

Inkslingers Blended Session

26th August 2023

The Prompt from The Bag Was:

“Five Words ”

Director, Evaluate, Admit, Celebration, Advance

And the Visual



Season of Mists...

A Door

Tina Irving

A door – something as simple as a door – can be misconstrued by some in the said housing association. An exterior door to where – the outside of a building or into a corridor? True that those that are open to the weather are more vulnerable to climatic conditions, and we all know about those except the said housing association who would not know one end of an environmental project from another viz a viz the “community” project the housing association has had thousands of pounds of public money to run yet exclude tenants for no other reason than they don’t like them, even though they are qualified experienced environmentalists.

I digress, back to the door. Well, several residents have complained and got nowhere. One man has been in his house for 20 years and never had a new door – despite the one he has is falling apart. We don’t fix interior doors, says the coordinator. Hang on, in the tenancy agreement does it not say that they are responsible for fixtures and fittings? In that case I’ll take all my doors with me when I leave, and the windows, and the nice toilet seat – and maybe the toilet, sink and shower as well. I’ll be building myself a new log cabin in the woods with a bit of help from the lovely men at the men’s shed."

Swimming

Matthew Tubridy

One day my Dad decides to go a swim,
In Glassilaun beach,
In the water he tries to avoid a jellyfish,
He swim out into open water,
A current pushes him out,
He passes small islands,
Eventually he reaches Inisturk island,
He washes up at the pier,
He gets out and walks up to a guesthouse,
He explains what happened,
The bean an ti gives him some tuna sandwich,
Despite his predicament my Dad goes down to he sea
the next day,
He floats in the water,
The island people really like my Dad,
They think he can represent them in a
swimming contest against other Co Galway islands,
My Dad sits on his throne,
With a crown made of rams horns,
Each morning he walks around the back of the island,
My family alert the guards they our Dad is missing,
The police come to Inisturk island,
They question my Dad,
But he doesn't want to leave the island
Because he is royalty there,
My family go to meet my Dad,
Bu there they are indirect royalty,
It what's to do there?
There's no University,
My family walk around the back of the island every morning,
Catch sheep and plunge a knife into their necks,
They bring it back to their cottage,
A roast it over an open fire,
My brother gets a letter from Trinity College Dublin,
They want him to document life on an island,

He gets the ferry to the mainland and the University drive him to Dublin
All the motorway,
They put him up in the Student residence,
He's looked at queerly by the students,
He is grilled by the professors,
'why did you move to Inisturk island?'
'I followed me Dad' he replied
He is some type of Royalty? They ask.
Yes brother replied,
They put a crown of thorns on my brothers head,
Haha! Who is royalty now?
Brother thinks of the windswept cliffs on his island,
He decides he wants to go back there,
He wanted it so much that his mortal body is flown back there in an
instant,
He goes back to being a prince,
Of chasing sheep.

The Mushy Pea

Gerard Byrne

Luther's bar was in darkness. The neon sign over the door was turned off, but there was still over twenty cars parked outside. Someone had called the authorities claiming that somebody had died inside. The ambulance was still ten minutes out. The heavy snow had led to that. So it was now left to Ivan and Victor to see what was happening inside. They weren't worried about it. They'd dealt with way worse situations in the past. Being a policeman in Russia was a tough enough job with all the gangsters and trigger-happy drunks. This seemed like a walk in the park so far.

The front door of the pub was shut, so they went around back to the service entrance. Thankfully it was open, and the two officers made their way inside. They were shocked to find two young men in the kitchen. Both dead and slumped over a counter. There were no signs of how they died, except for a half drank bottle of vodka.

Ivan noticed something about the bottle, "there's no label. Could be homemade", there was a major problem in Russia with people making their own alcohol. It had led to many deaths in the past, but still people tried to make it. This looked like another one of those cases.

Victor opened a door that led into the bar, "these two are the least of our problems".

The bar was packed with people of all ages. Mostly men but there were a few women. They mostly sat around tables. Open vodka bottles placed on every flat surface. Some even clutched tightly between the fingers of some of the patrons. Only problem was that each and every one of them was dead. Eyes tightly shut and skin blue.

"Look at that", Victor flashed his torch over at a homemade distillery that was set up behind the bar, "how did they get away with that?"

Ivan had been on the force for years, so had seen similar stuff in the past, "the locals aren't gonna report a good thing like this. Cheap vodka is all most of them want. Safety is a faraway second. You can't help people like this. They're gonna drink this shit whether it's safe or not", a

familiar face caught his eye from a nearby table. It was an old man with a large belly, and he was slumped back in a chair, “is that who I think it is?”

“Who do you think it is?”, Victor was checking the pulse of the odd person as he past them by.

Ivan shone his torch in the dead man’s face, “it looks like the Mushy Pea”.

“Who’s the Mushy Pea?”

