

# Inkslingers Blended Session

## 8th April 2023

The Prompt from The Bag Was:

“And One More For The Road

And the Visual



## **Audrey Vorhees**

### **Matthew Tubridy**

What's inside her head that she thought she had a glorious summer of travelling?

Was she not anxious she would miss her flights?

Intimidated by the people in the airport?

The taxi driver would take her on a extra long route.....

If she went to India she would get food poisoning?

And be shitting left right and centre...

On the bus someone would rob her rucksack...

She would lose her sense of direction,

Does she not want to be cowering in a darkened flat in Washington DC...

But no, she wants to do the haka to the French Rugby team,

But no, she wants to climb a mountain in South America,

Back in Washington DC she wears a suit,

gets a job as a lawyer,

Rides the bus to work,

Audrey's sister is a different kettle of fish,

She stays in the flat in Washington DC,

She gets her food delivered to her,

As the delivery man drops the food,

She grunts at him to 'Get Away!'

She had a stick for those situations,

She ordered ham and tomatoes and makes a sandwich,

She hears the boys playing on the street,

She rings up Audrey...

'Hey sis!' Audrey says!

I'm up a mountain, the view is amazing!

I'm on the border of Bolivia and Peru,

I have a milkshake in my rucksack,

Audrey sends her sister a few snaps,

Sister puts them in her wall and starts crying,

Sister watches Father Ted again,

She loves Ted and Dougal,

Listens to the same music album,

Eats ham and tomato sandwiches,

But for all that the anxiety still gnaws away at her tummy,  
For all the precautions, avoiding people,  
Not going to the supermarket,  
Putting blankets over her windows,  
Eventually they try to get help for sister,  
A key worker comes to her door,  
First she looks at him out the window and waves her stick around,  
Key worker talks to her threw her letterbox,  
Eventually sister lets key worker in,  
Sister makes him tea,  
Sister comes to a daycare centre,  
Gets tea there,  
They put her on pills for various things,  
She makes friends with Stephanie,  
The daycare centre put on a play,  
Audrey comes to watch,  
As well as their parents,  
The parents don't know which daughter to cheer on more.

## **You've just gotta to see this**

### **Mark L'estrange**

Julie asked Paddy "How was your day" "Bit crazy I went to a superhero meetup, and it was like a Halloween party" Julie laughed "Ok I would say you fitted in well there." "Well not really I was the only one who had superpowers, so they said anyhow."

They were about to sit down for dinner when Paddy's phone rang it was the girl from the group she sounded very upset saying "I am so sorry to disturb you but you have to see this my dad's garage is under attack from these guys they seem to have powers too they are taking everything on us all our cars and they said if we don't let us have everything they are going to take my dad too."

"I will spin over now." He said, "Sorry Julie I will be back shortly, and we can go out to a restaurant of your choice I promise." "Ok just be careful."

When he arrived the garage was deserted, he looked around the place he found a stair case which led to the second floor, he climbed the stairs and saw the owner tied up in the corner of the office, he said to Paddy "This is weird they keep coming out of nowhere and taking more of my stuff."

He was untying the owner when one of the thief's appeared beside Paddy and pushed him to the ground, Spin Man jumped up and you guessed it put him in a spin he kept diapering and then reappearing in the same spin which gave him time to get the owner untied.

He said to the thief "Get all this man's stuff back or you will be spinning to prison with the rest of your friends." "You will have to find us first." Paddy saw a button on his belt he pressed it and the second he did the three of them appeared beside him along with all the gear they stole.

This in turn took away all their power and the Guards arrived just in time to take them away, but they took away Paddy as well saying "We warned you not to take things into your own hands call us first." The owner was furious saying "We did call you but there was no sign of you, so we called our friend Paddy who was supper and I mean super help."

It was no use they took him away with the criminals. The owner said, "Don't worry Paddy we will be fighting this in court, thanks so much for helping us."

