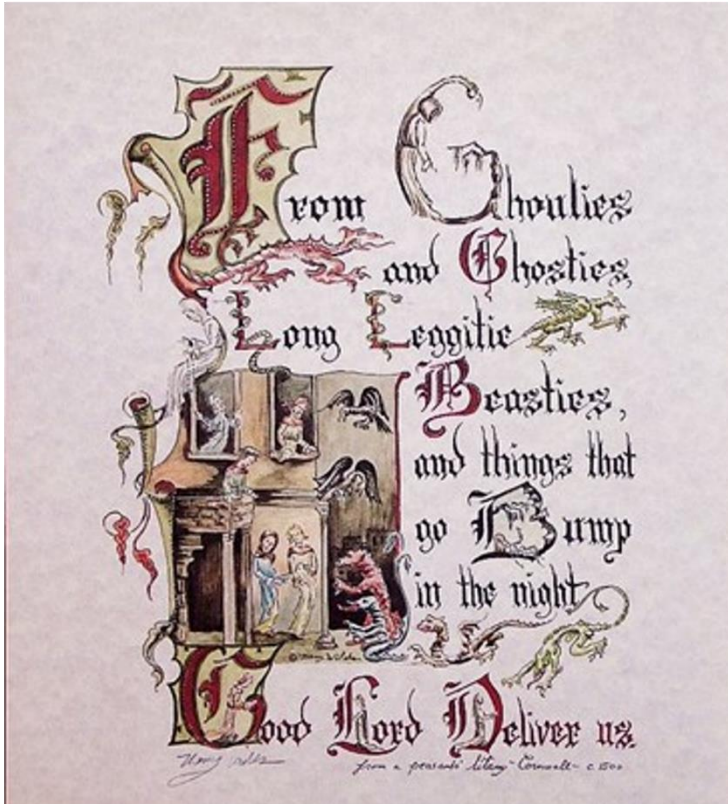


Scary Stories 2023



The Inkslingers

Contents

Dark Roots	Catriona Murphy 3
The Knock Upon The Door	Stephen Brady 10
Poltergeist	Deirdre Powell 14
A Holy Night?	Shea Walsh 16
A Little More than Kindle and Less than Kind	Eva Creeley 18
All Things Point Home in October	Greg Fields 21
An all expenses paid trip to Dublin for Halloween	Brendan Palmer 24
Cutting Waves	Gerard Byrne 30
Strange Lady	Ciaran O’Melia 39
Hecate	Elaine Reardon 41
Killing Time	Fergal Canton 42
Midnight Shenanigans	Angelina Kelly 46
Monster BFF’s	Katie Keeley 48
Scary Story	Mark L’estrage 50
She was a Friend of a Friend	Clíodhna Joyce-Daly.. 54
Tweedle Dee and that again...	Bridin Mary Harnett.. 60
Spider Writing	Paula Sweeney 64



Dark Roots

Catriona Murphy

Tara stared at the self-help posters plastered on the opposite wall.

A collage of stock photos mashed together.

One showed a woman with her hands in her hair, another a young man looking forlorn in a football field and an elderly couple holding hands and smiling.

Captions read, 'Feeling down?' and 'Is school stressing you out?'

It was her twice weekly checkup that had her seated outside doctor Gary's office at lunch time.

The faces in the walls came and went. Her mother's discerning frown, her brother's wide and innocent eyes, her grandmother's squint.

She dug her nails into her arm.

Stay rooted in reality. Feel the pain. Nothing what you see is real.

But they were in the ceiling now, breaking through like an unborn breaking the sac upon birth. Limbs were pushing and stretching the fabric of reality up there. An arm here, a leg there. All testing the ceiling's limits. One arm stretched so far down that she could see right up to the shoulder.

It was silent. No noise came from all this struggle.

She popped another Thorazine into her mouth.

Being black in modern day Ireland was challenging enough without seeing body parts coming through the walls. It was like glimpsing a flash of something in the washing machine that shouldn't be there.

It happened when her brother disappeared.

Small things at first.

She'd see shadows leaping in the corners of her eyes. Hear her mother calling her even though she was in a coma.

Then questioning reality. What happened when we died? Was any of her experience real?

She'd spent too many nights staring at videos on YouTube, watching guys talk about 'breaking out of the matrix' and that we lived on a 'prison planet'. One that stood out was the universe being a hologram.

Her grief mixed with the growing despair that life was terrifying, and a spiral started that would last a decade.

She tried an Ayahuasca trip once, to see the 'other side'.

She met an intergalactic being who proclaimed himself to be a 'Venetian' and told her she came from an ancient royal bloodline, back when the First People of Africa reigned much of the continent.

In her last life, she was an Asian soldier, fighting in a civil war and depending on how her current life went, she may be reincarnated back into Earth to learn the lesson of being at home with oneself.

She came out of her drug-induced stupor screaming, and one of the facilitators, some meditation teacher from the UK with a weird moustache named Ben, had to escort her out.

The trip only heightened her neurosis and shortly after that, she admitted herself into hospital.

Gary saw her after five minutes, ticking some boxes on a clipboard, and she was then left to the rest of her afternoon schedule.

'How are you?' Gretta, her therapist asked. 'Gary said the hallucinations have been receding.'

'A little,' Tara replied, twisting her mother's bracelet on her wrist. It was a traditional African knot. 'I still see them coming out of the walls, but he increased my dosage on the antipsychotics. He'll keep me on that for about four weeks and see how I do.'

The therapy room was south facing with neutral colours.

A rug, a buddha statue beside the fireplace and two armchairs were the only features. The clinic had a strict policy on simple decor.

Gretta nodded. 'And existentialism? Do you still feel...lost?'

We all feel lost.

'Sometimes, not as frequent.'

'And the nightmares? With your mother?'

Tara studied a painting over Gretta's head. It was of a lone woman facing a tempest, standing in a white dress. Her back faced the viewer and before her were swirls of blacks, greys and whites; a dark storm. The winds began to move in the painting, and her hair and dress started to toss.

'The same.'

Yoga was in the greenhouse that afternoon. A botanical haven designed to enhance wellbeing through connection with nature. The glorious biosphere hosted yoga, meditation, sound baths and group therapy.

Tara was flexible, and enjoyed the stability of mind the practice gave her.

'Touch your inner femininity, your inner healer,' Priscilla, the teacher breathed.

'Be the woman who runs with the wolves, let the wild woman guide you.

Unleash your inner force.'

Stretching down into a downward facing dog, Tara exhaled.

The air swam with droplets from the sprinklers that were set off earlier, adding to the incubated heat that Tara thought would make her snap.

It seemed to aggravate her perspiration.

'No room for Ballymun class,' one Dublin four girl whispered, two rows back.

Edel.

A high class snob born and bred for bullying and being a bitch.

Tara didn't know much about her but didn't need to, to stay away from the human virus.

A rattle came from her right. A shaking of the instrument that made her turn her head to stare deep into the greenery.

It intensified and she thought she heard a man singing words she couldn't understand. It reminded her of a TV show where a blonde, bright-talking anthropologist visited a tribe who're celebrating the end of harvest. A man danced nude to showcase his fertility.

