

Inkslingers Blended Session

9th September 2023

The Prompt from The Bag Was:

“What makes you think it was an accident?”

And the Visual



Magic Potion

Accident or Not?

Bernadette O'Reilly

"What makes you think it was an accident?" His friend queried.

"Of course it was" Brooke insisted, "it could not be anything else."

Brookes blue eyes stared at his friend.

"You're too suspicious, Clarke" Brooke informed him.

"Nah, Look at the evidence"

"What evidence?" Brooke wanted to know.

"Dana, my friend, has hurt herself quite a lot over the past while" said Clarke.

"Yeah, maybe, she is into sports and exercise, you know"

"Dana is not an athlete" stated Brooke.

I know that" said Clarke, getting annoyed "but my gut tells me there is something very wrong"

"Your imagination you mean Clarke" Brooke banged Clarke on the back and strolled off.

He did not see the look of frustration and worry on Clarke's face.

The Howth Lifeboat

Matthew Tubridy

The volunteers pagers go off,
It's someone at the back of Islands eye,
They got there on an inflatable,
He was going to camp on the island,
But his inflatable floated away towards Wales,
His name was Timmy,
But then he decided he wanted to go back to the mainland because it
was his cousins wedding,
So he got out his Samsung phone and rung 999,
He wanted some time to grill a few sausages,
And Pray to the wave Gods,
But the lifeboat speed around the island,
Timmy clammers onboard,
He plans for his next adventure is to camp on Howth Head,
He brings his MSR tent,
He brings those sausages he didn't have time to eat on Islands eye,
He had frozen them in preparation for this trip,
He puts up his tent,
And watches the walkers go by,
Someone from Howth Residence walks past,
He calls the Guards,
A policeman saunters up the cliff path,
He sees Timmy's Tent,
We have reports of you being here,
Timmy ends up getting the Dart to Killbarrack,
He gets of the dart and some teenagers,
They shout at him,
With his big rucksack,
Timmy makes a bee line for his house.

Do you want to hear a story?

Heloisa Prieto

(excerpt)

Every story holds another story.

Do you think life is but a fairy tale?

Several Brazilian proverbs or idioms refer to situations when one seems to be exaggerating, embellishing, or being fooled by illusions.

The same concept can be found when someone listens to an extraordinary life story and says: “your life could be a movie!”

In a way, it seems that our daily lives belong to a dull dimension and adventures, fairy tales to another realm. This may be partially true. As the Maori say, tales belong to the dream time.

However, they also claim our world was entirely dreamt before coming to existence. Therefore, to tell a story is a way to rescue one’s dreamt destiny, to find out about our secret dream and follow the true path to our actual life.

When children play make believe they usually say something like this: “I was the hero, you were the enemy”. Next, they start running around acting their parts, shifting to present tense.

In our “grown up” lives we hardly ever take our time to think about the roles we decide to play in the stories we chose to live. We don’t seem to recall the dreams that were destined to us by our parents, we seldom reflect about the culture we live in, its myths, and meaningful tales.

We live surrounded by narratives: oral tales, books, movies, soap operas, urban legends, authorized biographies, or not, short commercial scripts, each story holds another story.

Something that relates to us, the times we live in, the ancestral values or passing trends.

Take your time and think about the role legends and narratives play in contemporary lives. It's an endless pursuit.

Scriptwriters usually say a narrative should have a “turning point”, that crucial event that turns the whole plot around, changing everything about their characters.

How about we think of narratives we choose for ourselves as turning points, beacons which can feed our imagination, by revealing fresh ways of looking at life, unveiling the three levels of literature: the spoken word, written word and visual world. When we take our time to compare how narratives shift according to their medium, subtle meanings may surprise us.

As you read these reflections about literature, old, forgotten tales may come back from oblivion, or else, new, fresh plots may pop up on your mental screen. I hope that all of a sudden you, dear reader, may feel inhabited by narratives you never thought you owed or ever wanted to share...

