

Inkslingers Blended Session

29th April 2023

The Prompt from The Bag Was:

“You Know, I Never Thought Of Myself As A Thief”

And the Visual



Cute Cyclops Cliparts #2814334

Sons of Bankers, and Sons of Thieves

Greg Fields

(Our fathers sinned, and are no more.

It is we who have borne their iniquities.

Lamentations 5:7)

Are the sins of the father to be visited upon the sons? Or can a child born begin with a clear passage, and no lingering wisps of those who went before?

Mack Cooney had no stomach for such questions. He was neither a thinking man, nor even remotely spiritual. Life for him was subsistence, a restlessness for taking what he needed both to survive and then to find whatever pleasures he could grab within the surviving. The work, the women, the fire of the fight. And always there was the drink,

These traits passed his way from previous generations. Mack Cooney's great-grandfather, Michael Cooney, had spent his formative years in a workhouse, a blotted and shoddy building at the western end of County Cork. The Cooney family, such as it was, had been consigned there in the years following the Famine. Where others emigrated during those hard years, and even more had died away, the Cooneys lingered in poverty, trying and ultimately failing at farming, shopkeeping and thievery. In time the authorities grew weary of the tugging hands of the Cooneys and sent them to the workhouse in Midleton. Michael Cooney, the youngest son, spent his days being beaten by teachers who did not care whether he learned a whit of anything, and spent his nights in darkness while vermin raced beneath the wooden plank that was his bunk.

On one of those nights in 1891, shortly after the lad had turned 15, Michael snuck away from his bunk, out the door and into the early springtime cold. He took nothing with him but his soul. After a night of walking in the direction of the salt air, he found the docks in the Cobh of Cork. Exhausted and tattered, he snuck his way into the belly of a freighter, unnoticed by a callous crew who showed no concern for a young boy who might have been a messenger from one of the ship's

providers, an apprentice cooper, or the latest night time playmate for their old captain. And if a stowaway, so what? The crew would leave the lad to whatever he was about. He had no idea where the ship might be headed, nor did he much care. It was headed out, and that was enough.

In the hold Michael Cooney curled into a corner behind several large crates of indeterminable content. They perched one on top of the other somewhat perilously, and Michael thought that if the ship were to pitch a certain way, they might be likely to topple, and he would be crushed. But no matter. He had already felt himself crushed by weights more subtle and more sinister. He closed his eyes and slept for hours.

He kept that pace throughout the passage, slumbering during the day as best he could, then skulking about at night for food. He had become one of the vermin. The crew paid him no mind.

When the ship docked after a crossing calmer than most, Michael emerged from his corner before the cargo could be unloaded. He wore the same clothes from the workhouse, had not washed in weeks. But he had eaten, he had slept, and he was alive. When the ship at last moored, Michael walked down the docks. He approached one of the longshoremen.

“Where are we?”

“What do you mean, ‘Where are we.’ Are you daft, boy? Get the hell out of here.”

Michael walked the port and noted the markings of the place. Alexandria, Virginia. Unnoticed as before, he passed the entry point and found his way into this new space.

What followed for Michael Cooney mirrored much of what he left. He stole food from a small market that first day, slept in a green park with no one around. The next morning as he walked the city he saw a fountain, with clear, cool water spraying in all directions. As onlookers gawked his way, he jumped in to cleanse himself. There he watched a line of filth draw away from his shirt and the thin pants he had worn for weeks, a dark line in the clear water, sending away in Michael’s unformed thoughts the grit of Ireland.

It was the time he spent in the Alexandria jail that turned him to a purpose. Arrested that day for the thieving he needed to survive, then sentenced to a short 30-day term. "Another Irish rat," remarked the judge as he passed the sentence. paying no mind to either the boy's age or that he had nothing in this country to give him ballast.

But there were others like him in the Alexandria jail, and he heard what they told him. "Across the river is where you need to be."

"There's a corner of Washington for the Irish. Swampoodle, it's called. Find it, then ask for Thaddeus McCarthy. He's a contractor. Builds things, and he's busy as hell. He'll take you on, and give you an honest pay."