## IMMA

**Matthew Tubridy**

In a darkened room,  
With no light except a little chink,  
In IMMA,  
They made it especially for you,  
Out of wood,  
With only a chink of light,  
With low music,  
It's Woozy by the band Faithless,  
You don't have a watch,  
But someone will come into the darkened room when the time is right  
to stop being there,  
The most calming, your in a screen in the IFI,  
The lights are low,  
On the screen is a line from 1 side to the other,  
A low level of music is playing.  
They turn the lights down,  
Someone comes in with pastries,  
Everyone gets as many as they want,  
And they don't need to think if their hungry,  
From walking on Dame street with its buses and cars and people  
walking along,  
You need to go into the screen in the IFI to destress,  
Nothing happening except lines of the screen, and low volume music,  
If you can't take the boredom and try to leave a big man with big  
muscles will stop you.  
Put the sound down and get woozy,  
With the sound down and get woozy,  
If it gets too cold, they put the heat up,  
From starting an exam in Trinity College,  
Getting the sweats,  
You need to sit in the screen in the IFI,  
And the ceiling and the walls come in on each other,  
Then they put on Father Ted and play the same episode 10 times in a  
row,

The IFI started catering for stressed people,  
Play Father Ted over and over again,  
Play saltwater chicane 10 times,  
Your strapped into the seat,  
You were arguing with a bus driver,  
Take me to Foxrock you demanded,  
This bus is for Donnycarney bus driver says  
Smash the glass in the bus drivers seat,  
Then the staff of the IFI wrap you up in thick rope,  
Bring you back, sit you down in the screen,  
Play Father Ted,  
You get an exam on Father Ted,  
A professor in Trinity College,  
Sets up the exam,  
Have you turned your back on bus smashing?  
From now on get a taxi to Foxrock!  
The drug dealers are brought to the IFI,  
Zone out!  
Low level music in the screen,  
Cartoons,  
Drug dealers turn their backs at dealing drugs,  
They pass the exam on Father Ted,  
What did Misses Doyle say?  
Threw someone in the Liffey?  
No problem! say the IFI staff,  
They are hauled in,  
The police stay outside the IFI,  
so no one can escape,  
The Trinity professor is pleased with his charges,  
Because they remember what Missus Doyle says.

## **Paul – source of all wisdom**

### **Emma Prunty**

Have you been wondering what the best colour might be for an Easter bonnet, or even if people still wear Easter bonnets in the year 2023.

- No problem! Just ask Paul, he's the source of all wisdom.

Are you unsure if you should actually wear a hat, of any kind, inside a church, for your once-yearly visit to the Virgin Star of the Sea on the Strand Road for the 9am Easter mass?

- Talk to Paul! He can advise on modern church etiquette.

Trying to decide where you should sit in the church to feel innocuous yet still be within the sightline of your great-aunt Gertie, who never fails to sit in the middle of the third pew in the left-side chapel and who would surely be impressed to see you well turned out (hat or no hat) and looking pious at the first mass of the day?

- Let Paul help with that, he's good at seating plans!

Curious how you can best approach said Auntie Gertie outside the church after mass and, in the nicest possible manner, ask after her health and assure her that she's welcome to call on you at any time should she need anything at all, telling her that it's no problem for you to pop up the road from Dungarvan at a moment's notice?

- Check with Paul on the niceties of how to seem available in a friendly but non-pushy way to a 90 year old lady!

On another, but related note: are you looking for advice on how to navigate the current housing market and see if your 10 years of service (part-time) with the Dunmore East mobile library would look good enough to the credit union if you were to apply for a mortgage for that thatched cottage you've noticed is still for sale out the Rosslare Road?

- Have a chat with Paul about that, he's fully up to speed on the ins and outs of Ireland's dynamic housing landscape!



Or should you really come right out with it and ask dear old Gertie outside that church if she has plans for her Clontarf pad, the 5-bed she's been living in (alone) for the last 50 years, and tell her, with teary eyes, of your childhood memories of climbing her apple trees and playing with her black Labrador Joxer?

- You might want to heck with Paul for some advice on that, he's a wise man!

And will you know how to smooth the conversation when Gertie raises her chin in that terrifying way you'd forgotten and enlightens you that she never had a black lab, nor were there apple trees in her garden and how you must be confusing her house with that of another aunt? Perhaps someone on your "poor father's" side?

- Again, Paul would be a good man to give counsel on this scenario!

And do you want tips on how to manage it if she were to turn on her (high) heel off into the crowd outside the church and leave you standing like an eeijt in your pretty yellow dress with your ungifted Butler's chocolate egg still in your bag, sure that she'll probably never talk to you again?

- Ah go on, talk to Paul – he's awesome! And he's a good husband to boot!