“You’ve never heard of the Mushy Pea?”, Ivan stooped down to get a better look at the old man, “he’s a well-known Irish folk singer. He’s fairly popular here with people of a certain age. My parents always listened to him. Even went to a few of his concerts. I’ve heard even Putin is a fan. Wouldn’t surprise me if he’s over here for a private concert or something. There’s gonna be a lot of unhappy rich people when they hear he’s dead. And we’ll have the Irish embassy up our ass looking for answers. Not in the humour for that shit. They’ll be looking for a fall guy and it’s not gonna be us”.

Suddenly the Mushy Pea sat up and flicked his eyes open, “where the fuck am I?”

The two policemen jumped back with fright. Thankfully Ivan caught his breath quickly, “my god. Are you okay sir?”

“Why wouldn’t I be okay?”, replied the Mushy Pea, “I’m only out for a drink. I’ve done nothing wrong mate.

“It looks like you’re the only person to survive a mass case of alcohol poisoning. Everyone else in here is dead”, Ivan shined his torch at some of the nearby victims.

The Mushy Pea glanced around at all his dead drinking buddies and announced, “fucking lightweights”.

Mist

Bernadette O'Reilly

out of the mist

surrounding the hills

a dog barks

Five Words

Laura Alves

To advance in life, you must evaluate everything done recently. See what you have been doing right and how you can still improve them. Admit the fact that you are not perfect and check where you went wrong. Minor mistakes can be corrected and returned, but some things, the big errors, must be scrapped altogether.

This part can be difficult, as it may be something you enjoy doing and don't want to get rid of, but you may realise it isn't adding much to your life, it's taking too much time and keeping you from doing other things that are extremely but you don't find time to do them.

You will see in the end that it was a sacrifice worth taking as it helped you do things that you were trying to do for a while but couldn't find the time. If these evaluations are done regularly, you may end up bringing back things you had skipped for a while and then skip others.

You are thus acting as the Director of your life. If your evaluation is good enough, soon there will be cause for celebration! You can invite all your friends for a big party, or just that very special one and go out for a meal and a cinema.

In any case, just relax and be ready for more! Once you are in command of your life, soon you will be picking the fruits of a job well done and realising all those impossible dreams!

Season of Mists

Fergal Canton

Let us begin... we can admit a certain ignorance of the weather gods whose close governance of the Irish weather may owe more to the offerings of sheep , boar and oxen which have been in shorter supply since a certain St. Patrick became Director of offerings to The Dagda, The Morrigan , Lugh and Angus Og who must surely be tired of the epithet Og after two millennia. Nevertheless their internal zoom call (carried on the wings of a dove as is traditional) shows a healthy revival in the celebration of their ancient feasts,. Over to the chairman The Dagda.

"Order, order, come on settle down. Morrigan will you take the minutes?"

"I'd sooner take your head and drink your blood from it you unconstituted male chauvinist pig. Is it because I'm the Goddess of War you ask me every goddamned time to take the minutes to shut me up?" The Dagda mutes her.

"Lugh would you take the minutes for the sake of peace.. Okay that's settled.

Now Lugh do you have a report from Angus Og?"

"No that's me, Angus. Really Dad I am right here. You're not still mad about Brugh na Boinne?" "Yes son, They're doing tours now. By the way they are calling it Newgrange after it was invaded by monkeys."

"No Dad they were monks. Anyway... I have appeared in the social and broadcast media pretending to be an expert on Irish language called Manchán O'Thuathail. And I have the people back leaving devotions at

Holy Wells and Venerable Trees, like apples and nuts and the like..."

A muffled Roar from Mannanán splits the meeting." I'm not a bloody rabbit or hare, Angus . Never send a boy top do a man's job."

"Oi, Mannanán, I'm two thousand years old and this is just a first step."

"Silence for the Cailleach", interjected The Dagda. "Well I am a hare, as my husband, old salty balls, knows well so I'd kindly ask him to refrain from casting aspersions."

"Shut you old witch", roared Mannanán . "If I am a witch then you are an old walrus full of smelly fish. "replied the Cailleach, getting approving nods from Bóinn and the Morrigan. "Really Men!"

Lugh put up a timid hand. "Yes?" said The Dagda, grateful for the interruption.

"Could we not just frighten them . I evaluate it would be so easy for me and Mannanán to combine our powers to cast a spell and turn the Island into one long continuous season of mists. This might advance the worshipping at the sacred sites and maybe get a barbecue or two going in the Summer or at Samhain. I've high hopes for Samhain."

Mannanán shook his shaggy locks. "Samhain is bad for me. I've booked a Winter break and it's abroad." "Yeah," said the Cailleach, "and we know what broad it is. It's that husband stealing Bóinn again isn't it?"

When are you coming home to Kerry to cut the bloody rhododendrons?"

"To hell with the bloody rhododendrons." roared Mannanán. Lugh put up

a timid hand. "Yes Lugh?" said the Dagda. "How do you spell rhododendrons? Only my spell check isn't working." "It's not the only thing not working", said Bóinn archly with a wink at the Morrigan.

"Meeting adjourned," yelled the Dagda "and strike that last comment from the record. I need a drink . Anyone for an Irish Mist? "Me, me, me, me, me, !" yelled almost everyone." Mines a G and T", said The Cailleach. "I don't drink normally." "You don't." says Mannanán "that's why I left you." Uproar and laughter. Fade to Mist.