So it came to be. Michael Cooney embarked on a life of hard work, just enough pay to meet his needs, and a desire to find any pleasure he could claim. Days of sweat, nights of strong drink, loose women and the occasional brawl. He never saw his family again, and took no knowledge to his own grave of how they lived the rest of their lives. Nor did he care. Michael Cooney was here, he was alive, and he would go on, one way or another.

His son followed the tradition of sharp living, as did the grandson, both working the building trades and patronizing the local pubs. No one ever made enough to do anything else, nor did they aspire to anything different. This was what they knew, and who they were meant to be.

When the great-grandson Mack married Diana Halloran, who gave birth to a squalling boy to be named Matthew, the course of all the Cooneys had been charted. One could seek to alter the flowing path of the Mississippi more easily than the energies of those young men born to carry the Cooney name.

The sins of the fathers.

I never thought of myself as a thief.

Elizabeth O’Gorman

I was in Bushes, in Baltimore, West Cork, the nearest pub up from the quayside. The long brown shelves behind the bar area were stacked with pint glasses, half pint glasses, small spirit glasses, wine glasses, bottles of whiskey, bottles of rum, bottles of gin and bottles of brandy. A large mirror advertising cigarettes reflected back the shouldering groups of summer visitors. The desultory conversation of pink-shirted men and sun-glassed women exuded assured self-confidence in a mixture of accents.

As I stood there, by the smooth, varnished bar counter, memories came flooding back. In the days when Glenans ran seafaring courses from the old station house we would pile in after a day’s sailing, cold, wet and exhilarated and peel off the dripping, thick, yellow oilskins. We would stand along the polished wooden counter, jostling for the Tom the barman’s attention and the anecdotes would begin to roll.

“Saw you out there trying to haul up a mooring buoy. A new anchoring technique is it?”

“That a tricky passage up by Quarantine island. We almost came a cropper.”

“Close wasn’t it! We nearly hit the rocks!”

“Whose boat was that out by the Loo Buoy? What were they at? Running away to sea were they?”

“Probably, they heard you were on cooking duty tonight!”

The loud and friendly laughter would be pierced by calls to Tom, farther along the bar, chatting to fishermen in from days and nights at sea, their lyrical Cork lilt rising and falling with tales of weather and waves encountered.

“A schooner please.”

“One for me too.” “And me.” “Who else? Sorry, Tom could you make that eight schooners please.”

Clutching the short tulip shaped glasses, with Bushe's Bar Baltimore inscribed in red, we would move closer to the open fire, chuck on some driftwood and, with our damp, woollen jumpers steaming, salute our day on the water.

Years later, I could hear those faint voices from a distant past and I desperately wanted a schooner. Not the sherry but the glass. I never thought of myself as a thief but now I determined to steal one.

"A schooner please," I called out to the harassed young barman when he glanced in my direction, simultaneously filling three pints of Guinness for impatient, counter tapping customers.

He stopped mid pour. Confusion spread over his young face. "Pardon?"

"A schooner of sherry," I repeated patiently.

He looked perplexed. With a raise of his eyebrows and a jerk of his shoulder he beckoned to his colleague further down the counter. A swift, whispered conference and the older youth turned around and walked towards me.

"What's that you want?" he smiled.

I smiled back, hoping the nervousness of my intended theft didn't show on my face

"A schooner, a glass of sherry, please."

"What? I don't think we have that brand."

"No, it's the glass." I stumbled, feeling sure my pre-emptive guilt was obvious. "It's a medium-small sized glass."

"Sorry, no, we don't have those."

"You must!" I countered. "It's Bushes signature glass!"

"Sorry Mam. No such glass."

I deflated. My heist plan dissolved. Having a tangible object to hook my memories to suddenly dissipated. I was forlorn, but maybe, maybe I could write about them instead.

I never thought of myself as a thief

Mark L'estrange

Ten minutes had passed and Spin man paddy was still at the house one of the thief's tried to break into, when a squad car arrived at took him away the guard said to Paddy. "I am going to have to bring you in too, so it looks like you have nothing to do with us." "Ok I understand."

They also picked up a few more of the gang that were hanging around the canal with the remote control pigs. When they got to the station the Sergeant was there. "Thanks for your help today Paddy we managed to get most of the thief's today thanks to you." "Happy to be of service."