## **A Cafe in Tramore**

**Matthew Tubridy**

In a cafe in Tramore,  
Licking ice cream,  
But there is the waves,  
People on the beach,  
You're with Aunty Jean,  
Or stay in a room with the song woozy on,  
Jeans house must have that room,  
People on the beach turns into spots on the wall,  
In Jeans house,  
St in the darkened room with the sound down,  
I know there's lots of people on the beach,  
Walking in the Amusements,  
Down from Cork,  
Trying to find a parking spot,  
Tramore beach is heaving,  
The travelling darkened room,  
One foot in, one foot out,  
Then there's the scrambler track,  
Harry loves racing around it,  
From one jump to another,  
While I'm in the darkened room,  
Give me energy to go on,  
The drive back to Cork,  
Threw Dungarvan and Youghal,  
The sun is beating down,  
Back to key cutting,  
Walking up Grand Parade,  
While I sit in Aunty Jeans house,  
There's only so much I can take,  
Yeah! We're in Tramore by the sea,  
Gnasher speeds up the prom,  
In the Amusements they pump out 'Boney M',  
But in Kellsboro, my Grandparents house there are bricks, which don't  
move and don't make a sound,

I watch them,  
I hear there is a fire down by the beach,  
In an Amusement Arcade,  
I get away from the temporary identity,  
People scrambling to get out of the building,  
Sitting outside the building,  
seeing a burnt wreck,  
I nearly got 50 euro in there!  
Clever Matthew!  
I was on the rip in Tramore! Driving down from Cork City,  
Music booming in our car,  
The whole thing is a blur,  
The dodgems,  
The bars, the beers,  
Looking over the beach,  
Puking over the beach,  
Or you could do it another way,  
Muesli for breakfast, a walk down the beach,  
Noticing the sea shells,  
You're in a trance,  
Away from the Amusement Arcade building on fire,  
You see a puff of smoke coming from the town,  
You are safe now,  
You don't need to sing any songs,  
The waves provide the music,  
Then you see Harry running towards you,  
We will keep going even if we die!

## **And one more for the road**

**Tina Irving**

“It’s one more for the road” she said. “one what?” I asked. The long and winding road. We had been travelling for months. The desert was calling. We had climbed Kilimanjaro, done the forests of Alaska, and even been to the arctic. It was time for the warmth of the desert sun, and specifically the wild red deserts and dunes of Libya. We wondered if we would encounter any Bedouin. We hoped so. Having started to read an old, old, book “Green Grows the Oil – Desert Oil and Modern Society” (which, as it was written in 1978, is no longer “modern”. The experience would take me back to my youth and take in the sun, although it could get very hot and humid on the coasts of Libya. It was not as bad, though, as Dubai, where I had also spent a year. The book portrays life in Abu Dhabi perfectly – bored wives as their husbands were often away on the oil rigs, the continual waiting and waiting... for anything really. I was in my tender twenties when I drove from Dubai to Abu Dhabi to get a licence for one of the Polish engineers. Brian spent all morning waiting. He went for a walk and went back to the office for the final document. They were about to close. It was at that time I appeared and asked what was going on. They had told Brian to “come back tomorrow”. Bearing in mind it is a long hot and hard drive when you never know when you are going to encounter a camel in the middle of the road, we didn’t fancy that. So... yours truly persuaded the nice Arab gentleman to give us the licence anyway.

I looked forward to a foray into the Libyan desert. The last time I had been there we went scuba diving in Ghadames. There is a massive fresh water hole right in the middle of the desert. It was 32m to the bottom of the hole, pitch black after a couple of metres. This is the limit of the sports scuba diving. Ghadames is about 462 km (287mi) to the southwest of the capital, Tripoli, where we were based. It is close to the borders with Algeria and Tunisia, the Illizi Province, Algeria and Tataouine Governate of Tunisia.

Halfway between Tripoli and Ghadames is the fascinating town of Nalut. It is worth a trip on its own. I wondered what it would be like, 40 years later. My friend, Sue, had not been there before. She was in for a treat.

Libya is a beautiful country, with Leptis Magna an astounding archaeological Roman site, and Sabratha is of Greek origin.

So... we had one more look at the ocean before setting off to the dusty desert in our cranky old Land Rover. We just hoped it would stand the 600km journey... 1,200km of course, if we were to get back!