Flowers by The Roadside

Gerard Byrne

I drive by this spot most days. A busy junction in the heart of the city. Continuous traffic twenty-four hours a day. To most people this place is just somewhere that slows you down on a daily basis with its many traffic lights and turns. But to me this place has a deeper meaning. I'm reminded of it every time I pass. For there on the guardrail on one turn, there is an array of bunches of flowers tied to the bars. For years they always had at least one fresh one with a few others at different stages of decay. A constant reminder of my mistakes. But lately I've noticed that the flowers aren't being replaced anymore. Does this mean that someone close to the deceased has died themselves. Never getting answers to who killed their relative, friend or loved one that day. Why did they not stop to help or take responsibility for it?. Or maybe they've just moved on with their lives. Decided that they couldn't still live in the past. I'll probably never know the truth. But that seems only fair because I'm not helping them with clearing up their relative's demise. I'm the only one that knows what happened and unfortunately that information is coming with me. I'm not trying to be selfish. I'm just a coward. Not proud of it, but I fear the backlash for my actions. The hate that will come my way.

The accident happened six years ago. I wasn't drunk or drugged. Just a man in a hurry to get to the train station before my son's train arrived. The guy shouldn't have been there. There were guard rails to stop people from crossing at that point of the busy junction. He'd stepped around it and was in the middle of crossing when I turned the bend. Travelling at speed as I tried to beat the lights. He bounced off my bonnet in what felt like slow motion. His confused eyes staring at me as he flew off to the side and out of my life. I didn't break or slow down. Not sure if that was shock or was, I already trying to get away as quickly as possible. Suppose I'll never know now.

By the time I got to the station, my heart was pounding in my chest, and I couldn't relax. Jumping out of the car I checked for damage on the bonnet. Thankfully it was clear. I hate myself to this day for doing that. Didn't care about the young man's well-being or his family. All I was

concerned about was my own sorry self. That's changed over the years and I'm starting to see the damage I've done to another family. All it took was those flowers. A horrible reminder to my terrible secret. A secret that I'm afraid of exploding all over the news and papers. I'd be dragged through the streets and vilified by neighbours. Seems like a small price to pay now in comparison to the guilt that is eating me from the inside out.

Maybe I should start leaving some flowers. Late at night when no one is around. But that's the problem. There's always someone around. Maybe it's best that I just go on living a lie. Better for me and my family.

A Darkened Room

Matthew Tubridy

I go into a darkened room
with your writing!
There's 10 men in there,
They scrutinise my writing,
It's like Ultimate Hell Week,
One of the men scrunches up a piece of paper and throws it at the door,
They ask How far can you put your hands behind your back?
They lead me back to the Garden of Remembrance to continue writing,
The darkened room is in the Irish Writing Centre,
In the Garden of Remembrance I'm given some apples,
I write a bit more,
But the men are staring at me out the window,
I write 'All Hail Ireland!'
A few days later I'm in the darkened room again,
I say You know my writing is so good it will make you break your leg!
I start reading, the room vibrates,
The 10 men don't know what's going on!
I'll make the next script for Father Ted,
Bishop Brennan comes in,
He says a thing or 2 to the 10 men,
Father Jack comes in...
Demands some whiskey,
After all these characters leave,
And the room stops vibrating,
The 10 men sit back and clap at me,
Someone opens a curtain,
And the light streams in,
You'll be on the shelves in Eason's!
A military truck drives all my books to Eason's,
And soldiers carry the books into the store.

Mellow Fruitfulness

Max McCoubrey

'I've printed off the roll call' Archie said triumphantly 'I thought we would all get a giggle from it.' He pushed his glasses further up on his nose and I noticed a glint of pleasure in his eyes. This had been his idea after all; he lived on a huge estate near to Winchester College the area that is said to have inspired John Keats the author of the poem. All of the classmates of 1966 had made the journey to spend the autumn day together. A reunion, after almost half a century had passed.

Emailing, snail mail, and word of mouth had gathered us and a suggestion of a walk in the estate owned by Archie propelled the conversation into the years gone by.

Time had been kindest to Archie, his property was vast as was his wealth and his kindness reflected in his suntanned face as he welcomed us all.

The mellow fruitfulness of the orchard and glasshouses meant the day got off to the best start. There were baskets everywhere and we used them to gather any delight we saw. We wandered in single and double file picking choosing and chatting.

Bridget the youngest of us was thoroughly enjoying the afternoon. She told us she could make the best Lemon drizzle cake in Europe, and promised to do so. She placed the most mature of lemons into her container.

Josephina took a basket but also took her time in choosing. She wandered into the rose garden and with secateurs severed the finest of yellow roses.

Helen, who had been the most amazing sportswoman in school, had the best reach of all of us. She chose ferns and grasses and told us how she planned to dry them and use them for Halloween

A hearty meal that night was followed by a dollop of Lemon drizzle cake, and that was when we remembered Peter Brady and his crazy sense of humour. I remembered the day he took the tail from his Davey croquet hat, dipped it in ink and pinned it to my gymslip. As he was the only one who had not survived our gang, we toasted him and bid him rest.