Through the vines and exotic flowers ranging from Devil's Thorn to Flame Lilies, was something moving.

As her eyes adjusted to the depths she was gazing through, she saw Popobawa, standing in front of a large tree. The demon took the form of man; an African albino in a bloodied loincloth. His egg white eyes stared at her.

A harsh, pungent scent gusted, and she was taken back to Madagascar on a family trip when she was eight.

The man's singing became manic, the notes jabbing high, and Tara couldn't breathe.

Behind the eunuch the tree stirred, moving slow as though it were a large creature waking. The creaking, the straining, lengthened in her head as if it had been happening for hours.

The man stared. The tree moved. And Tara screamed.

It took two men to sedate her.

Another appointment at Gary's office, and she was sent to the orb room for relaxation.

The orb room resembled a futuristic spa.

Inside was round with plastic smooth walls that glowed a soft purple - her favourite colour. Her programme was engaged and her music of choice - Bach - began to softly echo in the space.

Projections on the wall showed childhood pictures; her great grandmother standing in full ritual costume with an ostrich headdress outside her village of Babyle, near Antsiranana. Her father in full uniform at the army base.

Tara ignored it and sat down, facing the opposite wall. She twisted her nose stud, staring into space.

She spent the hour doing a full body scan meditation, finding it grounded her and pulled her from the abysmal depths of her mind, resulting in a more balanced and stable temper.

Tara spent dinner ignoring Edel and her Dublin four posse whispering to each other at another table. She never considered herself psychic but she could see their futures - married by twenty five to some rugby stud or white collar dude. Children, book clubs and liquid lunches. Pretending they don't see their husband's second phone and believe their bullshit about 'working late' - there's only so many times the agency has a 'big selling presentation' to deliver in the morning.

No stranger to classism, Tara sipped her tomato soup and tried to unsee the leg dangling from the ceiling.

She passed Grace, a gifted girl of fifteen from Dalkey, drawing furiously. The girl looked up with her mousy-cute face, and smiled. Her huge brown eyes swallowed Tara.

Tara looked down to see a tree holding a corpse in its branches, vines wrapped around an African native. The man's face petrified with horror at his inevitable, oncoming end.

Tara's breath caught, and Grace's smile grew wider.

She rushed to her room and would have closed the door but rules were they closed only at bedtime. A bookcase lined one wall, and a desk with family photos from when they lived in their council home in Ballymun.

She moved to Ireland when she was five, after her father broke a deal with a smuggler to cross the Alboran Sea into Spain. From there, they arrived in Dublin with ten suitcases. A little later that day, they had a key for a hotel room where they lived for three years before being housed.

Before the paintings on the wall began to talk, before the car accident and her father prosecuted for smuggling in immigrants.

When the family key worker showed up at the house, eyeless, and muttering gibberish that the Gardai couldn't understand.

It was all over.

Her family disintegrated like the bones of the dead.

The books in Tara's room sprouted leaves and vines began interweaving between the spines until most of the case turned into a wall of ivy.

Tara backed another antipsychotic, sat down and ignored the festering growth as she produced some music on her laptop. Eminem and Snoop Dogg blasted through her headphones.

Ignore it, ignore it.

She took some Benadryl, and slept.

Tara dreamed, and saw she approached Ya-Te-Veo.

The tree sat like the crown jewel of the jungle.

Branches swung over its head like tentacles and she saw the woman go in, a sacrifice to the African god.

Chanting started from somewhere, natives hidden in the undergrowth, who watched Tara with expectation and interest.

She woke with a start and pressed her hand to her forehead, wiping at the perspiration.

It was just a dream.

A side effect to the new drug doctor Gary had prescribed her.

It was all too vivid, and the walls began to talk to her.

'Ashac, nuab de tei', they uttered.

She recalled her grandmother, Abeba, speaking Swahili to her as a child, and she loosely translated the words to mean, 'come home, come home'.

The clock showed after midnight, and she heard two nurses at the station at the end of her corridor gossiping about doctor Gary, going at it with the new intern. Their laughter made her jump and the words wouldn't stop.

'Ashac, nuab de tei'.

She knew if she screamed or hit the wall, that the staff would come running and jab her like some untamed animal.

She rose, slowly, as if sudden movement would cause the walls to rush in and ensnare her, and walked to the window.

The stars outside were rearranging.

They spelled those same words being uttered over and over.

A shiver ran through her malnourished body.

The tree was hungry, and it wanted her.

She could see her grandmother now, wiping her hands into the dust of ashes from the evening fire on Madagascar. She pressed both hands to her face, and then to Tara's.

'Cuac don achia sei,' she murmured.

Lift the curse, lift the curse, lift the curse.

Tara murmured it now, as the stars spun.

In the morning, Edel was gone.

They found leaves in her bed and the stench of branch rot in her room.

Popobawa drew near, and the tree was wild for her.

In the computer room, she booked flights using her grandmother's credit card after panic texting her that morning.

Her dark roots were festering in the deep earth, and the Great Mother called her home.

She packed a secret bag; stuffing as many antipsychotics as she could filch from the store room when the nurses had fled to Grace, who had swallowed her rubber again.

A new moon rose outside her window, peeking between the treetops.

Tara watched with anticipation.

She realised her missing brother had gone home too. She could feel him walking the Madagascarian wilderness amongst the baobabs and banana trees, waiting for her.

So much waited for her.

The Knock Upon The Door

Stephen Brady

Kevin was awake. Something had knocked upon his bedroom door.

It was sometime deep in the cold dead hours of the night. The house was dark and quiet. Past his bedtime, as his Mammy always said. Kevin had often wondered what brilliant and miraculous things occurred After His Bedtime. It was a mystical time of licence and surprises. But now, lying stiff with the cold darkness all around, he found that he very badly didn't want to know.

But what had woken him?

It had been a sound, a soft tap-tap-tapping at his door.

His Mammy would probably have said it was just his imagination. But he knew, as every child that lies petrified in bed and stares out into the after-midnight dark does, that there was something there.

And there was.

He could hear it! The thing that had tapped upon the door was still there, just on the other side of the painted wood. It was out there, and just like him, it was listening. He tried not to think, not to breathe, to will his heart to slow its beating. And then he heard it.

The thing on the other side of the door was breathing too. He could hear its ragged, slobbering respiration. Oh no, oh no! It breathed, and listened, it was alive, just like him.

And if the thing had tapped upon the door, then it must have... fingers. And if those fingers could tap upon a door, then those same fingers could also...

Poke.

And clutch.

And strangle.

The door burst open.

Kevin screamed and screamed and screamed, and yanked the bedsheet over his head. A hot presence invaded his room. He could glimpse its silhouette through the sheet, looming over his bed. Then the thing reached out, took hold of the sheet, and snatched it off him.]

"Kevin!"

It was his Mammy. She was in her nightgown and her hair was like a birdsnest and she was warm and fuzzy with sleep. But it was her.

He hugged her tight, and was ashamed in that moment of how he'd been wailing like a little kid, but it didn't matter now.