Sheba

Fergal Canton

They knew. They all knew what was happening and they did nothing. Of course, circus folk were not like a normal community. From the adrenaline junkie highwire and trapeze acts to the freaks and disfigured little people they were all ruled by the man in the top hat. The man with the big whip. The red hunting jacket and the twirling moustache held to power to hire and fire them at any point along the circuit. He wrote that into every contract.

Their community had unwritten rules. The first one was that the ringmaster controlled more than the money. He controlled the ability to make money. He controlled where you appeared in the show or if you appeared in the show. He was king of the Ring and the ring was everything. It was the light and outside of the ring there was a darkness that no performer could abide. He was Captain of the Ship and in certain cases the Governor of the prison.

The second unwritten rule was that Donna his daughter was his and his alone. There were no special friendships, no choice of partners among the circus folk, no tolerance of a look or a touch that might signal warmth or affection, let alone lust or love.

Hell is a place without hope. Because she was not a performer 16 year old Donna had to stand in her father's shadow, In the darkness that his spotlight brilliance cast, unseen and worse deliberately ignored. The only friends she could have were the animals. The performing dogs and monkeys, the cavorting ponies and the lumbering elephants, the snarling lions and tigers.

There was one old, scarred tigress called Sheba that her father despised. Donna was sure that Sheba was arthritic and would soon be unable to perform. Her mother Angelina had been a lion tamer before she married the Great Bombalino and Sheba was one of the last of her trained cats.

Donna often caught her father looking at the big cat as she chewed down her meat. He would sigh and complain about the cost. But it wasn't about the cost of the meat. It was the memory of when Angelina

put her head in the lion's mouth and that fire cracker had gone off from a child in the front row. The Great Bombalino never recovered from the accident. But another voice inside Donna's head asked. What makes you think it was an accident. Sheba had attacked the lion right there and then and tried to save Angelina but it was too late. The Lion was destroyed and another big Cat trainer was employed.

That was ten years ago now. Now at sixteen Donna understood the fate her mother had avoided. The drinking, the tirades, the violence, the apologies. The repetition. So it was that everyone knew what Bombalino was doing. Everyone knew and said nothing.

It was the last night in Berlin. The prancing Lippanzers had just exited the ring when Donna opened the big Cats tunnel and entered the cage behind her father's back. He turned and saw her stare at him. She shouted tell them what you are doing, tell them what you are making me do. The great Bombalino laughed. She stood aside and Sheba loped into the ring. "Tell them" she screamed again." He raised his whip and cracked it. Donna laughed and ran towards him so he couldn't whip Sheba. He struck her full in the face with the butt of his whip and the crowd booed . Just then a pistol shot rang out and Sheba leapt and Bombalino rolled on the floor of the Ring as the creature killed him. Donna smiled and petted Sheba. Good girl.

Magic in the Glass

Greg Fields

Willie Meadows began his day with stretching. It was a way he had of throwing off the night, dismantling its constraints and telling himself that he stood tall enough to face whatever came his way.

He'd begin in the doorway to his bedroom, reaching to the top of the door frame there and bringing his weight down gradually until the muscles in his back lengthened and his ribs expanded and, in the end, his lungs filled with the air he needed to get along. Then to the simple movements that brought himself together – a few sit-ups, a handful of push-ups and arching his back to throw his hips skyward from the hard floor. To the day then, loose, ready and essentially Willie.

The mornings were the same for him, and he relished the routine. No matter how tattered his days might be, the mornings always began fresh, filled with the sense of possibility rather than obligation.

And when the days beat down those possibilities by overwhelming him with obligations, he could at least balance his frustrations and disappointments and annoyances with the sense of self his morning rituals imbued.

To the office, then, and the work that lay at hand. Willie reported the news. He wrote the stories from the city desk, wrote the stories of a city he had come to know intimately, street by street.