So much, and so little had changed since that first roll call.

Season Of Mists
Bernadette O'Reilly

Autumn arrives
Spreading her cloak of mists
Hiding colour from our world
Hiding the sun
What secrets she keeps
What secrets she reveals
Gathering her cloak of mists
As she departs.

The Misty Season

Ciaran O'Melia

We lived for a time in a terraced house in Dublin, it was on the south side. I was the youngest of 6 boys, they were all burly and strong. I was the frailest of the group at 10 years of age. Never any good at school and got Fs in most subjects.

The teacher Mr Humphries often remarked "I was the best of them," of course he said this when the BA was looking for recruits for their many wars, he was only joking as I was too young to join.

I was recruited into a different army, a box the fox army, we roamed the streets looking for the fox to box.

You know I once saw a man kissing his bride as he hung a pearl necklace around her neck, she fingered it and turned to kiss him in turn. It was that time of year, the mist would roll in from the sea, the days were getting shorter, darkness would soon be upon us and remember we had to be home by tea time.

But before that Clancy said.

"We must box the fox."

"But where." Said the junior Clancy.

"I know a place, were the only person living in the house was an old woman, and the apples are ripe and ready for picking."

So the trio went to the back-lane and sure enough the branches could not keep the fruit off the ground.

"There you have it." Said Clancy.

Being greedy I climbed the wall and started to pluck the apples, placing them in my upturned jersey.

It was then a strange thing happened. As I went up again after offloading my jersey to the Clancy boys. The back door opened and a frail older woman came out.

I climbed out of the tree and told the boys to run. As we did so the old lady persisted in following us, she called us to stop.

Now alone I waited. Could I trust her not to tell the police. Finally she drew near me and she said.

“I spray the tree with insecticides, I want you to go home and get your mother to wash the apples, before eating them.”

It was the season of mist of change.

It was late August or September, and I never forgot that old lady.

Forbidden Fruit Baskets

Brian Mc Guinness

The basket lamented the season's meagre offerings and sighed. It was a proud basket descended from a line once woven. Proud Baskets that carried loaves and fishes. Functional baskets. But such baskets are now facing extinction.

That was then. Now. Nothing is growing when it should be growing as the seasons shift on an unpredictable axis. Fruit has either ripened too soon or hasn't ripened at all. Some fruit, most fruit this season, has been clinging to the branches for dear life as the elements did batter with the trees and bushes, market gardens and other fruit growing enterprises. Blown off the fruit trees by Storm Betty. The dry months are wetter and the "winter was the mildest in years", Joe.

Rain, hail and intermittent sunshine. Storms. Thunder and lightning. A bit of snow here and there in May and early June. More non-seasonal than unseasonal.

Anything that has grown has been blown.

Community gardens and allotments were reduced to clean-up zones and the bees took shelter and absentmindedly twitched their bee whiskers wondering whether to bother with pollen collection at all this year. Some even considered other lines of employment. A sweeter deal.

Swallows had arrived and about turned; Open water swimmers are learning survival skills like how to tackle a shark. The sharks are drifting into previous unexplored waters. Word has passed around the shark community that the Irish sea is the place to be. There's a good reason why Fungi scarpered from the Dingle waters, probably in search of the Gulf Stream.

The Gulf Stream has moved so much that it may be renamed the "North Atlantic Shift". Word is that mosquitoes and Ccs carrying deadly diseases will be amongst the next wave of tourists to our Emerald Isle. The most western island of Europe. The Arans and the Achill's are part of Ireland so shut up.

This season's crop is a better one and we wonder will it even be edible or have a future. What will we put on our porridge? There are concerns that there may be no jam on the shelves come December. Blueberries and strawberries from Spain or Greece? but they have been scorched. Cooked into the ground. Exterminated.

Forget about salad. rumour has it that the Happy Pear boys may have to change the name of their business.

But don't worry. Mushroom season is coming, and the government are proposing a mandatory scheme of micro-dosing to cheer us up or kill us off.

Our vernacular will change. An apple a day will probably now require a visit to the doctor.

But be positive. [Click here for 10 Things You Can Do with Empty Fruit Baskets.](#)

The Bus To Limerick

Matthew Tubridy

Another time, I got the bus to Limerick
but got off at Birdhill I think it was,
I was walking to the lake and passed a family having a meal outside,
The man asked me if I wanted a burger,
I said yes,
Then I went on my way, probably a doomed way,
But the man drove up to me,
And gave me a lift to a campsite,
Which was nice,
Beside a lake,
But I was a risk taker,
The next day I walked into Killaloe I think
I bought a saucepan,
I didn't want to walk back by the road,
So I walked up the hills,
My cake got mashed,
A woman met me and told me to get out of her field because there was
a bull in it,
If only I could have safe adventures!
Then I decided to walk up the hill,
The road stopped but I kept going up,
I think all I had was noodles,
I made a kind of circle where I put dried heather,
I put water from a stream into my saucepan
and the noodles and put it in the heather,
I lit the heather!
The water got sufficiently hot to heat the noodles,
So I had food!
The next day I walk down the hill to Scariff,
I got a lift from a woman who said there's loads of hippies in the area,
Insinuating that I'm a hippy,
I think I got into Limerick City where I got a bus back.