"Kevin, Kevin," went the timeless music of her voice. "That screaming. What on Earth is the matter? You'll wake the whole street!"

"Mammy, Mammy,"

"Ssssh, what? What's the matter?"

"S-something knocked on my door and it woke me up and I could hear it breathing and I thought it was going to come in and get me..."

"Hush now. You had a nightmare, that's all."

"No it was real it was there I h-h-heard it!"

"Come on, now. I thought you were a big boy."

"But-"

She pushed him away and held his face in her hands. Brushed away his tears with her hot, dry thumbs.

"Listen to me. You had a bad dream. That can happen to anybody, even to big boys. But that's all it was. Now you need to go back to sleep."

"Can I sleep in with you?"

"No, Kevvy. You're too old for that now."

"But the monster-"

"Hey!" Her sharp tone made him pause. "I want you to listen to me now. I'm going to make you a promise. You listening?"

He nodded.

"Nothing is going to come from outside the house and get you. That's a promise. Do you understand?"

"O-okay."

He wanted to believe it. But there had been a strange quality to her voice when she said those words. And there seemed, in the faint light of the streetlamp outside, to be a kind of glint in her eyes. It was almost as if she was... laughing at him?

"Now. Lie down and go to sleep. And in the morning it will all seem like a dream."

He lay back down, and she smoothed the blanket over him. Planted a single damp kiss on his forehead. Then she left the room, closing the door behind her with a quiet click.

He lay awake, heart pounding thick and slow in his chest. Her words hadn't reassured him and he might have thought they would. It was almost as if she'd been playing a part. Fooling him.

Could it even be...

His mind could barely form the word.

Lying?

No. No, that wasn't possible.

And then he reflected on what she'd said.

"Nothing is going to come from outside the house and get you."

That should have made him feel better, but it didn't. He mused for ages on the words.

And then he drew in a sharp breath, and his eyes bugged out into the dark.

"Nothing is going to come from outside the house and get you."

But what if it didn't come from outside the house?

What if it was already here?

The thought froze him stiff in his sheets, as the darkness all around him came alive with numinous horrific possibilities.

Two hours later he was sound asleep, the deep contented slumber of the tired child. His mother slept too, lying on her side, her breathing deep and even. It was still some hours until dawn, and in the silent house not a thing did stir.

Until a sound came suddenly from the attic.

It was a kind of scratching. Barely audible, but insistent.

The attic was a long, low chamber of vaulted wood. In the near-total darkness only shapes were apparent – old suitcases, stacks of newspapers, the skeletal frame of an ancient pram. And in that darkness, things were moving.

Bits of cloth and cardboard were sliding across the floor, drawn by an invisible hand. The newspapers unfurled, rising in a lurid dance. The sad detritus of the attic gathered, knit into a vaguely human shape. Trunk and limbs and long pallid cranium, old buttons attaching where the eyes should be.

The attic door popped open, and the ladder patiently unfolded to the hallway floor below. And it descended, a puppet-thing of scraps and oddments, like a

ghastly parody of something living. It clambered blindly down the ladder and shambled through the upstairs hallway. It passed the room where Kevin's Mammy slept the heedless sleep of the dead. It came to the door it wanted, and stopped.

A spectral limb unfurled. And a digit made of rotten wood uncurled itself and touched the surface of the door.

Tap.

Tap.

Tap.

It waited. Button eyes glinted blindly in the dark. A low sound drifted through the hallway, like ragged and slobbering breath.

And it waited.

Waited for the child to stir and wake, waited with the timeless patience of monsters.

The child moaned, submerged in a nightmare. The thing slumped at the bedroom door, poised to tap again. It could afford to wait all night.

Poltergeist

Deirdre Powell

I love New York in the fall. The buzz of the city with its inhabitants going about the daily grind is something that is forever ingrained in my psyche. Whether it is husbands buying flowers for their wives on their way home from work or young women enjoying a gossip over cappuccino, for me, New York has it all. I particularly like Central Park at this time of the year, and find the beautiful American Elm trees near 66th Street particularly engaging. To be honest, I wish that I had more time to enjoy the beauty of this park, but I have become so engaged in my work over the past five years that I often fail to see it.

You see, I work with the Secret Poltergeist Department at the New York Police Department (NYPD), which is located underground near 66th Street. As the nature of the work is top secret, the department is located underground so that we cannot be seen by members of the public. A lot of my time is taken with psychological profiling and forensic science, and it is not unusual to be deployed to the sewers to investigate mysterious noises and “happenings” underground. The department often receives notifications from the good folk of New York that unusual occurrences take place in the city. But, in general, – there is usually a good explanation for what has happened.

Take the case of an elderly lady called Mrs. Amber – she lived in an apartment above a run-down theatre on 42nd Street. She reported a loud noise to the NYPD that seemed to come from the depths of the ground but there was nothing visible to suggest the source of the noise and the little lady was concerned that a theatre ghost might have had something to do with it. The NYPD called us in and we were sent to investigate. The cause of the noise, was, in fact quite easily explained – a dog had become lost in the underground sewage system and the poor thing was howling and had to be rescued by us – it was fairly run-of-the-mill stuff.

As you can imagine, feelings tend to be heightened around the time of Halloween and the department is often inundated with requests for help. Our department sometimes feels like a modern-day version of the Ghost-Busters.

Last year, on Halloween night, we were deployed to a vacant house on the outskirts of the city where my boss, Jasper Hansen, had received reports of strange lights and eerie sounds coming from the building. A team of us were sent to the house and we brought our recording equipment and lights with us, together with other instruments of a top-secret nature that were used in these situations.

Jasper knocked on the door but there was no reply – this was as we expected. He broke down the door and, using our flashlights, we saw that there were spiders’ webs and dust in the hallway. Jasper crossed into a dark room and I

followed close behind him – the flash lights revealed that the presence of a table and four chairs that had seen better days. I noticed the presence of a sulphurous smell.

You could have cut the air with the silence. Presently, a sharp noise like a knife being whetted filled the air. My boss illuminated the area with his flashlight and in a commanding voice, boomed “I know you’re here. You may as well show yourself.” As he spoke, I switched on my recording equipment and got my instruments ready.

A yellow sulphurous vapour started to waft toward us and it began to take shape. As the seconds passed, I realized it had the form of a male child and it started to shriek and wail, as though he were in pain. We tried to use our ghost-busting vacuum to calm the spirit and to capture him but this was not successful. Although we tried other techniques, we were unable to either calm the spirit or to capture it.

Presently, I had an idea. “Perhaps, we should try something more Old-Timey,” I said, “something that my grandmother might have used.” My boss was interested, “And what’s that?” he asked. I told him that I had a bottle of blessed water with me as part of my equipment and that it could often be helpful. He wasn’t a believer in such things, but was willing to try it as everything else had failed.

I sprinkled the table and four chairs with the water and then blessed the rest of the room, making sure to bless the door lintel and the window. As I did so, the yellow form first let out a shriek and gradually started to fade away. When the ghost was gone, the lights in the house flashed on suddenly and we were able to see each other clearly again.