Paddy headed home excited to tell Julie of his success, he was only in the door when the phone went again it was the Sergeant. "Paddy I know you are only home, we might need your help, one of the suspects keeps saying that he never saw himself a thief its just when he turns into this monster it's like he is possessed, if this happens we might need your help to spin him into control.

"Ok I will head back down now." When he got there everyone looked in a panic, he asked one of the guards "What has happened?" they said. "A huge guy just ran out of the station with one of the guards." Then the sergeant ran to Paddy. "The thing I was talking to you on the phone about happened the second we got off the phone." "Ok which way did they go?"

"Down the street we have a fleet of cars and a chopper following them." The sergeant gave Spin Man Paddy a radio and asked. "Do you need a car?" "No I find I am faster on foot"

He quickly caught up with the fleet of squad cars which at this stage had the suspect cornered.

He approached the suspect and said, "let this lad go look your hurting him" He growled saying "Make me." He ran to put him in a spin but it didn't work he pushed him which mad Paddy fly into a police car, but after he did that he turned back into normal when he did he looked shocked like he couldn't figure out what was going on.

Paddy ran back to him again and asked, “when did this first happen to you.” The other day I was asked to meet this guy who had some work for me on a building site, when I got there he had some food for me, it tasted a bit funny but I was hungry so I ate it.” “What happened then?” “It turned out he was making it up he had a different type of job for me which involved steeling, I refused, and he said you will soon change your mind after the food.”

To be continued.

From Annapolis to Armageddon (Part 5)

Gerard Keogh

(A selection of entries from the personal war diary of LtCol Thomas B. Schultz, CO, 2/1)

(under the command of 1st MARDIV and I MEF).

September 11

It's that date on the calendar again. The attacks by al-Qaeda terrorists in 2001 are the reason we launched OIF in 2003 (or more precisely, 9/11 was the casus belli for the eventual invasion of Iraq, eighteen months after the day that changed the world forever). The Global War on Terror was supposed to defeat the scourge of jihadist extremism for once and for all; instead, it spawned the likes of the butcher, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, as well as the leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and countless others of similar ilk.

Perhaps if more people had paid attention in history class (or if schools still taught history), we in the West might have anticipated an attack on September 11 – every year. Since the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, starting in A.D. 711, Europe has been subjected to repeated attempts by Muslim armies to conquer it. At the Battle of Tours in 732, Charles Martel led the Franks to victory over the Umayyad Caliphate, stopping any further advance into Western Europe. On the Continent's eastern flank, Constantinople fell in 1453 to the Ottoman Empire. From there, the Turks pushed into the Balkans, causing panic among those unfortunate enough to be in their path.

The Kingdom of Hungary collapsed following defeat at the Battle of Mohács in 1526. Three years later, Vienna was besieged by Ottoman forces, but the city did not fall. In 1683, the Ottomans would try to capture Vienna again. Once more, they failed. The decisive battle took place on September 12 of that year. While wars between Christian armies and Muslim invaders continued in Europe for centuries to come, the tide of Turkish conquest had been turned on that fateful day. Which means that the high watermark of Islamic power in Europe was reached on September 11, 1683. And that is why that date is so important to

those alive today who would like nothing better than to finish the job their forefathers had begun in 711.

Centuries of wilful ignorance of hugely important historical events, principally among political leaders, the education system, and the news media, have led us all down this well-trodden road to conflict yet again. Maybe I was meant to be here, in command of an infantry battalion in the United States Marine Corps, regardless of the failure of our civilization to pay attention to the past. We may have been on an unavoidable collision course with another ideology for the last fourteen hundred years. But if we hadn't been asleep at the wheel, I might still be driving down that road, not in a lightly armoured Humvee, but in an M1 Abrams main battle tank.