Autumn

Miguel A. Rivera, Jr.

A simple plate of fruit. It was what Jacob observed with some degree of nervousness after having volunteered for this kooky college outing with a friend.

“It’s revolutionary, Jake! This guy claims he can reverse aging with genetically altered fruit!”, His college friend and drinking bud, Adam had said.

“Adam, I thought our frat had this rule about drinking before twelve, Bro. You don’t have to sell me this crap. I mean this is all for a few credits, right? Please don’t go swallowing some crazy old coot’s bullshit about fountain of youth fruit or whatever.”, He’d answered when he was filling out the form and signing the legal wavers that would give them both access to the remote compound Dr. Fenris kept in the Rockies. It had all seemed like some infomercial or a good gag for the most gullible of society.

Now they sat in the thin, chilly air sipping tea and listening to Dr. Fenris’s spiel about the unique effects of bioengineered fruits and vegetables in combination with fresh air and blah, blah, blah.

Jacob smiled and nodded but was bored to the point of tossing himself off a cliff, when two orderlies wheeled out a woman in pajamas. Jacob surmised she was somewhere in the neighborhood of her late eighties to early nineties with snow-white hair and more wrinkles than Yoda. She was slightly bent due to her age and her right hand was curled around a therapeutic rubber ball in a manner that told Jacob this woman had had a stroke or some similar malady at some point.

“This gentleman, is Agnes DaSilva and as you can see, she is well-advanced in age. With respect to Mrs. DaSilva, her age is well above ninety. She has advanced Alzheimer’s, arthritis, and has suffered two strokes. She has also volunteered to be our test subject today.”, Doctor Fenris unleashed. Jacob smiled but was inwardly pondering the very real potential legal ramifications of witnessing this unethical and violently insane experiment.

His eyes darted toward Adam for a second who sat there with a grin and glossy look in his eyes as if mesmerized by this deranged doctor's claims.

Dr. Fenris nodded to one of the orderlies, who picked up a piece of fruit from the bowl, cut a small slice from it, and then placed it in Mrs. DaSilva's aged and most likely toothless mouth. Exactly nothing happened for some thirty seconds and then Mrs. DaSilva's hair began moving, seemingly by itself and independent of any breeze. She jerked in her wheelchair and then her eye-pupils doubled in size for a few seconds. Next there was a crackling sound as her stiff and formerly useless hand straightened. She flexed her fingers as the ball she'd been holding fell to the ground.

Jacob rubbed his eyes and stared at the cups of tea that they'd been served during their conversation with the good Doctor, wondering what pharmaceutical concoction was in them.

When he looked up from the tea his eyes were no longer his friends, as they revealed something right in front of him that his mind simply could not fathom. Mrs. DaSilva stood erect with a thin, youthful body. Long, silky black hair hung to the middle of her back. Her face and limbs were now quite inexplicably, those of an eighteen-year-old girl. "Obrigado", she said in Portuguese to Doctor Fenris with a smile. She then leaned over and kissed him on both cheeks as was the custom for many Europeans. As she strolled off, sans wheelchair, Jacob sat stunned in his seat, utterly without words, explanation, or thought of what was to come next.

I Remember Cavan

Matthew Tubridy

Camping by Lough Oughter,
A boy had to be rescued from the lake,
We walked around by the forest,
We cycled into Cavan Town,
Went to coffee shop and Tesco,
We got the bus back to Dublin,
Put our bikes on the bus,
Me and Izabella,
We had the pocket rocket,
It was very sunny,
But we had sun screen,
Which i lathered on luckily,
We had the MSR hubba bubba,
When we arrived I didn't know if there
would be a place to camp,
And there was a no camping sign,
But we pushed the bikes threw the grass to the end
of the cut grass,
It was very busy with the good weather,
It was hard cycling out and into Cavan Town,
In the heat,
The food was going bad in the heat,
You should camp in campsites so you don't get uprooted,
Like by Lough Leane near Killarney,
A guy said the park rangers would take down your tent.

Rainy Season

Clíodhna Joyce-Daly

Johns torn wellies trudged along the sopping uneven ground. With every step drops of mud, dirt and various debris lined up of the scruff of his linen trousers. It had been five straight days of unforgiving rain. Despite his love for the season of mist, he longed for a patch of the brightness illuminating his now saturated field. Due to the waterlogged landscape, the thought of ploughing seemed unfeasible.

John relished in his memories of biting into his grown winter kale that combined the perfect taste of bitterness and tender juices that burst as the stems were crunched under his tongue. The time for planting was slipping further into oblivion and the thought of eating store bought kale projected John into a panic with reality of his taste buds would ultimately dull.