He knew the best neighbourhoods – Georgetown and Adams Morgan, Massachusetts Avenue with its embassies, the sweeping condominiums along the river – but they tended to bore him. Not much there other than white collar crime, the occasional affair that misfired and led to violence, perhaps a government official who pulled one too many strings. Run of the mill stuff, really.

No, it was the other parts, the city's nether regions, that fascinated him most. Northeast, the stretch along New York Avenue that ran through the old parts of the city where the working people lived, and Southeast, along the Anacostia, some of the roughest territory he had seen in any city. These were where the stories lay, sometimes close to the surface

and sometimes hidden behind a shield of distrust, a notion that anyone not of these neighbourhoods might be as alien as a creature from the moons of Jupiter.

Willie relished the work, and at the end of the day, when the jagged edges of jagged stories punctured the linings of his psyche and sent forth the pricks and needles of sorrow or pity, Willie relished his release from it. He had the places where he might stop for a drink, ostensibly to relax but at the same time ready to hear a potential story hidden in a passing remark or an overheard conversation.

A reporter never really is off duty, he told himself, even with a drink in his hand. Maybe especially then when the world around him relaxes and lets down its guard.

And so on a particular night in August Willie Meadows drank his drink at a neighbourhood bar not far from his apartment in the Northwest. A simple place, with simple people.

His obsession with Carrie has come to a crashing halt. She had not wanted him, certainly not to the extent that he wanted her. In the days since he managed to gather himself again, to patch the wound and to re-enter the places where he might find some temporary solace. There were women in these places, and Willie would watch them, confining himself to his fantasies and maintaining his privacy.

He gestured to the bartender as he sipped the last of his scotch. "A refill when you get a chance," and when the second drink appeared he lifted it up to his lips with a nod to the man who had brought it to him.

"A magic potion," he said with a smile. "The things the Johnnie Walker can do,"

The bartender nodded his head. "Does all kinds of things. Makes you bold. Makes some people wise."

"It's amazing how profound I can be after a couple of these," Willie said. "I become a bleedin' genius, and a marvellous philosopher. And it makes you forget things, too." He sipped again. "That, my friend, might be the highest realm of its magic."

When he finished the drink he settled the tab, tapped the bar with his knuckles and told the bartender that he would see him again soon. He would. These days needed their closure, just as they needed the stretching that opened them up.

As he left the bar he took note of two young women at a small table near the door. One looked up at him as he walked by, and he detected a smile. A hint? An invitation to be bold? The one who smiled looked a bit like Carrie. She had the same fall of blond hair that tucked behind her ears, and her eyes were blue.

Willie Meadows passed them by and opened the door to the street.

Back home, then, to what he knew best, to the peace of his own space, and the time to rest up to do it all again.

Answered Prayer

Michael O'Brien

This was it; he was going to do it, he sat at the table and opened the laptop, ready. He felt like he was about to enter the codes of a nuclear weapon, which of course is what this was. The information he was about to impart was going to be devastating to the person who received it.

He was nervous and took a deep breath, but there was something else, guilt. The message he was about to send was the truth and the information in it was correct. The problem was his intention, his motive, he disliked the person he was sending it to and the thought that this message would be hurtful to them pleased him. But as he got older and more ill, he was beginning to see the importance of intention, he was praying more and asking for forgiveness. He had become aware that he could say he was sorry, even fake the expression, but at his age the stakes were higher, and the game was deeper, the priest had told him all that was required was true repentance and the only way you felt this was through compassion and empathy, by feeling the effect of your action on the victim.

When he was a younger healthier man he could have justified this to himself and he would have sent this message like a right hook to the chin, but the thought of his own death had gentled him, his frailty had made him more sensitive. He was conflicted, he desperately wanted to tell this person the truth and when he remembered some of the wrongs they had done him and the hurt they caused, he got angry and his finger hovered over the send button.

He then began to do something that years ago would have been alien to him but lately had become more normal, he prayed. He received nothing that looked like a sign, so he went to press the send button and as he did the internet connection went down.