September 12

Russian S-400 air-defence system surface-to-air missiles based in Syria shot down an Israeli F-15 as it flew through Syrian airspace en route to a target in Iran. In the attempt to recover the pilot and navigator in a combat search and rescue operation, a U.S. Air Force HH-60G Pave Hawk was brought down by Russian forces on approach to the landing zone, killing all four personnel on board. In retaliation, the Navy launched F/A-18s and F-35s from the U.S.S. George H.W. Bush, whose carrier strike group is positioned in the eastern Mediterranean. The Russian air base at Latakia and the naval facility at Tartus, both in Syria, were attacked, causing considerable damage and many casualties on the ground. In what may have been a case of "escalate to de-escalate," the Russian Navy fired a salvo of cruise missiles from ships in the Caspian Sea against Ramstein Air Base in Germany.

This direct attack against a major USAF base in the territory of a NATO ally has provoked a massive response from the Pentagon. The headquarters of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol has been destroyed by a low-yield nuclear weapon, dropped by an Air Force F-15E Strike Eagle operating out of Incirlik Air Base, in Turkey. What happens next is anyone's guess.

Me a thief? No Way

Clíodhna Joyce-Daly

The air was thick, heavy almost, riddled with aromas of garbage, sewage and city sweat pouring from its glands. The scuffle of rats floundered beneath the building making a splashing sound every time they waddle over a leftover puddle. The honking of the city traffic began to fade out between the pitter patter of the rodents. It had to be the brightest city in the world between Times Square, Madison Square Garden and Penn Station – yet you may as well be in the middle of Kansas with the darkness that encompassed this alleyway.

I never thought of myself as a thief, yet here I was doing John's dirty work, illuminating his past crimes. John had spent many years out of the city and quite frankly disappeared out of our lives. I tried to turn away from the lifestyle John paved for us, well for me specifically – a life of questionable morals, death but never tricable. A life of easy living for a Hell's Kitchen kid only to gain a slight of independence by committing unlimited crimes, that were not crimes – but mishaps by John's standards. What was it for? To scramble my life together and haul it out to Long Island. No, I could think of nothing worse. Selling my soul to the suburbs white picket fences, manicured lawns and crimes that were called white collar so they were not as dirty as the normalcy of crime committed in the city. The American Dream, all done after a life of crime and screwing people over. The life I paved for myself was one of a city rat, running, from one borough to the next chain smoking and looking back at my prospects behind me, not BBQs in Nassau county.

When John left, the boys and myself tried to turn ourselves into good men, one of morals and less of crime. The only thing when you turn your morals into an actual job, the money may be clean, but its not plentiful. Our lives became one of that listening to nights misfortunate adventures of drunk NYU students, men bringing home women who were not their wives and rich folk who didn't want their drivers bringing them into Times Square for the girls and the movies that were guaranteed to mask their true identity. I drive them back and forth, listening to their lives, and yet although, not explicitly not committing westy crimes – still calling into question the legality of their actions. The

NYU students with their drugs, the men with their women and the women with their men. I listen to their complaining of 1980s New York and Mayor Koch.

The city was embellished with characters, dreamers, and families wanting something bigger, greater than themselves, a legacy in the city that never sleeps.

The fire escape was uneven as I gripped my hand underneath the rail to grip myself into reality. It was my last task. John came back and agreed to make amends for one final favour. The bedsit and listening to the cities issues overwhelmed me and the money despite how unclear flashed green in my mind. Squealing from a cop car vibrated through bricked buildings and alerted me to the next task.

I stared into the window. It was dark, filthy in fact of months of unkept dust which was collected and caked onto its brim. The sweat from my hand dripped onto the brick gripped between my fingers. All I had to do was complete this task, raid the apartment and the money will come. I never thought of myself as a thief but John sure made that possible.

She wore a red dress

Michael O'Brien

She wore a red dress and yellow shoes with ankle socks, this was a girl from the fifties who as a young woman loved the decade she was living in, not that she ever had a sense of time in that way, as if she could have been born in another period of time if she wished, nothing that deep or mysterious, she was just simply happy in her own skin, which taken to its natural conclusion meant her own skin in her own place in time. She stood on her toes to see what was on the top shelf, which accentuated her calf muscles beautifully, and smiled when as she suspected she saw her favourite biscuits hidden under the lip of the shelf, hidden from the view of anyone who didn't know where to look. She took the packet down and looked towards the counter to see Mr Baker, the shop owner smiling at her. As usual Cora was two steps ahead and knew he was looking before she met his gaze, hence the tippy toes and stretching.