In anticipation of a miracle dry patch, John searched the ground with the expectation there would be an ideal spot to sow seeds. The dirt slipped through his calloused hands during his quest – leaving strains of its wet texture across the palm of his worn hands. He was devastated.

While getting engrossed within the contemplation of thought, John failed to acknowledge the growing accumulation of mud expanding on the sides of his boots. As he attempted to move, it appeared the earth would swallow him up as he was projected into an anxiety ridden state about kale.

As the struggle ensued, John fell backwards into the filth of the terrain. His boots became loose and his socks became submerged into dampness with no respite from the cold the mud procured.

In addition to not having organically grown vegetables, John despised being cold in glacial weather. As the dampness engulfed his entire body, John debated whether having a vegetable garden was worth all this hassle.

“John, what in god’s green earth are you doing out here?” – he heard his wife’s shrilled voice of concern in the distant background. As he was

mustering up the opportunity to respond, he noticed his teeth began to chatter and his voice starting to croak breaking with every single word.

“I.....wanted.....to.....see....if.....I.....could.....plant.....mykale”, John moaned.

“John, don’t be so ridiculous you can’t plant in this weather. I will get you a small greenhouse – surely that will do you to plant,” his wife responded.

As the words came into orbit, the realisation of a simpler easier vegetable garden came into fruition. The constant dealings with unpredictable weather, seasons of mist and annoyance disappeared into hindsight and a more relaxed hobby seemed plausible. His wife surely knew it all.

“Actually yes Mary that would do,” John stated, “Also can you come here and help me up?”

Season of Mists

Elaine Reardon.

First light touches leaves,
pine boughs, grass, and stream
warmth and wind heats the air
rouses the fog to and curl and rise
up the shallow hill to my window,
then further, high above the trees.
August ponds lie lazy
to early morning's stir
mist rises above the kingdom
like hosannas in the dew

Robbing Apples

Gerard Byrne

“Catch this one you dozy twat”, roared Heather from up high in the tree, before throwing down another apple to her friend Donna who put it in the basket.

Donna was getting bored hanging around the apple orchard. She just wanted to go home and play her brother’s mega drive. He was away for the weekend visiting friends, so she would have full access to his room for the next two days. Collecting apples for someone else’s pies was not her idea of time well spent. It was then that she noticed the elderly man approaching them on the well worn trail, “someone’s coming”

Heather tried to see through the branches of the tree, but there was little chance of that, “who is it?”

“Some old dude on a walking stick. Don’t recognise from round here. Maybe we should leave before he gets here”

“Don’t be an idiot”, Heather plucked another apple and fired it down towards her friend, “he’s not gonna be catching us anytime soon on a limping stick. Just smile, say hello and let him move on about his business”

Donna glanced back at the old man. His pace had picked up and he seemed to be trying to move faster than he was used to. She didn’t like the look of him, but tried to stand strong and defiant, “can you at least come down and back me up until he passes”

Heather wiped the sweat from her forehead, “by the time I’ll get down there, he’ll be gone and I’ll have to climb back up again. There’s no point so suck it up and act like we’re doing nothing wrong”

The old man was only ten feet away now and his expression was of someone who was highly concerned about something or other, “you shouldn’t be here. The season of the mists is coming”, he pointed behind him, “it’s on the horizon. There’s not much time left. Run while you still can”, he never slowed down as he past them by. He seemed frightened of something.

“What did he say?”, Heather shouted down from the tree. She could see the old man pass directly underneath her. He was fairly moving for an olde fella.

“Something about the season of the mists. What is that?”

Heather laughed, “that’s an old wives tales. My mother used to tell me about them when I was little. They’re a bit like a banshee, but they travel in the mist of the rain. Supposed to kill you by drowning if they get to near. Load of horse shite that adults tell kids to stop them wandering”

Donna noticed the dark cloud on the horizon. It didn’t take long to arrive over the cusp of the hill, with a curtain of heavy rain. It travelled at speed across the fields towards them, “that’s a weird rain cloud”

“What’s weird about it?”, Heather threw down another apple, which unfortunately hit her friend in the head.

“Ahh, watch it”, moaned Donna, “something doesn’t look right about it”, it was then that she seen the people at the front of the rain storm. Each one wearing white and spaced out by ten foot gaps between them. Their arms were outstretched and they glided across the ground as if they were floating. Come to think of it, they were actually floating. Two foot off the recently baled field, “we need to go”, she dropped the basket of apples and started to run in the opposite direction of the cloud.

“Go where?”, Heather looked down from the tree and noticed her friend was already gone, “what the hell?”, she started to climb down from the tree. When she reached the bottom, she noticed that Donna was already thirty feet away, “why are you running for?. It’s only a bit of rain”, she turned to look at the closing in dark cloud. It was then that she seen the people inside it. Their eyes glowed bright green, “what in god’s name?”, she didn’t wait around for an answer and ran after her friend. Heather hadn’t much faith in herself to outrun it, but she was still gonna try.