We packed up our equipment and departed in silence – another case successfully closed.

A Holy Night?

Shea Walsh

Tiger, tiger,
Burning bright
In the forest
Of the night
Lord Byron wasn't thinking of
Temple Bar in Dublin
When he wrote that
Tigers are there and witches with
Inflatable male dolls
Instead of brooms
Another way to fly?
Conan the barbarian
Battling a hangover
Not someone you want to meet
Nuns in micro skirts to be admired
Having the faith to dress
That way in October
Accompanied by a group
Of well fed buxom Bunnies
Skirts bursting at the seams
Topsy belly dancers
With questionable rhythm
Mickey and Minnie mouse
Chased by tightly wound
Pussy cats
A Moo Cow
How do they decide who?
Gets in the back
Who would go darkly into this night?
Monsters Miss Piggy
Where is Kermit?
Dracula and Frankenstein
Arm in arm singing
Will you be my Valentine?
While they dance macabre
Leprechauns' Fairies Pucas
Refugees from St Patrick's Day
Pub crawler bikes
Powered by alcohol
There is Satan gleefully

Making a mental list
While the Pope in the corner is
Getting hit and missed

A Little More than Kindle and Less than Kind

Eva Creeley

Janice was quietly proud of the content on her Kindle. Not that she was one to boast. But if she was to be found dead with her Kindle in hand- which was not unlikely since she read it night and morning- she was sure that those who might peruse her reading content would be way impressed, not least by the number of years that had gone into the accumulation of titles.

For Janice was also proud of being an early adaptor, she had been the first in her Book Club to get a Kindle and her uploaded tomes included all the big hitters from Impac and Booker lists for more than 15 years as well as the usual classics. The honour roll began with Adichie, and continued through Banville, Burns, Dickens, Doyle, Evaristo, Mc Ewanand ran all the way through to Zola. Not to mention the works by some of these writers' alter egos such as Benjamin Black and Robert Galbraith. She did not grudge the space taken up by these which she felt reflected her lighter self.

What was not included though were the trashy pulp bodice rippers and regency romances that seemed to attract her fingers whenever she went online to shop on Amazon. It wasn't entirely her fault. Every time she did a search, messages would pop up 'Because you have been reading similar content' as well as 'Other titles by the same author'. And so, she would be sucked in again by another tale of female seduction by an attractive rake. All leading to the same conclusion – Happy Ever After.

If only life imitated art! Janice knew only too well that it didn't, with a divorce and several broken romances behind her. As soon as she read these tales of seduction and bliss, she deleted them determined to maintain literary standards that would not embarrass her in front of members of the Book Club. They were not likely to be impressed by anything less than titles from long or short lists for literary awards.

So Janice was surprised, as she opened her Kindle and went on Amazon to search for something to suggest for the October Book Club meeting that she would be hosting, to discover that the oddest of titles were popping up. They were all by authors she had never heard of: Ben Stokes, Steven Queen, Máire Seilidhe, etc. Their titles she could not make head nor tail of: 'Implaculum', 'Clowning', 'Frankly My Dear'.

She tried searching using the names of authors she knew had been published and were well known but all that came up was the message 'Currently Unavailable' and it would revert to the Kindle Home page with a further message 'Application Error. Unable to process your request. Please try again later'.

She checked everything- her Internet connection, that her kindle was charged up. Nothing made any difference. As the date of the Book Club approached, she gave in and clicked on one of the suggested titles 'Frankly My Dear' expecting perhaps something romantic. She was gobsmacked to see that although it was recommended it would not be available til Oct 31st, too late for her Book Club on that night. The members had decided to keep to their usual routine in spite of the date- they weren't involved in any of that dressing up or carry on. She tried the other recommended titles – all were the same – publication date 31st Oct. What was going on? Why was her Kindle turning against her? She had always relied on it to provide suggested literary titles for the Book Club that had given her a bit of a reputation as a serious reader. Now she had nothing to recommend.

In desperation on the 30th she decided to give it one last go. This time there was another recommended Title: 'Riders to the Sea'. Wasn't that by Synge? A bit old hat perhaps but at least a literary classic. She quickly clicked and saw that at least it was available and shared the link with the members of the Book Club with the message, 'See you tomorrow evening to discuss 'The Seven Moons of Malia Almeida' as agreed last month. Am suggesting we read 'Riders to the Sea' for the next one. Let me know what you think tomorrow night'.

Janice focused on getting things ready for the meeting. She printed out Book Club questions for the book to be discussed 'The Seven Moons'. Yes, she would give a nod to the date by having a barm brack as well as the usual wine and cheese. That was only acknowledging tradition, surely there was nothing 'infra did' about that? And at least she had a suggestion to recommend for the next month

The members arrived on time and she led the discussion for a good hour. Then as usual she called a break for refreshments. It was then she noticed some strange looks passing between the members.

She decided to jump in, 'Well, I just thought we would have the Barm Brack for the day that's in it. It's a bit of national tradition after all. I think the author of Riders to the Sea would approve as a great admirer of the old ways'. 'Hmph' snorted Betty Curran, who had originally invited Janice to join the Book Club, 'If Riders to the Sea is an example of tradition or the old ways then its something we can do without'. And with that she slammed down her glass of wine and left. Some others looked at each other and began to shuffle their feet. Surely they were not going to bunk out on her? One after another they made flimsy excuses. 'Maybe it would be better to head home early tonight'. 'There are a lot of fireworks going off'.

Janice could hardly believe what she was hearing. This was the Book club that met every month, no matter what, and expected the members to have a critical

discussion of serious authors. Cathy was the last to leave, and she said almost apologetically, 'It's a shame Janice. The brack was delicious. No one could blame you for that. It was a nice touch. But, that recommendation for next month!' And giving a theatrical head shake she left.

Janice was stunned. What was after happening? She picked up her Kindle and searched for the title she had recommended. Clicking on the 'more information' tab about 'Riders to the Sea' she read 'Sizzling new bonkbuster from J M Sing. Yes, based on your previous selections, Jane Mary has managed to include some of the raunchiest activities known to man (or woman), in this tale set on a secluded island where the monthly Book Club is where it all hangs out.' And with that the text on the screen faded and the image of an old crone appeared and winked knowingly.

Janice smashed the Kindle against the wall, grabbed the bottle of wine and vowed to never open a book again.

All Things Point Home in October

Greg Fields

Donal Mannion opened the new bottle and poured himself a measure. The light brown of the pour flowed over the ice, then Donal raised it to his nose and sniffed gently. He liked the scent of newly found scotch, the brusqueness of it, the smell of the earth. The aroma was the first step toward forgetfulness. He took the glass with him to his favorite chair, the one next to the small window that overlooked the tatty, dark street down which papers blew and equally tatty men hung out in doorways.

When the cancer came, Donal fell back into his old ways. He had not been terribly surprised by the diagnosis. He knew something was wrong, as it was bound to be. It may as well have been cancer as anything else. And pancreatic cancer at that. At least there'd be no extended suffering.

He had rejected the treatments, those spells and jolts and elixirs that might bring about a few more months, maybe even just a few more weeks. No chemotherapy, no radiation.