"Find them Ok love?"

Cora smiled nodding that she did.

"You know where to look to get what you want",

"I do", Cora knew she had a beautiful smile,

"It's good that a beautiful young girl gets what she wants",

"Well, I'm very glad you feel that way", she almost laughed as she said this.

"Anything else I can get you", the shopkeepers grin was leery,

"Yes I need some tobacco, the old blend type", she had seen that this was farthest away from where Mr Baker stood,

"Ooh, let me see if we have any in stock",

As he turned to peruse the shelves Cora gently opened the wrapping on the biscuits talking at the same time to disguise any noise,

"Just to your left there at the bottom",

As Mr Baker bent down, she tilted the packet sliding the biscuits into her bag, the nature of the wrapping meant that the packet kept its shape even though it was empty.

She stood holding the deceptively empty packet as the shopkeeper returned with the tobacco,

Mr Baker looked Cora up and down, but Cora just flashed her smile as she was used to disguising her discomfort at these times,

“You’re not from round here,”

“No, I’m visiting my grandad, I just want to get him some things, don’t want to turn up empty handed”.

“Oh, and who’d be lucky enough to have a granddaughter as considerate as you?”

Cora stayed focused and ducked this question like a prize fighter slipping a jab.

“Ooh, and pipe cleaner please, the one in the green box”, she smiled again as she put her elbows on the counter leaning forward and easing a few small tins into her bag.

“This’ll cost a pretty penny, your grandad is a lucky man”.

“How much is it?”

“Ooh let me see”, Mr Baker took the pencil from behind his ear and gleefully started totting up the bill,

“Oh no, oh no sorry, I’ve forgotten my purse, I’ll have to go back and get it, only be a minute I’ll put these back on the shelf”.

This stopped Mr Baker in his tracks, and the smile disappeared as he stared at Cora returning the biscuits.,

As she placed the empty packet back on the shelf, a young man entered the shop asking for woodbine cigarettes and at the same time asked Mr Baker if he stocked this and that, confusing the old man.

When she was a safe distance away Cora leaned against a wall as she savoured one of the chocolate biscuits melting in her mouth.

The young man from the shop approached her smoking a Woodbine.

“Lot of trouble for a few biscuits Cora”

“Not just Biscuits Alfie, few groceries as well, and besides I liked getting one over on that leery old codger”.

“Well, you certainly did a lot of smiling and leaning in to encourage that leery old codger”.

“I certainly wanted my biscuits”, Cora laughed as they both walked down the cobblestone laneway.

Alfie’s tone got a little serious, “Do you ever think this is wrong, you know, stealing like that?”.

“We aren’t stealing Alfie, we’re surviving, we could have taken that leery old creep for everything he had but we only took what we needed, biscuits and a few groceries”.

She flashed her smile that always softened Alfie to whatever shape she needed, “In fact when you think about it, we left him with all his cash in the till, which we could easily have taken, so you could argue we actually gave him that money”.

Alfie shook his head, “Warped way of thinking Cora”.

She was completely unconcerned by this statement, “No, I never thought of myself as a thief, just a lost little soul foraging to survive”, Cora said the last part laughing, putting on her best Oliver twist voice, “Please sir can I have some more?, is that what they expect me to do after me Ma died, and no father I know of, Huh?, It’s me and you against the world Alfie,” she said this as she linked his arm and they continued down the alleyway.

“Where’ll we stay tonight?” Alfie asked as he looked at her and smiled,

“Bed and breakfast, owned by a miss Wilson, a widow, her sons off in America misses him terrible I believe, so it’ll be your turn to do the smiling and leaning in” .

“Oh, I can lean in and out”, Alfie smiled as he cheekily snatched a biscuit out of Cora’s hand, and they went on their merry way.

One Piece At A Time

Stephen Brady

"I've never considered myself a thief."