## **Chihuahua Dogs**

**Matthew Tubridy**

The chihuahua dogs have a island in the Atlantic Ocean,  
There's a governor of the island,  
He's a chihuahua dog,  
The bus drivers are chihuahua dogs,  
The heart surgeons are too,  
They're best reward for them is a bit of ham,  
The heart surgeon goes out of this hospital to do a pee in the car park,  
The staff in the bakery are all chihuahua dogs,  
Walking down the Main Street,  
You pass all the dogs,  
You enter the clothes shop,  
Nice coat for doggies!  
In factories they think what do chihuahuas actually need?

## One Minute To...

### Angelina Kelly

Sitting at my kitchen table, the clock on the wall read one minute to midday. An air of expectation hung in the room. The wooden display unit on the wall behind me, under the clock, proudly held the ornaments of various kinds, brought back from trips abroad and stood neatly placed in each slot. A small picture frame sat on the table carrying a picture of the clock and display unit.

I held my head in my hands and stared at the empty seat beside me. "What am I going to do?" I asked my imaginary friend. "It's been so long since I physically attended an Inkies writing session. Our Leader Harry calls me and the other Zoomers his Floating Heads. I don't think he believes we actually have bodies. In fact he has often said that, as far as he is concerned, we are just figments of his imagination."

Amalia, my imaginary friend, looked back at me and said, "Tell him you borrowed a body and that you have to return it before Midnight, or you will turn into a pumpkin."

"Do you think he will believe that?" I asked.

"He is a writer; he'll see the humour and appreciate the story." She replied, with a shrug.

"Oh, I don't know. It seems a bit far-fetched to me."

"Writers are the masters of far-fetched, they'll believe you, you'll see."

Hesitantly I dressed and prepared myself for the coming gathering - today it was a seasonal party. I was a bit apprehensive but knew that this was my coming out party after Covid and that it was an important step for me to take.

Travelling into the City on the LUAS, I mentally prepared, "Don't worry, Angelina, all will be well, they are colleagues and friends and will understand." I spoke reassuringly to myself. For some reason, the journey only took a half an hour, normally it was forty-five minutes, so I got into town earlier than expected. I got off the tram and, putting one foot in front of the other, continued to reassure myself.

I arrived at the hotel and, as I stepped into the bar, some of the gang were already there and engaged in lively conversation. I walked over and joined them and was greeted warmly.

“Angelina, it’s really you and you’re here!” Brendan exclaimed.

“Good, to see you!” Stephen said.

“Yes, I’m here, I’m not just a floating head today. Look, I actually have a body.” I replied, as I did a twirl. Harry and the gang clapped and cheered, and I felt like I had never been away.

“I borrowed a body for the day.” I explained. “But I have to return it before Midnight, or I will turn into a pumpkin.”

“Well then we’d best get down to business and make good use of your time here.” Shay said.

The next few hours passed in a blur as I got into conversation with Claire, Eva, Sandra, and the rest of the gang. We eat, we drank, we swopped notes and told stories and before I knew it my alarm rang on my phone reminding me that I had an hour to get home. Hastily I gathered my things, said my goodbyes, and left.

Returning home on the LUAS I remarked to myself, “That was such a good night, I’m so glad I turned up. And they liked my explanation too.”

Sitting back down at my kitchen table with a steaming mug of milky coffee cupped in my hands I heard the ticking of the clock. As the hands struck one minute to midnight. I looked up at it and let out a sigh of relief, “Thank God, I made it just on time!” I exclaimed.



**If**

**Matthew Tubridy**

If someone gave me lounge wear I would lounge around my flat,  
If someone gave me ski wear I would ski down a mountain,  
If someone gave me leathers I would ride a motorbike,  
If someone gave me oxygen cannister and mouth piece I would go scuba  
diving,  
If someone gave me a hair net I would work in McDonalds,  
If someone gave me a bus I would drive it around.

## One For the Road

Ciaran O'Melia

"I'm new on the job and wondered who Paul is," Sam asked Tony.

"You know, beats the crap out of me – what do you think, Tommy."

"He's the boss's son and a right messer," Tommy said but added, "Never mention him again if you value your job."

"Why not." Said the new guy.

"It's a bit awkward, and it might not be the answer you're looking for."

"What do you mean by that? Is this a closed shop?" "How do you mean a closed shop." Said, Tommy.

"Unions." The new guy answered.

"Ah, now, I'm a card-carrying member me self."

The new guy was like a dog with a bone. He would not let it go at that, "well, what is it." Tommy looked left and right before saying anything, then told the new guy. "You see, that is his mug, and as the sign said, he was awesome, one of the best, very good that was –till."

