

# Inkslingers Blended Session

## 3rd June 2023

The Prompt from The Bag Was:

“You Say Freak, I Say Unique”

And the Visual



Go Wild

## Into the Freak

Greg Fields

Saturday night was for them, and always had been. Ever since the first halting, exploratory weeks at the beginning of their courtship, Conor and Adrienne had always sought to make Saturday something special. There might be midweek dinners or Sunday excursions to museums or wineries, but Saturdays were to shake off the mundane and sniff around the edges of something new.

It was a way they had of fighting off boredom, of turning back, at least for a time, an ever-unwinding clock that counted down their days to the quiet and silence of being older. They would not allow themselves to become dull.

On a Saturday morning, then, after a good night's sleep and the warmth of their closeness, Conor and Adrienne sorted through their options. He sipped his coffee and skirted through the local websites. Adrienne nibbled a muffin, and quietly waited to be amused.

"Big Tiny Little is playing at Blues Alley", he suggested.

Adrienne raised an eyebrow. "Not on my list," she said.

"How can you resist a blues player with a name consisting of three adjectives? He might be worth hearing."

"Pass. And we went to Blues Alley just last month."

"Maybe we just head to the city and walk around. Find something when we get there". Just before Adrienne was able to protest, Conor saw a sidebar on the City Pages website. "Ah," he said. "Here's something."

"What?"

"Bondage A-Go-Go. Specialty night at the Black Greco, up on U Street." He read on, "Apparently one night a month is set aside for the more adventurous crowd." Adrienne smiled her quiet smile, then took another small bite of her muffin.

"You can't be serious."

"Might be intriguing. That's a side we've never walked on."

“Let’s just find a quiet place to have a drink and listen to some music. We can leave our chains and whips at home.”

That night they ate at an Ethiopian restaurant in Adams Morgan. As they finished, Conor asked, “What next?” And to his surprise, Adrienne touched his elbow and whispered, “Let’s check it out.”

So it was that they made their way to The Black Greco, an old club that constantly changed its themes. It had gone from disco, way back in the day, to jazz, to folk, and then to electric. Tonight it would be for a special crowd.

The doorman looked at the two of them as they neared, then smiled and waved them in. Conor reached to pay the cover, but the doorman gestured them to pass. “No charge for the two of you.” They entered a dark world with revolving lights, thumping metal music, and waves of leather and lace.

Conor leaned into Adrienne. “We’re the oldest people here. By a couple of decades.”

“And we’re not really dressed to fit in,” Adrienne said.

“Well, at least we’re not the only ones wearing collars.” Adrienne giggled, then went to the bar to order two drinks.

From their table they watched it all for a bit, and Conor noticed Adrienne’s eyes flicking and dancing. He leaned across to her. “Seems we found something new, lass.” Adrienne leaned across to him and kissed him hard, something she never did behind her quiet demeanour.

“Always good to get a little freaky, right? Come on. Let’s dance.”

They did not stay long. Back into a warm night, they leaned on one another and giggled their way back to the car, parked along a side street.

“Think you touched a hidden part of your desires, Adrienne? Some hidden fetish?”

She laughed. “No. But I do think you should buy me a new leather coat. And maybe a choker. I think I’d look good in that.”

## **Unique Beauty**

**Magda Velloso**

Blue skies shining above,  
Green on Earth as far as the eye could see,  
The heart full of thankfulness  
That around that green I could be;  
I saw myself in Inverness  
That time I stayed overnight  
On my way to Skye  
Long before the Outlander saga had caught my wandering eye.  
The road winding around hills  
Yellow flowered and green everywhere  
Gave my grateful heart a thrill  
Thanking the universe, I could share  
Nature and beauty,  
Greatness and unity,  
And the heart that I might fill  
With the grandeur of the green  
And all the colours under the sky.  
Even if you say freak,  
I repeat that it's unique  
To enjoy the privilege to have seen  
Such beauty under my eye.

## Unique Freak

### Miguel Angel Rivera

It had been four years. Four long, arduous, hellish years since the first Martian settlement had been established. Mary-Beth sat looking out of her dome's window wondering if this latest effort by Dr. Bettner and his ultra-annoying wife, Camila, would work. The entire scientific community both on Mars and Earth watched his progress, but Mary had little interest.