"There are great things being done now, Donal. Great new ways to fight this that might buy you more time. To do the things you've wanted to do and never had the chance. Maybe to tidy things up a bit."

"I've no need for that," Donal said with a wave of his hand. He looked the doctor fully in the eye. "I'll die the way I've lived. With a glass of scotch in my hand and a curse for God on my lips."

In the ensuing days he had grown weaker, and the pain had become more devilish. He flooded his days with sleep and morphine, feeble weapons to be sure, but the best he had. Slowly he felt himself drawing down. The doctor had told him that, when it got bad enough, he would refer him to hospice care, the thought of which left him cold, the notion of pills he didn't need, amusements he couldn't stand and nurses fawning over his every move and comfort. Donal Mannion wanted to die at home.

And so on a night in late October Donal sat with his pain and his scotch, both of which overwhelmed him. He closed his eyes and slept dreamlessly for a time, dozing into the evening quiet around him.

He slept, then he woke, a startled shake into consciousness. It was the sound of the chair adjacent, the old wooden one, creaking with a new weight, or so it seemed. His eyes opened in a soft haze, a fog that shrouded the room and blurred what was in it.

"I hope you don't mind, Donal. I let myself in." Across the way, emerging from the blur and leaning back leisurely in the old wooden chair, Matthew Cooney smiled at his old friend.

Donal squinted and blinked, and his eyes watered with the effort. "Cooney? No. NoNoNo."

But Cooney laughed and clapped his hands. "I always was able to surprise you, Donal. You never knew what was coming when we were together, did you? All the mischief when we were boys. The games and the fights and the pranks. The girls we chased. The ones we caught and the ones that got away. Great fun it was, wasn't it, Donal? And here we are again."

"You're not here, Matty. You died three months ago. I carried you into the hospital. Your blood ruined the backseat of my cab."

"Ah, just another game, Donal. Just another prank. I'm here now, as real as you are, don't you know."

Donal leaned back and drank down his scotch. As he raised the glass to his lips, he noticed the trembling of his hand, and a sharp stab down his spine. He lowered the glass and looked again at the chair across the way, where Cooney still sat, smiling softly.

"Why are you here, Matty? If you really are."

"Just dropping in on an old friend. That's all." He paused then, and shook his head. "We ran together as boys, Donal. Then we lost our way. Both of us. And the years were not kind. They were perhaps a bit rougher for me, living on the streets as I did, but they did you no favors, either. You lost love that I never knew. You never found a purpose. You never found a home. You were as empty as I was all those years, just a bit more comfortable.

"So, when I saw you that day," he went on. "When I dropped into the back seat of your cab in the process of bleeding myself to death, I was amazed. An old friend, someone I knew, but it was like looking into a mirror. It seems we did everything together, Donal. Everything parallel, even when we spent years apart. It all became clear to me as soon as I glanced at your license and saw the name. Finally, a moment of clarity. Too bad it came at the end of it all."

Donal said nothing. He sat motionless, staring at Matthew Cooney. On the far side of the room, a clock ticked away the minutes, a sound Donal had never before noticed.

"So here I am, Donal. Paying a visit to an old friend."

"And what's the purpose of the visit, Matty?" Donal's voice came as slightly more than a whisper. "More than just reminiscing about our young days."

Cooney leaned forward and reached across the space to lay a hand on Donal's knee. "Might be time for you to leave, Donal. That's all."

Donal leaned his head back and closed his eyes. The familiar warmth of the scotch gave him comfort. He brought his head forward again, opened his eyes and regarded his friend once more. Then he broke into a grin. "So, what's it like on the other side, Matty?"

"Ah, do you remember all the rot that Father Lemmon tried to teach us when we were boys? The angels and the harps and St. Peter at the gate and Jesus with the lambs? Remember that? It's all tripe, Donal. All garbage. No angels. No choruses of Hallelujah or eternal pure blue skies. I've yet to meet Jesus, although he might be busy with others more worthy of his time.

"But it's better than all this, I can tell you that," and Cooney swept his arm across the room. "And it's better than sleeping on a heating vent in a dirty storefront. We create our own heaven, Donal. It's what you want it to be."

Donal turned and looked out the window. He thought quietly, and said nothing.

Cooney spoke again. "You can come along now if you want. It's up to you, Donal. But even if you don't, you'll be seeing me again soon enough. But it's really up to you."

Donal Mannion's now quiet thoughts recalled something he read years ago, a passage written by Thomas Wolfe - "All things on earth point home in old October; sailors to sea, travellers to walls and fences, hunters to field and hollow and the long voice of the hounds, the lover to the love he has forsaken."

He rose from his chair then and smiled down at Matthew Cooney. "Come on, Matty. There's a bottle of Johnnie Walker in the cupboard. Let's drink together one last time. To what was once Matty and Donal. Then let's get on with it."

An all expenses paid trip to Dublin for Halloween

Brendan Palmer

Carla woke from a dream that had been so real, it felt like it had really happened. She could almost taste the Coors Light beer she had been drinking and smell the lingering scent of the guy she had been drinking with.

Normally her vivid dreams would fade as she came fully awake but this one was still like a real memory as she showered and dressed. She shivered a little at the name of the bar she had been drinking in, The Gravediggers. Completely unsettled by the fact that as far as she knew, she had never been in a bar called The Gravediggers. Was there even a bar called The Gravediggers in Dublin

Despite her busy day ahead, the dream haunted her until lunchtime. Sitting at Katzingers Deli in downtown Dublin, nibbling on an Ari's Open Door Pastrami sandwich and sipping a filter coffee, she began to wonder if she had been in a bar somewhere in Dublin with that name. Katzingers has a no Wi-Fi or social media policy, so she left her sandwich and took her coffee to go. Once outside, she searched for "Gravedigger's bar Dublin" but found nothing for Dublin, Ohio. However, Kavanagh's bar in Prospect Square, Dublin, Ireland was shown as also being known as The Gravediggers. Carla had never been to Ireland, so how could she have dreamt so vividly of a place she had never been to?

She went back to work thinking she would pop into The Dublin Village Tavern on the way home to see if old Jimmy the Barman would know of a Gravediggers Bar in Dublin, Ohio

She arrived at the Dublin village Tavern at five o'clock, just in time for the happy hour kick off. As is usual in an Irish bar the happy "hour" lasted from five to seven and the place was humming.

It was 10 minutes before she caught Jimmy's eye

"Hi Carla long time no see how have you been"

"Good Jimmy, busy at work as usual, not enough time for socialising"

"Nobody ever had *"I wish I spent more time in the office"* written on their headstone Carla, there's more to life than work you know"

"I know Jimmy, but a girl has to get on"

"Yeah well, you just be careful, believe me the time goes by real quick, what will you have?"

"Coors light Jimmy, please"

"There you go Carla good to see you again" He tapped the bar twice, signifying that it was on the House

It was 20 minutes before Jimmy was at her end of the bar again “will you go again Carla” he asked

“Yeah Jimmy sure, and I have a question for you”

“That sounds very serious” he said smiling as he uncapped the Coors Light

“Jimmy, I had a really strange dream last night so real I still feel like it really happened”

“Go on, lay it on me, dream analysis all part of your friendly barman’s box of tricks”

“Did you ever hear of a bar called The Gravedigger's here in Dublin?”