This is a line from the Johnny Cash song "One Piece At A Time". In which the bould Johnny, or hs fictional surrogate, recounts working on an auto-mo-bile line in Detroit in 1949, and hatching a scheme to build a super-car out of parts he pilfers off the line The plan is to smuggle the parts out in his lunchbox, one piece at a time. The verse, if I remember rightly, goes like this:

Well I've never considered myself a thief

But G.M. wouldn't miss just one little piece

'Specially if I strung it out over several years

The nuts and bolts are brought out in the lunchbox, and the larger items in his buddy's RV. And eventually, Johnny has pilfered enough parts to assemble his dream machine. It will, he promises, be "the envy of most any man." With his partner in crime helping, he puts it all together one night, starts the engine, and is pleased as punch when the mutant motor roars into life.

The next day he drives uptown, to display his masterpiece to the world. Word has gotten out, and the good folks come from miles around. But instead of marvelling at his handiwork, the crowds descend into laughter. For Johnny's super-car is a Frankenstein beast of mismatched parts, that has two headlights on one side and one on the other, only one tailfin, and a back end that looks "kinda funny, too." Instead of the admiration he craved, Johnny's jalopy is a source of mirth across the land.

I've sometimes wondered just what this comic country tale is trying to say. Cash's songs always contained moral messages of one sort or another. Is it trying to say that there is no such thing as a victimless crime, that even if you steal from a faceless conglomerate you will still end up the loser? Or is it a warning against being too clever for your own good, a mythic template that goes back to Daedalus, who sent his

ill-fated son aloft on homemade wings? Or did Johnny just receive the idea, as great songwriters do, in the shower?

I guess we'll never know. But what I take from it is that great storytelling comes in myriad forms. And I'll leave you as the song ends: a curious trucker asks Johnny the year of manufacture of his unique auto. And Johnny replies:

Well it's a '49, '50, '51, '52, '53, '54, '55...

Rabbit Prison

Miguel Angel Rivera

It was three in the morning and a particularly loquacious, buck-toothed bandit would not give it a rest. Mr. Easter stared at the bottom of the bunk above him contemplating either murder or suicide. “Now which of the two is a more cardinal sin, I wonder? I’m already serving quadruple life terms for ridding the world of the fat man and all his holiday cronies.”, Easter considered.

Meanwhile, above him, the oration of the inexhaustible went on. Easter began sharpening his favourite hardened carrot. “You know, I never thought of myself as a thief”, were the words that left Bugs Bunny’s relentless mouth as he lay on the cot above Mr. Easter. Since his conviction for multiple murders and terrorism, Easter had been assigned as a cell mate, this most annoying of creatures. Many a night he wondered what would happen if he were to send his shank through the mattress to the bunk above him and end the incessant talking and complaining of a fool only doing eighteen months for embezzlement.

The only thing keeping this blabbering disgrace to the rabbit-race alive, was “The plan”. Events had been set in motion to free Easter from this place of torment. He’d struck a deal with the one legendary character who’s interests aligned with his own. He shoved the sharpened carrot back in its secret stash location in his mattress and tried to gain a few hours’ sleep before the guards cracked the doors at six am.

A few hours later they stood in the yard. Just as any other day The Rabbits’ eyes were constantly surveying all the gangs that occupied each yard sector. The pigs, the wolves, the coyotes, and so on. A moment later the escape alarm sounded, and Easter knew it was his moment. He made a mad dash for the middle of the yard and a pair of broad white wings swept down. The baby delivery stork had come to break him out. Shots from the guard-towers rang out past them as those wings flapped and Easter was ecstatic. He was aloft. Sailing through the air and away from that penal hell. Away from the cavity searches, intrusive prison showers, and most of all, Bugs Bunny’s diarrhoea-mouth. He smiled, contemplating a visit to the naughty-bunny farm followed by the production of some more exploding eggs.

The Cyclops

Deirdre Powell.

It was raining and the water dashed against my face. My hair was blowing in the wind and every time I took a step forward, it was as though I was pushed back by another step. I tried to shield myself with my umbrella but, unfortunately, the wind kept blowing the broly inside out and after several attempts to fix it, the device was blown out of my hands and I had no remaining protection.

I heard the cry of the wind, like a wolf howling at midnight. The seagulls started to caw and caw as though they were expecting a meal of some sort and, as I trod my path, I looked down and realized that I was close to the edge of a cliff. Something said, don't look down, you'll get distracted.