Her only reason for being on this mission was as a maid. Someone to help clean up after this eccentric old lunatic, who was being billed as the salvation of humanity. She had minimal scientific training and had barely passed the required math and scientific courses that were a requisite for this well-paying but seemingly suicidal job.

Of the four hundred or so scientists, soldiers, and maintenance personnel that had come on the initial trip, twenty-three were already dead. Buried outside in odd graves under the opaque sky in the cold Martian soil. In his latest escapade, Dr. Bettner claimed he could merge humans with artificially intelligent nanites in an effort to make them smarter as well as immune to radiation and other light gravity diseases that had already claimed so many of their party.

"What a boiling crock of shit!", Mary-Beth mused to herself. Doubtful that she would ever get off this rock, into a return ship, and back to her lovely home in New Jersey.

Just then the orbs gave the signal, and an announcement came over the intercom. "Mary-Beth please report to the main lab, stat!", Was what came over. It sounded like Bettner himself, only slightly different. A bit more zealous than normal. She gathered her cleaning supplies and decontamination gear, preparing for yet another mouse, monkey, or plant that had melted during the heinous experiments of a man she regarded as an old kook, probably older than Yoda's mother.

She walked past the sliding doors in her hazmat suit and her eyes seemed to betray her. Where once stood the elderly pair of scientists in their white lab coats were a pair of blonde youngsters, some twenty years old or so.

“What the hell...? Where is Doctor Bettner she posed. The blonde male turned to her and just then she knew. Knew that amidst a thousand failed and violently unethical experiments, something had gone terribly right. Those glaring, piercing blue eyes that she was used to seeing from behind the wrinkled mask of an octogenarian with snow-white hair and liver spots, were now staring at her from the very tight, male-model like face of what would otherwise be a stranger. His companion had equal unexplained vigour.

He smiled as the entire scientific staff that surrounded him stood still as statues, some smiling like idiots others with their mouths agape.

“Come now, Mary-Beth. You did it. Or should I say, your DNA did it!”, The now-very young man unleashed.

“Oh, you didn’t really think we brought you here as some domestic servant, did you?”, He added.

“Freakish...”, was the phrase that escaped her bewildered lips. Even in this light Martian gravity she began to feel her balance broken and the room spinning.

“You say freak, I say unique! Go wild, my dear. Immortality, is here!”, This new, youthful Doctor Bettner announced as the entire staff broke into applause. Mary-Beth passed out.

## **Go Wild**

### **Deirdre Powell.**

I work as a business executive for an accounting firm in the city of Dublin. I've worked there for fifteen years. It's amazing how a company can form your personality. There is and has always been a formal dress code – I usually wear a black suit, complemented by a non-descript but professional-looking white blouse. I have several black suits at this point in my wardrobe and have some blue pin-striped business style suits also. I carry my belongings in a black leather briefcase. I wear glasses and my hair is in a bun. Neatness is expected and slovenly behaviour is not tolerated. At least, not by my supervisor.

Every day is the same and predictable. The firm deals with the accounts for a wide range of Dublin companies – some companies are great to work with and the accounting procedures are straightforward. But you get your headaches too – there's one firm and it always seems that the profit and loss aspects of their business are at odds with what is expected. The day is punctuated by coffee at eleven and at four, though sometimes it's difficult to attend due to the pressure of work, and there's an hour's break for lunch. Sometimes, one of my colleagues called Cliona and I go to lunch together but that doesn't happen often. At lunch, I usually read a book during my spare time, if I have any. My journey to the office is by train, I pass along the same section of the River Liffey as I walk to my office and I see the same people travelling to work on the train each day. My life is predictable.

But, today, I just want to go wild. I'm not sure whether it is the fine, summer weather or that I've just got a yearning to travel that won't go away. I think about travelling a lot, but I have to be careful, as my salary will only stretch so far and I'm trying to save for a mortgage for a house. I've always wanted to travel to the West Coast of America and swim in the Pacific Ocean. I'm sure it's a lot warmer than the Irish Sea – I sometimes feel that chilblains are likely to develop if you swim there too often, a problem that you won't encounter in the Californian Pacific, no doubt. Then there are other days when I really want to go far, far away and be as wild as possible – I'd like to visit Australia and see the kangaroos in the outback, as well as the beautiful Harbour Bridge in

Sydney. You can take a train from the east coast of Australia to its west coast, so I'm told, and see the sights – I'd love to have the adventure of a lifetime and get away from the predictability of the office.