He looked to the heavens and smiled, had his prayer been at least heard and acknowledged, he was finding that the more he invoked this higher, whatever it was, the more unexplained little things were happening. He

hummed a little tune to himself, “Strange days indeed, most peculiar Momma”.

He then deleted the message and was not surprised to see the internet signal return.

Trip

David Walsh

Kevin recently broke up with his Chinese girlfriend and he had arranged this Amsterdam trip with Raksha and me. Raksha was beyond description beautiful, her eyes haunted the attention of every man. I was decent looking but her beauty was inescapable. Every room heightened in heat at her entrance, every idiot's braying intensified and I've seen my uncle's stories become more boastful. Silences and jealousy were more vicious at every encounter I brought her to.

Kevin had played an old song obnoxiously on his phone "crush a bit, little bit, roll it up, take a hit".

Kevin had been my friend 15 years ago. I met him again when I recently joined the same accounting firm. I thought I held no illusions about him in my head, prone to violent exhibitionism and cutting remarks, I encouraged the good and gaslighted the bad out of my head.

After the first café, I was worried about Raksha. Her eyes were watchful but she swayed her head with the music and when I looked at her she'd grin wolfishly.

"So let's cut the tension, redlight district in an hour? I mean a threesome is just what the doctor ordered for you Mark." Kevin dropped.

"Here I would suggest a couple of shots for your liquid courage to feed your Asian fetish but let's keep it real, no one wants to see your minuscule whiskey dick" I tried respond coolly, above simmering.

"Motion of the ocean, only up and downs in life are between the sheets and I saw our hostel, I booked cabins solely for personal use from redlights to 4 a.m. Then you can sleep." Kevin was inexhaustible.

"Really? You said redlight in an hour. So that's 9pm, since you probably last 42 seconds, that gives you what 6 and half hours to convince a prostitute to sleep with you?" my girlfriend spoke.

“Hear, hear, this your real personality when the weed kicks in? I knew there was a reason you’re with Mark. This smoke visage is your personality finally clear” Kevin.

I was getting a headache, my brother had got very sick from smoking weed and I was uneasy as I tried sipping my beer.

“Red light district for clandestine reasons for Kevin. Tourism with humanity’s despair for us.” I motioned for the bill and began the next stage of our trip.

We drank a bit, chatted to some Irish people and laughed our horrid scars. It’s an open invite for emotionless sex. and the breeding idea of the exotic bearing such depravity that ordinary didn’t cover their banal depression.

“You won’t believe it guys, I was talking to this Aussie guy, and he’s actually a magician.” Kevin spoke to us two.

“Why could he not find your cock in his ass? I told you to bring a magnifying glass” I spoke.

“No he’s got a magic potion, just need your consent, you game Mark? Are you really going to go to weed capital of Europe and drink Mi Wadi at a rave?” Kevin spun out.

“I hope you know what consent means and not the redlight version” I said.

“Magic potion?? What do you mean.” Raksha spoke, eyes were on her, and the club teemed with heat to get to know her each man tried to catch her eye and her chin swung up open the adventure of the world.

“Come here you too, double shot of absinthe on fucking fire for my best friend Mark, and a polite decanter of absinthe, one shot each for Raksha and I.”

The barman bored, spun the bottles, spilled some 60% absinthe on the counter, casually lit it and performed an exorcism of tricks my drunk mind could follow not, and I drank. I poured the drink down, I tried to

inhale it, and it tried chugging back out of my stomach. I bit my tongue and determined not to be the weaker man. My memory fled me then.

I woke turned to the wall, my stomach burning my nostrils feeling the heat of the pool of purple chalky liquid right beside my nose. My head didn't hurt, I violated my soul and banged with poison.

I braced myself and began to wonder about Raksha so I leaned my hand back to try to grab her. I caught air. I turned over after a minute curious as to what horror would exist for me to discover. I laugh sometimes when I recollect, my innocence, my naivety, I thought a bad event would be a lost wallet, more prosaic vomit, or maybe a helpless tourist regretting her choice in a bed.