Camping

Matthew Tubridy

Camping up a mountain,
The tent nearly blew away,
The ground was soggy,
Carrying all my camping kit,
Where was I? Just follow the arrows,
Then I think the cloud came down,
All the people whizzing past in their cars,
And me trudging along, but I was getting fit!
When the clouds came down I couldn't see the arrows so I walked down
to the road,
An hitched a lift,
I got dropped off in Organico,
A nice restaurant,
I got food, then I got the bus to Cork.

Season Of Mists

Angelina Kelly

The season of mists is upon us again. The time when no amount of clothing is sufficient for warmth. The sky is grey, the sun does not shine and the air is heavy with damp.

I catch my breath when I walk down the street, the damp fills my lungs and tries to choke me. I fight for every breath I take.

I can barely hear my footfall on the pavement, and the sounds of the town, normally so loud, are muffled today. A heavy sense of silence hangs in the air and I feel afraid.

I do not like being outdoors on days like this but, I must go to work to provide for my family. It is only a short walk but today I find it challenging.

I know that when I get to work the fire will be blazing brightly and the air in the taverna will be warm. The noise will be deafening and, after a few minutes, I will wish I was back out here with the muffled sounds and the silence.

The season of mists disturbs me. I long for the return of summer, the long bright days, the sunshine and the warmth. For now I pull my cloak more tightly around me, pull the hood up over my head and snuggle into its warmth.

Bus Journey

Matthew Tubridy

Being a passenger on a bus
Going to Cavan,
The woman in front of me suddenly gets up and tells the driver she
wants to get off,
There was a man with her who gets off too,
I think the woman had issues,
What would they do after getting off?
I sit on the bus, watching the lakes go by,
When the bus reaches Cavan Town,
I get off,
It's frosty that day,
I go into a shop because it's warmer in there,
I walk to a golf course,
I pitch my tent,
It's very cold,
I survive the night anyway,
In the morning I get out of the tent to see it had frozen solid,
I think that day I started walking,
In forestry,
I think I camped in a field beside a lake
but I couldn't see it due to the fog,
I walked to Killashandra to a Hardware store,
Asked for something to put under my tent,
He said Is it just a bit of plastic you want?
I accepted his offer of a bit of plastic,
I think the field owner saw my tent,
We exchanged a few words,
Him not too happy I camped in his field,
I asked him could he take my rubbish,
He said there's bins in the forest,
I think I walked back to Cavan and got the us back from there.

The Time Travellers Ball

Gerard Byrne

Dr Roberta, or Dr Robotnic, as he was called by some of his students because of his similarities to Sonic the hedgehog's arch nemesis, was nearly finished setting up for his big party. The bar was filled with bottles of champagne. There was cakes and sandwiches on a table to one side of the ballroom. Loads of balloons cluttered the dance floor. There was even an eighties cover band setting up on stage.

At the moment he was watching two of the hotel workers erect a banner over the stage. It read, WELCOME TIME TRAVELLERS. All this had cost Roberta a lot of money. Thankfully it was gonna come out of next term's grant scheme. But the media coverage he'd receive in return would boost his failing career to new levels. Yes, that twat in the wheelchair had beaten him to such a wonderful idea. But Roberta had plans to go one better. He'd paid a fortune to transmit a message into space tomorrow. He was covering more bases than the computerised voice guy. Yes, there would be a lot of food wasted. But all this was in the name of science. No one cared about all the bunny rabbits he experimented on a couple of years back, when he was trying to see would watching violent movies effect a rabbit's brain. It didn't. But he wouldn't have known that unless he chopped the bunnies up. Besides, wasted sandwiches weren't gonna draw a lot of controversy.

Roberta stood the opposite end of the room from the stage and pulled out his phone to take a few pictures. He'd already planned to give it to only certain news outlets. Sky News, CNN, BBC, only the best ones. The Sun and Star weren't getting a look in. No trashy papers for him. As he adjusted the shot, Roberta noticed a tall blonde woman helping herself to the buffet. She had long blonde hair and was wearing a purple jumpsuit with matching thigh high boots.

"Excuse me", roared Roberta as he marched across the room, "you shouldn't be in here. This is a private party. Invitation only"

"Oh, I'm sorry", the young woman was halfway through another cheese sandwich, "didn't know this was invitation only. I've seen the sign and figured that all time travellers were welcome".

“You’re a time traveller?”, Roberta could see he was getting played already, “where’s your time travelling machine?”

“It’s outside in the carpark”, the young blonde announced as she picked her way through a bowl of loose biscuits, picking out the pink wafers, “it’s some size, but it blends in well enough with the other vehicles”.

Roberta laughed to himself at the absurdity of the young woman, “what’s your name then time traveller?”

“Zoe”, she poured herself a glass from the punch bowl, “so can I stay at your party?”

“This party is only for time travellers and you my dear is definitely not one of them”.

“Then how did I know about the party then?”, Zoe was defiant in her reply, while getting another glass of punch from the large glass bowl.

“You read the bloody sign”, he pointed at the banner over the stage, “you are just a chancer and you’re taking advantage of a situation that has nothing to do with you”.