But my conscience bothers me too, sometimes. A trip to Australia or the West Coast of America is costly, and I sometimes wonder is it quite Christian to be so extravagant at this point in my life, particularly given that I really need to save for my mortgage. Time will tell.



## **You Say Freak, I Say Unique**

**Angelina Kelly**

Jacqueline was a quiet kid who was misunderstood. She didn't dress like anyone she knew, she didn't do things that anyone else did, she didn't go places most other went to, she didn't watch the TV programmes that were so important to everyone and she didn't get caught up in life.

She spent her time outdoors in her mother's large garden with her imaginary friends climbing trees and walking on walls – the higher the better. Often she would fall and cut her limbs and sprain her ankle. In summer she lay in the sun dreaming of wonderful adventures in far off places. In the winter she would snuggle up in her room keeping company with herself, listening to music – memorising every word – reading and writing short stories. Her mother would despair that she would ever be 'normal' and encouraged her to find some real friends. While her peers listened to the latest pop songs on the radio Jacqueline rummaged through music stores seeking out obscure, under-rated rock bands that no one heard of.

Halloween approached and on the last day of school before the midterm break the principle suggested they all dress up and have a party. Some of the girls arrived in princess costumes, others donned the usual witch rigouts and a few dressed as animals. Jacqueline arrived in to school that morning sporting bell-bottom flared jeans and a tie-dyed cotton T-Shirt under a bright coloured shirt with flared sleeves. Platform shoes and a large shoulder bag were finished off with a broad-rimmed 'hippy hat'.

The girls all admired each other favourably but Mary turned to Jacqueline and called her a freak. Tears sprung to Jacqueline's eyes and she hung her head in shame. The principle, standing at the top of the class, silenced them with the wise words, "You say freak, I say unique.

Jacqueline raised her head, looked the teacher in the eyes and mouthed the words, "Thank you."

For the rest of the day she mingled with her peers with a new inner smile and exuded a air of new found confidence.

## **Paddy Goes Wild**

**Mark L'estrange**

They were on the train for about two hours at this stage and everything was going fine until they stopped at a stop and there where police at the station, Paddy said. "Don't worry they won't recognise us just remain calm and don't go wild if they ask any question leave it to me." "Ok I will do my best but I am very nervous I have been through enough already." The police where moving through the carriage checking peoples ID. They stopped about three rows from them and Stephen was starting to freak out saying. "Paddy I think we should get off at the next stop there is a lot of them and we were lucky to get away last time." "Ok let's move down towards the exit."

Then they saw them drag one of the passengers out of the seat and move him to towards the exit, Stephen made a big sigh of relief. "Thank God for that they weren't looking for us after all." The police got off with the suspect at the next stop. Paddy said. "That's great we can relax for another while now." They both fell asleep for a while and woke luckily before the Irish embassy stop.

They both got off the train and saw the embassy facing them as they stood outside the station. Stephen said "I have never been so happy to see the Irish flag since Italia 90." Paddy laughed "I agree good old Jack Charlton." They noticed a lot of characters standing close to the embassy. Paddy said. "I will ring the Super and tell him where we are." He said "I will have our lads stand at the gate to meet you on the way in I'm sure you can get the crooks spinning Paddy while you head in." "I know I am more afraid for the safety of Stephen in case they have guns and he gets shot." "Why don't you walk over first and test the waters and Stephen follow you."

He told Stephen "You hang on at the station and I will ring you when it's all clear." "Ok thanks Paddy be careful." Spin man Paddy stared to walk across the street to the embassy and sure enough he was approached by a few of the lads who were siting the lads in the embassy couldn't do anything to help because outside wasn't in their country and these guys had badges they were crooked cops.

Paddy got a few of them spinning right away, but there was so many it didn't work on them all, but he managed to get into the embassy after he dodged some bullets as well.