“Not this Dublin Carla, but here's a thing, the last bar I worked in in Ireland was Kavanagh’s on Prospect Square it’s also known as The Gravedigger's, how's that for a coincidence?”

“OK Jimmy let me describe what I saw, it's a real old bar, all old worn dark pine, bare wooden floors. The front part where I walked in had one table on the left with a few old guys sitting around and an old black Doug lying on the floor beside them, there was two more old guys sitting on stools at the bar, all drinking pints of Guinness. There was bat wing doors through to a bigger section, again all old wood and bare floors and that's where I was sitting with the guy I was drinking with in my dream.”

“So you've been on the Internet checking it out then” Jimmy said with a grin.

Carla opened her mouth to speak, hold that thought Carla, gotta look after other customers”

He was back in 10 minutes “go on tell me all”

“The thing is Jimmy, I did go online but the only thing it showed was a modern type of pub that served food, nothing like I saw in the dream”

“Jeez Carla, that's weird, because you have just described the old bar area of The Gravediggers to a T”

Carla just stared at him “back in a flash” he said and went along the bar serving other customers.

With the bottle of beer in her hand she swung around on the stool and surveyed the crowd and realised why it had been a long time since she had been in this bar. It was full of pretentious wannabe next big Internet success nerds and their airhead female hang around's. She turned back to the bar so that she would not catch the eye of some dumbass who she would have to tell to tell to fuck off.

Her phone beeped telling her there was a new Facebook post that she might be interested in. She opened Facebook and without having to scroll too far came

across a huge advertisement that said in very large letters, win an all expenses trip to Dublin Ireland for Halloween with United Airlines, all you need is to be over eighteen, have a valid passport, your address and a telephone number to text you if you're a winner, click here to enter.

"How fucking weird is that" she laughed to herself and clicked to enter. The entry form was simple, your name, your date of birth, your passport number, your telephone number and click here. She had all her personal details in a file on her phone so she filled in the details and pressed send

Jimmy arrived back in front of her and she shouted, "you have no idea what just happened Jimmy, I just entered a competition on Facebook for an all expenses paid trip to Dublin Ireland for Halloween how mad is that?"

Jimmy just looked at her for some seconds and said "if you win that prize Carla I would suggest that you do not go anywhere near The Gravediggers on Halloween"

"Why the hell not Jimmy"

"Because people disappear from that pub on Halloween night Carla"

"Get a life Jimmy, I don't believe in all that ghost and spirits and witches shit on Halloween"

"Well, I'm a bit of a sceptic too Carla but there have been strange disappearances of people who were drinking in that pub on Halloween who were never heard of again. There is a rumour that the High class private clinic in number thirteen on the other side of Prospect Square is a secret resting place for a Vampire, it might even be Dracula himself, controlling all the vampires sleeping in the Graveyard next door. It is said that he comes up from the cellar every year on Halloween to have his blood replaced. While it's only a rumour, the place is always closed on Halloween and November 1st."

"Go on Jimmy, you Irish are well known for your tall tales and anyway, what the chance of me winning that trip, there will be thousands of people entering the competition, time to go, I'll let you know if I win" She waved and left him looking after her, shaking his head.

On her way home she messaged a link to the competition to three of her friends. They all came back within minutes to say that the link didn't work. She went back to her Facebook page, it was still there so she sent a screen shot, they all came back asking her why she sent a blank screen shot to them. One of them messaged back that someone has obviously hacked her Facebook page and was messing with her head. She switched off her phone, deciding to get the tech guys in work to look at it the following day.

The hacking specialist Tech guy handed her back her phone at eleven am the following day, "Nothing there Carla, clean as a whistle, definitely no sign of anyone messing with your Facebook page"

"Thanks Doug, you're the best" she said, switching her phone on and logging in to Facebook, there was no sign of the competition. As she placed the phone on her desk, it lit up with a text in big letters saying "WINNER" click here.

The click through page said in flashing words "Congratulations you have won the all expenses paid trip to Dublin, you will receive your prize details and tickets within two days. `She wasn't sure if the feeling was dread or excitement

Two weeks later, Carla was sleeping on a United Airlines overnight flight from Chicago O'Hare to Dublin Ireland.

The flight landed at Terminal 2 at 10:04am the following morning. Waiting at the baggage carousel she switched on her phone. Checking for a service a message said, "You do not have a service on this phone in this location" Forty minutes later Carla walked through the arrivals exit door. Her anticipation and excitement levels, or was it anxiety, were higher than she had ever experienced. They notched up a level when she saw who was holding the passenger greet card with her name on it, it was the guy she had been drinking with in her dream.

"Hi Carla" he shouted, waving and smiling broadly, "My name is Tony, let me take your bag, the car is outside"

Outside, Carla almost laughed out loud when he opened the back door of the Maybach limo with blacked out windows.

Sitting inside as it whooshed out of the Airport, Tony spread his arms wide, "Welcome to Dublin Ireland Carla, I'll be your guide for the next two days. Today we will be taking it easy, we will get you checked into your hotel, you will have some hours to rest after your long flight and we will then visit the city to have dinner to give you a feel for the original Dublin, how does that sound?" Feeling slightly overwhelmed all Carla could do was nod as she said "yeah, that sound fine to me Tony"

Half an hour later she was in a small suite at the top of the Skylon Hotel, bypassing check-in as Tony already had the key. "I'll pick you up at seven" he said, bowing slightly as he backed out of the room and closed the door.

Unpacked, she lay on the bed, again not sure if her feelings were excitement or anxiety, she was certainly feeling a little controlled, there was an intensity about Tony that she couldn't quite put her finger on. She checked her phone again, receiving the same message.

He arrived back on the dot of seven. The evening was uneventful, a short walk into the city, Tony giving a running commentary about everything they were seeing. Over dinner in a Sardinian restaurant he explained that the following day would be much different, a full tour of all the main sites of Dublin followed by a trip to Prospect Square for a Halloween Party and finishing up with some drinks at the Gravedigger's pub, he smiled and said, "I believe you already know the place" She couldn't help the slight shiver that ran up her spine at the intensity of his eyes. They agreed on nine o'clock the following morning for breakfast.

After breakfast, they took a bus to O'Connell St, a new experience for Carla, public transport was not something she had ever used in Dublin Ohio. The Hop-on Hop-off tour bus took up most of the morning and after a pleasant lunch in the Merrion Hotel, they spent some hours visiting the shops in the Grafton Street area with Carla accumulating quite a number of very expensive bags full of designer label purchases. This required the use of the Maybach again to get them back to her hotel. Carla still had a sense of unease around Tony, she had a feeling he was hovering around her, totally enveloping her space.

The Maybach appeared at the hotel again at eight o'clock with Tony on board. At Prospect Square the central green had been laid out for a communal Halloween party. A huge bonfire had just been lit and preparations made for a firework display while everyone helped themselves to the free food provided by the local resident's association.