Zoe put the cup down and wiped her hands on her jumpsuit, “okay then. Ask me a question about the future. Anything at all and I will answer it”.

Roberta figured he could catch her out with a few carefully chosen questions. Didn’t need to be anything complicated. The woman didn’t exactly look like an intellectual herself, “okay then. What year are you from?”

“Twenty eighty-four”, she replied.

“Okay then”, Roberta wasn’t expecting her to reply so quickly, “what’s the political stability of the world in your time?”

“The Ukraine is now a part of Russia. So is Poland. America and Britain turned a blind eye to the takeover and in return America got Cuba and Britain took the Canary Islands off Spain. It was pretty heated at the time. Looked like war on a lot of fronts. Then Britain decided to drop a nuclear bomb on Northern Ireland, and it actually resolved a lot of issues. No one left alive to complain about religious differences. And all that charity money the states used to raise for the republicans was used

to help the refugees that were left homeless after the blast. Most of them where in Benidorm and Malaga at the time”

“This is a joke”, Roberta had to give it to the young woman, she definitely had a vivid imagination, “no way Europe would allow Russia to take Poland”.

“They were too busy to care”, Zoe began to fill her pockets with custard creams. They crumbled in her hands as she forced them in, “making sure that all packaging for fish products had made contain fish printed on the side and that all pronouns were used correctly in every television show across the whole of Europe. Sounds like a simple job but it’s actually quite time consuming. By the time Poland and Ukraine fell, it was too late. Britain was just glad to not have to send them any more money and missile launchers. They were able to sell them to the Republic of Ireland instead. They were stockpiling weapons for years before they went to war with the Isle of Man”.

“Hold up”, Roberta had heard too much bullshit already, “you’re trying to say that peace loving Ireland went to war against the Isle of Man. Another peace-loving country that might I add, belongs to the United Kingdom. They wouldn’t have allowed this to happen”.

“It used to belong to Britain. That was until they decided to become a sovereign state and changed their laws to become a mini–Las Vegas on the edge of Europe. They legalised hard drugs and made prostitution legal. Didn’t bother the pimps because they were legalised as well. They just couldn’t beat the hookers as much as they used to. Only ten percent of the body could be badly bruised. They even have special workers to go around and check them regularly. Anyway, Ireland wasn’t happy about the Isle of Man robbing all the American tourists, so they declared war on their neighbours. It’s all been going downhill for the Irish since Elon Musk bought up all the landmarks and renamed them all X. Even Temple Bar is just called X and all the pubs along it are called X as well. It took all the fun out of the place”.

“This is insane”, Roberta pointed towards the door, “think you better be going. I’ve had enough of your lies for one day. I’m sure if you go out to your time machine”, he even did the exclamation marks as he said it, “there’ll be a few idiots out there willing to lap up your wild story”.

“Then ask me something that would be difficult for a mad woman like me to answer. Anything at all. Test my knowledge to the full”.

“Okay then. Why are you wasting valuable time in the past with the likes of me? You could be out there changing the future for good. All this here around you is just my way of proving time travel wrong”.

Zoe flashed him a knowing smile, “how do you know that I’m not here to stop something happening in the future? Maybe your work will end up being important in a few decades and I have to steer you in the right direction. Or I could be here to kill you. Make it look like an accident so that your death will not leave too much of a ripple in time”

Roberta’s throat felt dry. He so needed a drink right at that moment. He was starting to fear the young woman. Something about her didn’t seem right. He just got that feeling. It was a gift he’d had since very younger. A sixth sense for lack of a better word. His mind was conflicted. His brain was telling him that she was a nutter and that he should get security, but his heart wanted to believe, it so did, “so which one are you here for?”

Suddenly he spotted a security guard out of the corner of his eye. Then another one on the other side of him. They seemed to be sneaking up on the young woman, who was still blissfully unaware of them having company. As they got closer, he noticed the uniforms were actually for a nearby hospital.

“Which one do you think?”, asked Zoe through a menacing grin.

It was then that the security men jumped on her. They pinned her to the ground and attempted to handcuff her. Zoe screamed and lashed out at them with her arms and legs. Suddenly a doctor arrived and injected her with something that made Zoe go limp very quickly.

The doctor stood back and let security finish off the job of taking her into custody, “sorry about that. Poor woman was acting in a play earlier and one of the stage lights fell on her head. She wasn’t the best for it. Thinks she’s a character in the play”.

“A time traveller”, Roberta couldn’t believe how stupid he felt right at that moment.

“Take it she told you that story as well”, replied the doctor, “she’s been going around casualty trying to tell anyone that will listen, that her time machine is outside. We didn’t take much heed of her until she robbed one of the ambulances. It’s crashed into a Ferrari outside”.

Roberta threw his eyes up. He already had a bad feeling that it was his car that had been hit. The doctor escorted the security guards as they carried Zoe out of the room. Thankfully the only people who seen all this was just the staff. Roberta cursed himself for being so stupid and turned back to take the photo of the room once more. But now there was more people at the buffet table. All of them wearing strange uniforms and electronic head gear. Roberta figured that it was just gonna be one of those days.