"Till what," said the new guy.

Again he looked left and right. "Now, if I tell you, mum the word, right."

"You right – but tell me did he die?"

"No, it would have been better if he did die; Ye see, Mister high and mighty, Paul's father was and is a bit of a lad for the age of him. Him up in the big house with the young wife."

"Sure, we'd all have one of them, so I've heard nothing yet."

"Well, he ran off with the father's wife."

"Christ, his own mother, that takes some beating."

"A Jesus, you have it all wrong. Didn't I tell you the father married a younger wife?"

"For a minute, I thought we were in Egypt or Dallas." The new worker said.

“There was murder here around the time he left, bloody murder. The father threw out everything that would remind him of Paul, except that mug.”

He rose to get another coffee and turned to the new guy, “Will you have one for the road.”

**September 1978**

**Steve Huenneke**

If it is an emergency  
You better call Paul  
Don't call him Saul  
And don't ask me  
I never watched that show  
I wasn't on the road to Damascus  
I was on the road to Cholet  
Every day  
I was a hobo  
I didn't think of me in such terms  
But I always knew who I was  
Just before nightfall  
Sleeping on the street  
I had a meet and greet  
With three new friends  
Who voted  
To give me a space  
Under their awning  
When it was raining  
They said we're here to see Genesis  
They said it like this  
Gene-cease!  
I said I am on the road to Cholet  
Our liveliest time was at the Louvre  
Next to drinking in cafes  
And mocking the smartly dressed  
Then that was over  
Time was up for four tramps  
In Paris  
They were going to see Genesis  
I could have stayed longer  
I wish I would have  
But I was on the road to Cholet  
It was time to say goodbye

I said I will teach you all a song I learned on a school bus  
In West St. Louis County  
As a child in Missouri  
With a crew cut  
Going to a place called Camp Pioneer  
We sang it together  
On the wall there were ninety nine bottles of beer  
There were  
Eighty bottles of beer left on the wall  
When those three  
And me  
Were all too small to see  
Except in memory  
Our voices were just wind in our own ears.

## **“And one more for the road.”**

**Miguel Angel Rivera**

Parked in front of the “Scarlett Diner”, Annie sat in a warm, luxurious, and very stolen S.U.V. Her eyes scouted in all directions for any sign of cops, while she listened to the police band app on an equally stolen cell phone. The internet, press, and social media outlets had all dubbed their crew “The Runaways”, and they seemed to spare no detail with respect to the supposed “crime wave” they’d created. She resented how one-sided the reporting and back stories were with respect to their origin. Nothing about the beatings, abuse, neglect, and rapes that took place in those wonderful group homes they’d all escaped from, ever made a single headline or even peripheral detail in the media. It was as if they’d all suddenly been infected with some Bonnie and Clyde syndrome. Tried in the court of public opinion, rich, entitled folk had decided that they should at all costs, be put down like rabid dogs.

Inside the diner she could see Blain, their groups’ leader, marching about and threatening terrified patrons while his associates relieved them of their purses, wallets, and cell phones at gun point. Blain usually gave a speech during these robberies. One laced with the bitterness of neglected children and what society’s responsibilities should be. She could see his wild, blond hair and deep green eyes through the windows of the diner. He always enjoyed these moments of control. The only sense of power he’d had his entire life. Born to a prostitute, he’d been bounced from foster home to foster home, suffering every indignation one could imagine. Few knew him like Annie though. Although dyslexic, his IQ had been cited by doctors at somewhere in the 175 range. It was one of the things that was slowly making her fall head over heels for him. That and the fact that he’d stabbed the group home’s manager in the neck with a fork to prevent him from raping her in her bed.

Their rag-tag band had grown from 2 to 8 teenagers and a burglary of a Police Chief’s house had yielded a wonderful cache of weapons that had elevated them from burglars to armed robbers. In the seat next to her she had the travel brochure that showed wonderful places in Argentina, their planned getaway. She dreamed of it every night.

Inside Blain sat on the counter as his subordinate robbers finished taking items of value from the terrified customers and waitresses, some of whom now laid in puddles of their own fear-induced urine. Blain gave the signal that their time limit was up, picked up a pint of cold Coors, and raised a toast to his latest victims. "One more for the road, eh?" A second later a bullet came through the window and Blain collapsed forward, a newly made hole spewing blood from his head.