Raksha's perfect athletic bum was turned to me, with a condom hanging out of her pussy, cum dripping onto the bed and her leg wrapped on Kevin.

I was confused but my gut spelled something out - what makes you think it was an accident?

What makes you think it was an accident.

Mark L'estrange

They didn't know what to do because they were airborne, the Super tried to radio the army

to see what they suggest, the soldier got on the phone and asked. "What's the problem?"

He explained everything that was happening they were reluctant to send the fighter jets up

to join them because they knew the Mexican authority's where all over this, he said "Sit

tight for a few minutes and I will get back to you." "I wouldn't leave it too long or you won't

catch these guys."

Then the phone cut off and Paddy said, "I'm sure that was an accident." "What makes you

think it was an accident." "It's the army they would hardly hang up on purpose would they?"

"Don't know he doesn't seem bothered." They didn't hear from them again. "What shall we

do now?" asked Paddy. "Nothing we can do really, suppose we should just head back

home."

"I like the sounds of that I'm wrecked. They were about to head home when they heard the

sound of two fighter jets fly past them, Paddy said. "Told you it was an accident them

hanging up." "Ok you were right I should have warned them what they were dealing with."

The word had just left his mouth when the hole place went into darkness again Paddy said

“That was weird hope the lads in the army are ok” Then they heard a big crash like plains

hitting the sea.

The Supers phone went again it was the officer he was talking to earlier.

“We have just lost

our two jets” “Oh no are the people in the plane ok?” “yes thankfully they were able to eject

from the seats before they hit the water.” “Thank god for that did you get them out of the

water ok?” “Yes are rescue team are on their way, what on earth are we dealing with, with

these guys?” “Don’t know but I am sure going to get to the bottom of this.”

To be continued.

Sharp Awakening?

Max McCoubrey

My mother was placing her rosary beads back in her apron pocket as she watched my tears flow.

'I prayed for years for this moment, the day you would wake up, this is fate!' 'Rent is dead money' was always her favourite mantra to me. I had told her many times I wanted to rent, not buy a home because I had no intention of setting down roots here. I figured there was so much more to do before warming my slippers by the fire. She would smile inwardly and tell me that one day I would see the bigger picture. 'What's keeping you?'

Love... that was what was keeping me; it took the form of a tall handsome sweet talking guy and his words spoken with a silver tongue in the beachside home owned by his parents where we lived in bliss. I mean how could I explain that to my Mum? She talked about planning for the future and all I wanted to do was be hedonistic and live for today. The sea slapping against the fence, was part of that magic plan. It was the perfect venue for parties, picnics and the great life of a travelling troubadour we both enjoyed.

So, I ignored Mam's input and she continued to turn the rosary around day and night and pray for as she called it, 'the perfect outcome' when anyone talked about me.

Until the day, when my dream lover came home one day and told me his new girlfriend was moving in with us, or I could move out, but either way she was the new truth.

I went crying to Mum.

'What can I do?' I asked between sobs. 'I have nowhere to live, and I ain't living with those two, that's for sure'

'Go forward' she said and let the silence hang.

'I prayed you'd wake up and you did, this is the good news'

She placed ingredients for hot cross buns on the kitchen table and allowed me some space as she worked. She knew the aroma of them

baking always took me back to a happy place. When the scones were made cut and placed on a floured tray in a hot oven, she broke the silence.

'What have you learned?' she said noticing I was looking at my savings and downloading a form requesting a mortgage'

I suddenly realised that's what I should have done decades ago.

'Have you learned anything?' She repeated checking the temperature of the hot tap and preparing to wash the basin. Cutter and jug she had used for the scones.

She reached for a towel.

'...Anything at all?'

'Yes!' I said sourly 'Never again will I put all my eggs in one bastard'