There were furze bushes blowing at the side of the cliff, and as I walked, some brambles caught my feet. I bent down and tried to remove their tendrils but the harder I tried, the more the tendrils seemed to wrap themselves more tightly around me. I kicked with all my might and finally shook off the brambles.

Presently, I came to a large nest at the edge of the cliff and in it lay three eggs. I looked at the eggs and thought that they were unusually large. They were coloured blue and black, and I had never seen eggs like these before. I wondered what kind of bird would lay such eggs, and I as watched them, I decided that I would steal them from the nest and take them home for breakfast. You know, I never thought of myself as a thief, but that is what I thought I would do.

I bent over the nest and was about to place the eggs in my pocket, when the sound of an enormous roar filled the air. I could feel the vibrations of the ground beneath my feet and a cold hand clutched at my heart, as I heard the words, "what man has robbed nature of its beauty?" I ran as fast as I could away from the nest, leaving the eggs behind. The wind howled even louder, the rain beat faster and heavier, the cold started to bite into my skin. I could feel the vibrations of something behind me, coming ever closer and closer and in hot pursuit of me due to my misdemeanour. Presently, a large rock presented itself ahead of me – I

needed to rest and I decided to hide behind it, in an effort to see what was pursuing me.

As I looked back, I could see an imposing cyclops with a horn and one eye edging ever closer in my direction. Before I knew it, he was so close to me that I could feel his breath. He took an intimidating step toward me, and, as the hairs on the back of my neck bristled, I stepped away from him, and as I did so, I fell over the cliff edge – down, down, down, with the waves below washing upward to greet my watery death. There was a thump, and I woke up, safely in my own bed, far away from the prying eye of the cyclops and secure in my own life.

You Know, I Never Thought Of Myself As A Thief!

Angelina Kelly

When I was in the corporate world I sometimes brought home some stationery for personal use. It was never very much, a notebook, a stabler and some staples, a few pens and some pencils. I never thought anything of it, I just did it – we all did. It was innocent, no harm was intended, it wasn't going to be sold and nobody noticed.

In the old days this was easy because we didn't have computers logging every item, we only had a person taking stock of what was available and what needed to be replaced. It was their job, it was what they were paid to do. Everyone had what they needed and business ran efficiently and smoothly.

It's different now – everything is documented, recorded and catalogued by computers and therefore more traceable. If something is missing it can be tracked to a certain department or even an individual.

Recently, while in discussion with a former colleague who is in charge of provisions in her company, she informed me that this behaviour is now regarded as stealing because it has an impact on company figures and overall profitability. In this context it's a minor crime, you won't be prosecuted or go to jail but you will be called up to The Manager's Office and made aware that your actions are being observed. A mild reprimand is issued and it's understood that it won't happen again. If it does you will most likely be fired from your job and a note placed on your Reference which could affect your future employment prospects.

Mildly horrified and deeply embarrassed by this discovery I exclaimed, "You know, I never thought of myself as a thief!"

I'm glad I'm no longer in the corporate world because, what used to be regarded as minor indiscretions and overlooked is now seen as unacceptable and against company policy.

Robin Hood

Laura Alves

You know, I never thought of myself as a thief. If ever I went on to become a thief, it would probably be like a Robin Hood, stealing from the rich to give to the poor, but of course I would start by giving out what I could gather from my own possessions.

However, I never imagined I would ever be in that desperate situation where you have been days without food, walking not knowing where you're going in a completely desert place, not a soul around to guide you with instructions where to go to get something to eat and when you think you really can't get any further and you're going to fall any minute you look ahead and see a restaurant with all tables just served with lovely food, steaming hot, waiting to be eaten... it seems this city has just recently been evacuated for some reason and this is all there in front of you!... I sat there quietly and had the meal of a lifetime!

Chose my favourite meals from the tables and then went for a nice glass of water, dismissing all the fancy wines, because I needed it! I don't see this as stealing, but survival tactics!

I then got some sleep right then and there at the table and when I woke up I was surrounded by puzzled people as to what I was doing there and how on earth I had managed to be there in the first place. It was the setting for the film "I am legend".