## Dad said

Elaine Reardon

The fairies could carry me off  
if the day was too grand,  
if I were too far from the house  
or burrowed under the lilacs,  
like a small fox. The fairies would  
find me and carry me away.

Dad said he found me  
tiny as a rosebud, hidden  
under a cabbage in the yard,  
and brought me inside to mum.

I understood our differences then,  
recalled how Mary and Joseph  
lost young Jesus in the crowd  
as they trooped towards home.  
The fairies had been trooping  
one May morning, here, in a similar  
way, I was sure. When they passed  
I must have fallen away,  
landed in the vegetable garden.

My new father would have heard  
some small noise, a bird or mouse  
he'd think, and so he found me  
in the cabbages, where rabbits nibbled,  
and claimed me as his child.

Now I waited at the window when  
each May came, and again as leaves  
fell. Nose pressed against glass, I wondered  
if my true parents still looked for me, if they  
still came to this garden. Would they think I had  
grown too much, wasn't like them anymore?



## **Maybe I don't need to be a goddess**

**Catriona Murphy**

Megan's father was shot dead when she was five. She still remembered the devastation filling the household in the weeks thereafter, like a virus.

Grief settled in like a shroud, covering everything so all was muffled and silenced.

Her buoyancy had been burst and she sank into the inky depths of a bland existence.

Men came and went in her mother's life, a revolving door that spun her head, until she fell into drugs at fourteen, and got suspended from dealing cocaine, meth and amphetamines to minors.

Her friends teased her that she'd get the chair, but she knew she'd die before that, before the justice system could convict her future, adult self.

Her mother yelled because her dad had been in the police force, and her actions had added insult to injury.

Since she had an entire week off, and she wasn't due in court till Friday, Megan stole a bottle of vodka from the store, and went to an old train station, with weeds overgrowing on the tracks.

She scratched at her new tattoo, a depiction of the Greek goddess, Artemis. She'd taken summer classes in Greek mythology and held both an admiration and jealousy of the gods. Their beauty and power appealed to the helpless way she felt navigating through life - so many decisions had been made for her.

With Olympian blood in her veins, she could bring back her dad, and her mother wouldn't rely on antidepressants and her older sister wouldn't be addicted to athleticism, training seven days a week to qualify as a bodybuilder.

A shop appeared on the opposite platform, a shining white door gleamed in the afternoon sunlight.

Megan frowned, the station hadn't been used in 40 years.

Swigging her vodka, she trotted over and went inside.

The entire interior was covered from floor to ceiling with mugs filled with teeth.

A man behind a counter reading a newspaper looked up and smiled.

‘Good day mam, who would you be looking for today?’ he asked.

‘Eh, I’m not looking for anyone,’ she responded. ‘Is this a shop?’

‘Of sorts,’ he replied, eyes twinkling. ‘Who’re you looking for?’

Megan blinked. ‘I just said I’m not looking for anyone.’

‘Only people who come in here are looking for someone. Usually it’s a Karmic score that needs to be settled. Tell me mam, who did you wrong?’

Jeremy Whitaker. The man who shot her dad, flashed to mind.

‘Oh! We should have him.’

The man crossed the floor and reached up and pulled down a black mug down with a skull on its front.

‘Let me see,’ he murmured. ‘Here we are.’

He tossed a tooth to her.

‘Bury it at full moon and your man is as good as dead. Why not take a candy can with you? One for the road.’ And winked.

Megan left without another word.

She entered a graveyard that night, drunk now and the bottle empty.

She placed the tooth inside it.

Maybe I don’t need to be a goddess to get revenge, she thought, as she dug a hole.

## **One more?**

**Bernadette O'Reilly**

Ah yes  
How many times  
Did I hear that phrase  
In my younger days  
In a pub in Virginia  
In a pub in Ballyjamesduff  
On a Saturday nightinkies  
After one more for the road  
The country men would cross  
Over to the other side of the bar  
At midnight  
Buy cooked chicken and groceries  
Head home by the light of  
The stars.

## One for the Road

Greg Fields

Matthew Cooney no longer took things violently. But he still took things. The need to survive did not abate as he grew older, and there were always those who had much more than he ever would, more than enough to share, even involuntarily. He would not take these things forcefully, as he did when he was younger. He no longer felt a need to exert himself, to shout through strength and force that Matthew Cooney walked this earth, drew his breath, drank his liquor, ate his food and lay with his women.