When she saw the gates to the Glasnevin Cemetery on the west side of the square she asked Tony about its history, he explained that it was the biggest graveyard in Dublin with many famous people buried there, it was especially noted for the many elaborate family mausoleums, his strange smile when he said this unnerved her and she shivered as she looked through the gates, she had an overwhelming sense that it was a living thing and there was a coldness flowing outwards from it that was at odds with the temperature in the Square.

"Come on" said Tony, "let's go into the Gravediggers for some beer and I'll tell you all about the legend of how it got its name. Remembering Jimmy the barman's warning Carla said she would rather not go in this evening, that she could visit the following day before her flight left for America. "Come on Carla, you must go in this evening to complete the destiny of your dream, what's there to be afraid of? there are lots of people around and I'm right here with you" although he was smiling, the smile didn't quite reach his eyes.

Sitting at the bar, the scene exactly as she had seen in her dream two weeks previously, she began to relax while thinking that the Coors light in Dublin Ireland tasted a little different than it did in Dublin Ohio.

The people still partying on the square didn't notice the couple walking around the perimeter of the square and going into number thirteen

Carla woke up naked on a bed in a warm dimly lit bedroom, standing above her was a tall dark haired, white skinned man with ruby red lips, dressed from head to toe in black, with a black cape, lined with red silk thrown over his shoulder.

“Welcome my dear” his silk smooth voice was so mesmerising Carla felt herself falling into an abyss, “you have been chosen my dear to be the mother of my children, you are very privileged person” He leaned over and kissed her throat, his eye teeth sliding into her skin and she was lost.....

Cutting Waves

Gerard Byrne

The blade glinted under the lights of the room as Colin swung the novelty samurai sword around like a drunken ninja. He had loads of them at home in a glass case, but unfortunately the law stated that you couldn't have them sharpened. Basically they were all blunted pieces of nicely made metal. But the one in his hands was very different. Bought in Turkey and lethal to the touch. Getting it home would be difficult. Colin already had plans to bury it in the bottom of his suitcase and deny all knowledge of it if caught going through customs.

This was the joys of traveling on a cruise liner. You get to stop off at all these different countries and bypass their local laws by jumping back on the boat with all your ill gotten gains. Besides the sword, Colin had stocked up on a lot of different drugs. Being stuck on a cruise ship with his wife Mary for two weeks was hell enough, so drugs really were a necessity.

Mary was sitting at the fancy dresser that came with the penthouse cabin that he had paid for. He would have been happy with a smaller room, but she always wanted bigger and better. Image being the key word in any argument they had about wasting money on unnecessary luxuries. She was sitting on a small matching stool wearing a satin white gown and was fixing her makeup in the mirror. Yes, she was beautiful, but deeply ugly inside. Unfortunately not everyone could see that, but Colin had been with her long enough to see through the poorly kept veil that she hid behind. That firm, tight ass that had attracted him to her in the first place, was like the cheese in a rat trap and he was the poor rodent.

Colin snorted up another line of coke off a nearby sideboard, before going back to swinging his new sword. Mary was watching him with disgust through the reflection of the mirror, "you look like a total fool with that sword. And for the love of god, give up on the coke. You're not in your twenties anymore. You're forty eight for god sake. You'll end up keeling over of a heart attack if you keep snorting that shit up your nose"

"Don't hear you complaining when I drop two viagra the odd night", Colin swung his sword around in the air. He caught his reflection in a full length mirror. He definitely struck a good pose in his skimpy white briefs and nothing else. He was proud of his figure and had been working at it for many years now. Pity Mary hadn't the same interest. Yes, she was thin, but her skin was flabby and wrinkled. Shagging her was like going at it with a badly punctured sex doll.

"Did you drop any viagra to bang that cocktail waitress last night?", it sounded like a question, but Mary didn't need an answer. She knew he fucked her. She

didn't need proof. The signs were all there. You just had to know how to read it and Mary had become an expert over the years.

"At least I'm not hanging out of the ship's yoga instructor like a horny dog in heat", Colin had seen how excited his wife was every morning as she ran off to the aerobics classes each day.

"What I do is discreet and not harming anyone I care about", Mary put some blusher on her cheeks. The captain was cute and she hoped to get to know him a little better that night.

"Why do we bother staying married?", Colin wasn't even sure anymore. It seemed like they only lived to hurt each other.

"Because we both need each other, unfortunately", Mary stared at her husband in the reflection of the mirror, "if we break up, our power and wealth gets divided. We become weak in our circles. That can't happen"

"Thought you were gonna say it was for the kids sake", the sweat was dripping from Colin's bare skin. This sword swinging was taking a lot out of him. He was really feeling his age these days.

"Our kids are in their twenties now. Becky is about to get married and start her own family. Matt has his own business. And the other three will get there soon enough. They don't need us anymore. Come to think of it, maybe a divorce would be a good idea. Take you for everything you have. I'd get all the sympathy from the kids, friends and business associates. While you get demonised as the two timing cunt you are"

Colin was used to his wife being a bitch. She ranted like this quite regularly, so normally he'd just play along, "and how do you expect to do that?"

"The sex tape that I paid that cocktail waitress to make", a smile spread across Mary's face as she performed the final few last touches to her make up.

Colin suddenly felt deflated. Life had just punched him in the stomach and was now sitting on his chest. He leaned down and snorted another line of coke. He needed the drug induced courage to carry on, "really?"

"Really", Mary finally turned around on the stool to face him, "I'm getting the footage off her tonight. Only cost me ten thousand and it was worth every penny. Can't wait to sit in court watching you pull out your wrinkled cock and trying to satisfy a young woman who was probably sickened with you being so close to her. I bet she was disgusted with every second that you were inside her. Bet you were making that gormless face you do when you're about to shoot your load", she did an impression of Colin's cum face. Sticking her tongue out to one side of her mouth and throwing her eyes up, "does that look about right dear?"

Colin was set to explode. His hands were gripping the handle of his sword so hard that they hurt. He wanted to unleash his anger. Explode in some way that would satisfy his mood. He couldn't keep looking at her smiling face. It needed to go away. Leave him alone with his hurt and betrayal. But Mary started to laugh at him. Laugh at his downfall. That's what this was. Colin's life was gonna be over and she was gonna be the cause of it. After everything he did for her. Financing all her businesses. Introducing her to all the right people. They'd even embraced the movie industry by financing a number of low budget films. No way was she gonna destroy him. That was not gonna happen. Not in his lifetime.

Colin wasn't sure how it happened. Something exploded inside him and he lifted the sword and lashed out in one swift motion. He had practiced the move at home thousands of times. But that was with a blunt sword and he was hitting a pillow. But this moment was different. Nothing seemed to slow the blade down. It swung through the air until it made contact with the frame of the balcony door. It stuck hard and it took Colin a few thugs to pull it clear. He examined the end of the blade to make sure that it wasn't damaged in any way. Thankfully it was okay, except for some thick red stains that ruined the gleam off the blade. Colin wiped the sword off the thick brown curtains before realising what he had just done. In the corner of his eye, he could see the bloody stump that used to hold his wife's head on top. There was blood still spurting out of the neck. Reminded Colin of that old Quentin Tarantino film about killing some old bloke called Bill. It wasn't that great of a film. More like a love letter to seventies martial arts flicks and Colin thought the last hour of the second part was boring as shite.