He was relieved to be inside the lads in the army said. "Sorry we couldn't help you there the country's rules are a bit funny when it comes to this stuff." "No it's fine just lucky I didn't bring Stephen with me he is still at the station, I need to speak to the ambassador so I can arrange to get him home safe."

They brought Paddy up to his office, he shook Paddy's hand and said "Don't believe I have ever shook hands with a superhero before." "I have never shook and ambassador's hand either." He explained the situation to him and said. "I need to get Stephen out of this." He said. "I understand why not ring him and we can pick him up on the way to the airport, make sure you tell him to keep out of site for the next hour till we arrange everything." "Ok thanks for everything, this has been a wild adventure."

To be continued.

## **Freak?**

**Michael O'Brien**

Stephen Hawking, Helen Keller Michael Jackson, Prince, Paul MacLean fishing, Alan Turing. There is an aspect to all of us that could be considered freaky, which means that actually none of us are freaks, everybody's different so we're all the same. Wanting to be different and fit in at the same time. Come the frightening moment that awaits all living beings the one thing we all crave is union, oneness , togetherness.

Eccentricity is considered freakishness and we all have some eccentric traits, the wisdom of the herd moving and living as one, no solitary creature lasts long who does not choose it. For how can we be solitary anyway, all living things being connected by the air we breathe, the moisture that rises from us all and is drunk by everyone, sustaining life on this one ground we all stand on.

## **I say unique**

**Ciaran O'Melia**

As you know I was away for a month or so. The garden that I left in the trusted care of one of my Grandsons. He was busy most Saturdays and then to make up for this he came around just the day before we came back.

Then he ran around cursing his luck that he would have Grandparents like us.

Like everything that is put on the long finger, it went to hell in a handbasket, now you only need a machete to get at the back, and sides, and don't talk to me about the weeds, they are like trees.

But there is always a silver lining in every dark cloud. While working my way down with the machete to see the back, I found this, now it is not what you immediately thought, but close to it.

If I can get the box open, there are several big locks on the box, which is about 6' long and shaped like a coffin, well not really a coffin, but it is about 3' square and heavy. As I tried to figure out what it was, I was disturbed by my grandson, the gardener.

"What are you doing." He asked.

Now I had a machete in my hand, "What do you think I'm doing, cutting the grass you were supposed to, you let the garden go wild."

"But the box Granddad, I hear a muffled sound from within." He is studying English, old English, hence, the way he talks.

Sure enough, there was a scratching sound coming from the box, now we had to open it, and this we did.

On opening it, out jumps a dressed-up mummy, with paint all over his face.

We fell back, and he brushed himself off and walked away.

Now, you say a freak, but I say unique. So, if you see himself, this is mine. P.J. Fossett.

## **My Sister Giulia**

**Heloisa Prieto**

(excerpt from The Storyteller)

Nardo was the only father I knew.

Rich and famous. A typical Playboy.

Bernardo Fontana. An only child to an Italian family based in São Paulo.

He inherited farms and industries.

Mom and Nardo knew each other from a very early age. His family's property was close to my grandparents' in Minas Gerais.

My Nona used to say: "In Italy we believe one should marry one's daughter to the neighbour's son".

So Nardo was seen as Mom's best choice in life.

It so happens Mom loved to be independent, she had a hard time committing to jobs, careers, friendships, let alone relationships.

Ironically, I guess Nardo loved my mother for her wild heart, for her lack of ambition, for her aversion to social conventions.

Besides, they shared memories of an adventurous childhood on the farms. They also shared a similar upbringing: some kind of bipolar education, since their parents combined a strict, conservative approach to over protectiveness. To make it short: they were both spoiled, somehow naive and over confident, not to say, snobbish. None of them could handle frustrations.

When I was two years old Nardo told Mom he wanted to have his own, biological child. But my mother refused it. She did not want another baby. He was furious. He left home and immediately found someone else. His new wife was pregnant with Giulia shortly after.

Mom was so confused, she started drinking and taking substances. First time she went to rehab I was only four years old.

Eventually, Nardo and Mom decided on shared custody over me.

Giulia and I went to the same school, shared toys, friends and secrets.

Love is thicker than blood.