Such things, he came to reason, mattered more to himself than to the world at large. Besides, violent robbery brought more attention than quiet theft, and he had had enough of the consequences of being caught at it. He was here, that was all, and as time went by he learned that he could weave his way through an uncaring society by remaining invisible, wafting like a vapor in and out of the places that could sustain him. Cooney came to steal quietly from those who would not recognize their losses until well after he had disappeared into his daily nothingness.

There were opportunities that his wise eyes could not ignore. Rarer and more fleeting than before, but no less real. Behind unlocked doors, or those too casually secured, lay the means for Cooney to preserve himself for as long as he might need. All it required was a keen eye and a careful touch. He marked his time now in days, sometimes hours, no longer within the luxury of projecting too far into the future. Aspirations beyond the immediate were nothing more than teases. What mattered was the next meal, where he might spend the night, and what comforts he could claim for himself on those fine days when comfort was a possibility.

Cooney knew the neighbourhoods most fertile for his work, and he watched them, an unobtrusive shadow sitting on a park bench or a worn figure walking through the streets. He knew where the best lawyers lived, and where the captains of business lay their heads in their spacious bedrooms.

He trained his eye on the anomalies – a door handle that might be loose, a slight tear in a window screen, a gate to a backyard that had no latch. Such things would draw his interest, and then he would watch for a time, gauge the comings and goings of those who lived within those spaces. If there were a security system he might not be able to crack, he would turn his attention elsewhere. There were always plenty of candidates in a city where people rushed about in self-importance and made mistakes in the rushing.

Cooney never acted rashly. Instead he studied, and then strategized. Unlike most, Cooney had patience, and with nothing else to fill his days, he had the time to make that patience work for him.

And so it was that on a warm evening in August Matthew Cooney sat opposite a rowhouse on New Hampshire Avenue. There had been no signs of life there for several days, other than a nightlight coming on at the same time each night. No one coming or going, and disinterested neighbors that paid no mind. Like many of these houses, it had a tiny basement door in the narrow triangular backyard that could readily be picked open and was unlikely to trigger an alarm. No one ever paid attention to the basement doors.

All too familiar, this act of thievery, this act of survival. Done a hundred times and despite a few close calls, never caught, always able to take what he needed to bring him along. Cooney sat on the bench in the tiny green triangle near the corner, watched the house one more time, just to be sure, then sighed deeply. Tired of it, he was. The taking, and the hording, and the scrambling. So very tired now. Not like before.

“A tough way to get by, isn’t it, Matty? Taking what we can and begging for the rest.”

James Barry had said those words to him that very morning.

“It is, James. But we do it, don’t we? All so that we can face another day and do it all again.”

“Makes no sense when you think about it that way, Matt.”

“We’ve long ago past the point of logic, James,” and Cooney smiled with the countenance of one who held no stock in logic, or order, or peace.

Illusory things those were. All that mattered, the only real thing, was getting by.

On legs stiffened with age, Matthew Cooney walked slowly across the avenue, empty of traffic this time of night. Most men find a profession that brings them through their lives and imparts a measure of meaning. He had found his. Now it was time to get to work once more. One more time. One more for the road.

## **Slurry**

**Matthew Tubridy**

Leo Varadkar, has on his suit, but goes to cattle mart,  
A farmer brings slurry to the Department of Agriculture,  
Spreads it in the floor,  
Minister for Agriculture Charlie McConalogue gets It in his suit,  
Waaa he says!  
Heads back to M&S,  
How do you wash this out?  
They say go to the laundrette!  
Back in the Department of Agriculture,  
The slurry gets on computer screens,  
Coffee cups, hair, taps, windows,  
We were trying to wear suits in here they say!

## **Give thanks**

**Deirdre Powell.**

Let us give thanks for the beauty of today,  
The warm sunshine spilling on our faces,  
The gentle whisper of a spring breeze,  
The winding road,  
The meandering river,  
Undulating gently.

Let us give thanks for spring lambs  
For spring chickens that lay eggs,  
For chocolate eggs,  
And cream cakes,  
And a myriad of goodies,  
A real smorgasbord of delights.

Let us give thanks for hearth and home,  
Footsteps of friends,  
Lively chatter and laughter,  
An evening by the hearth,  
The purring of a cat,  
And a dog's patient presence.

Let us give thanks to Him,  
In His awesomeness,  
Source of all wisdom,  
The unseen presence,  
The guiding finger,  
Eastertide