal old witch), and about the townland in County Clare that her people had departed a hundred years before. And now they were here, or in some godforesaken place in the same general area.

"I hope you know," she said, "that I'm dealing with a lot right now. And I hope you're getting all this out of your system."

Before Todd could answer, the rumbling voice came again from the shadows.

"D'you know, you look fierce familiar to me. What's this your name is?"

"Garritty, sir. Todd Garrity."

The sage nodded, or at least the massive head tipped back into the darkness, then returned. "That's right. Fierce familiar, you are."

Ignoring his wife's gaze, Todd leaned over the bar. "Actually, sir, my family name was Garraghy. From around this area originally, we think."

"Would that be Garraghys from Kilfarnagh?"

Todd was so stunned he had to grip the bar to keep from falling backward.

"That's right! That's what my Grandma used to say. Her Mom, my great-grandma, left from Kilfarnagh with all her people."

"That's right," said the sage. "Margaret Garraghy, wasn't it?"

"That's right," said Todd in wonderment.

"Knew her well. When she was a wee gerl."

"Oh for Heaven's sake," muttered Shanice. She looked over at the kitchen door. But where a chink of light had been visible before, now was only darkness.

Todd said, "I'm sorry, sir, but that's not possible. Margaret Garraghy left Kilfarnagh in the 19th century. Sometime in the 1880s, we think."

"That's right," the sage said equably. "A grand sweet gerl. They called her Maggie Poll. Somethin' funny with her left eye. A finer wee lass you couldn't meet."

Todd was dumbfounded. All of that matched with things his Grandma had said. All of it taking place in this bare country, more than a century ago.

"Todd!" his wife hissed. "Don't be an idiot. That guy spins yarns to tourists all day. He'll hit you up for a drink next. What's the matter with you?"

"And yourself, young lady." The denizen addressed her for the first time. "What was your family name?"

She considered not answering, then said: "Schwarzheim."

The sage drank, and returned to a complacent silence. Todd found that he could not stop staring at the man on the far stool, half-eaten by the shadows. And it seemed, as he studied the mountainous figure, that moss lay in the wrinkles of his face, that swatches of grass grew on the backs of his hands, and that when he moved fine curtains of earth would sift from the creases of his clothes.

Shanice Garritty was staring out the window at the ocean. The sounds from the kitchen had long since ceased. And she realized that they would never get their tea, or leave this place, or see Springtime in Milford again. The only sound in Shanley's bar was the never ending miles-deep rumble of the sea.

The Pig Race

Gerard Byrne

The Clinton hotel in the Bahamas was well known for its upmarket clientele and lack of a sense of fun. Their management's idea of entertaining their guests was to have a pianist playing in the bar from six to late every night.

But one tradition that the hotel didn't give up on was the pig race. It dated back forty or so years to when the hotel was just pretty basic and the room fees were exceedingly low for the area. The pig race had been started by the original owner. A Mr B Yeltsin. Nice man with a strong Russian background. Mostly crime based but he had cut the chords from that a long time ago.

All the overly dressed guests stood on the bridge that overlooked the long run into the hotel's private port and betted among themselves on who was gonna win the race. Wads of fifties were put on display for all to see. One fading American film star was trying to gamble her diamond encrusted necklace on a pig called Mr Tibbs. No one wanted to take her up on the offer.

Suddenly a starting pistol went off and the hotel staff threw the pigs into the water and started shooing them along with loud voices and arm gestures. Mr Tibbs was second from the back, but Captain Kirk was out in front, cheered on by a group of young Russian men with more money than sense.

When the tired pigs were finally near the end of their journey, an object plopped down into the water among them. The hotel manager, David Wang, noticed the small item bobbing around on the water, "that looks like a grenade"

Suddenly the waters exploded into a fiery mess, sending pig parts onto all the hotel guests, along with a generous helping of blood. There was screaming and shouting as people tried to make sense of what had just happened. One old man from Poland was laughing to himself among the chaos, "looks like the pigs have been barbecued for us"

"What's left of them", complained David Wang as he pulled a bloody trotter from his top pocket and placed it on a nearby table, before

turning his attention to the group of young Russian men, “right lads. We had this out already about you lot bringing grenades into my hotel. We still can’t open the children’s pool yet due to tile damage at the bottom”
“That’s the quickest we’ve ever cleared it sir”, announced Gloria, the entertainment manager.

David Wang threw her a nasty glance, “enough with the jokes. And if you think all this is so funny. Then I wanna be around you for the next few days to determine how well you’re doing your job Gloria”

Gloria just shrugged her shoulders, “find by me”, she gestured towards the small group of Russian men, “at least now I have someone more senior with me, to tell that lot to stop using live grenades for golf balls during the crazy golf challenge”

David Wang glanced over at the group of scary Russians and rethought his last plan of action, “unfortunately I haven’t got time to work with you today”, he briefly looked at his watch, “things to do and places to be. And get all these pig parts cleaned up before you go”, and with that, he made his exit. Leaving Gloria and her team mates to clean up the bloody mess.