He looked down at the shaggy white carpet to see the streaks of blood running along the length of it towards the balcony door. There was no hope in getting those stains out. He wasn't living in a magic Persil advert where all stains are easily disposed of.

The sword was still in his hands. Colin gripped the handle tightly. He knew his wife had to be dead, but some part of him had this fear that she was gonna pop out from nowhere and berate him for trying to kill her. But he had killed her. The headless body was enough to drive that point home, but where was the head?. He looked around the room for it. No sign of it anywhere. Colin carefully put the sword down on the sideboard and knelt down on the floor. He looked under the few pieces of wooden furniture around him. He was half expecting it to jump out on him from the shadows. But it didn't. Turns out Mary's head was under the sideboard. Her eyes staring out at him. There was no fear in them pupils. Just hate. The bitch still wasn't backing down in death.

Colin left the head where it was and sat down in the armchair as he tried to get his head together. He didn't know what to do next. He couldn't say that she had an accident. No one was gonna believe that she fell on his blade and her head

just popped off. That was a story too far fetched for anyone to believe. Maybe if he was Donald Trump and he was filling his followers full of shite, maybe then it would work for him. His loyal supporters would believe anything. No, he had to come up with another plan. But first, a few more lines of coke to help steady the nerves and help him to think a little more straighter.

Twenty minutes later, after ten lines of coke and a lot of soul searching, Colin finally had Mary's body rolled up in the carpet. He had had to rip it up off the floor. A difficult thing to explain, but a lot easier than trying to explain why his wife was now missing a head. He'd used her clothes to clean up any blood and had packed it into the carpet as well. He then rolled it all up and had dragged it towards the balcony door.

The waves outside were crashing around with the rough sea. Thankfully Colin hadn't noticed the bad weather. He normally got seasick, but he reckoned the drugs were masking it from his mind. It seemed like a good plan. He could report his wife missing the next morning. Cry wildly as the captain would tell him that there was no sign of her. He could play this off so well. He just needed to play it cool. The carpet could be worried about at a later date.

He opened the balcony door and watched the waters lash about roughly. Then it dawned on him. The body needed to be weighed down. For the next five minutes, Colin ran around the room testing the weight of different items. In the end he decided to open up the carpet, place a full length standing lamp made of brass, in his wife's dead arms. He then vomited on her cold body, before rolling it back up again. The job was now done and he lifted the rolled carpet up over the railings and threw it into the dark waters below. It quickly disappeared out of sight. Colin cheered with delight. His plan was going perfectly.

Suddenly a spotlight shone down from the deck, where Mary's body had gone under. Colin quickly ducked into the darkness of his cabin. Last thing he needed was to be seen by anyone.

"I think someone went overboard", shouted a voice from the deck.

More spotlights hit the water. Colin shut the door of the balcony and hoped that no one spotted him. He figured his nerves needed steadying, so snorted a few more lines and sat down in the armchair. On the dresser, opposite him, was Mary's head. It was in the laundry bag that was in one of the drawers. Colin had packed a load of books and some of Mary's heavy shoes into the bag with it. Anything to weigh the bloody thing down, but now he was left waiting to get rid of the evidence. He couldn't dare chance throwing it overboard now. The crew was on high alert. Someone might see him. He couldn't take that chance.

The laundry bag was bloody, leaving Colin wondering what Mary's head looked like inside. He had rushed to bag it up before even the body. He couldn't bare to

look at those accusing eyes anymore. She knew what he was about to do, before the blade even made contact. Colin was sure of it.

There was a bottle of Jack Daniels nearby and even though Colin wasn't normally a straight whiskey drinker, he quickly learnt to embrace it. Every so often he snorted another line of coke. He really wanted a fag, but no way was he going back out on that balcony again. No point in risking unwanted attention. He just had to ride this out and hope for the best. It would all blow over sooner or later. That's what he kept telling himself.

"Happy now?", the laundry bag suddenly spoke.

Colin fired himself back into the armchair with fright. His fingers gripping the arms tightly. He honestly thought that his heart had stopped for a moment. It really felt like that. He didn't answer and waited to see was his head playing tricks on him again.

"Well?", asked the laundry bag.

It was Mary's voice alright, but this couldn't be happening. Colin nervously got up out of the armchair and approached the laundry bag. He reached out his hands and readied himself to tear the material open. But he hesitated. Was his mind playing tricks on him?. Was it the drugs and drink that was doing his head in?. He couldn't be sure.

"I know you're there", Mary's voice had that hate filled tone filling her words, "I can smell you. It's a mixture of sweat, leaking piss and that horrible aftershave that you insist on wearing. Open the bag and face me you cowardly fuck. Come on, you were brave enough to kill me without warning. Now it's time to face me. I've got questions to ask before you fuck me overboard and play the victim for everyone else onboard. Can't see you getting away with it, but stranger things have happened. O. J. Simpson got away with killing his wife. You never know, people might actually believe your bullshit. So you haven't much to lose by opening the bag and facing me for one more time. Grow a pair of balls for once"

The sweat was pissing out of Colin. He wasn't sure what was happening, but it couldn't be real. None of this was making sense. He edged slowly towards the laundry bag. It had to be all in his head. Suddenly a floorboard creaked under his foot.

"Ahhhh", announced Mary coyly, "so you do have big balls under that shrivelled excuse for a cock you're packing between your legs. I can imagine them growing with each inch you take towards me. Soon you'll be weighed down with testicles the size of basketballs. Only a few more steps and you'll be able to set me free. Let me look at you before you fuck me over the edge. Let me gaze at my killer one last time. No funeral for me. Probably better off since my parents don't

deserve to not have an open coffin at my funeral. In a way you're doing the right thing by dumping me overboard. Save the kids from seeing me like this"

Colin's fingers touched the material gently. He could feel her mouth moving through the bag. This couldn't be happening. His body was now drowned in sweat. It stank from his pores and he was pretty sure that a little bit of pee came out as well. He held his breath and tore at the light material. It ripped easily apart to reveal Mary's head. He then pulled the laundry bag down to the top of the sideboard so that she wasn't obstructed in any way.

"Now, that's better", Mary seemed relieved to be out in the open again. The heavy books and shoes that was in the bag with her, sat around the back of her head, "we can finally talk now"

Colin sat back into the armchair, "what do you wanna talk about?. You're dead. What else is there to say on the subject?"

"I wanna know where you got the balls to cut my head off?", Mary spat the words out like venom, "no one just gets one lucky blow with a cheap ass sword and the head comes off in one go. You've been practicing this, you little worm. So, go on then, how long have you wanted me dead for?"

"I've never thought about killing you", Colin couldn't look at her as he spoke.

"Liar", she roared, "liar, liar, pissy pants on fire"

Colin glanced around in the hope that no one outside the room could hear his wife. If this wasn't in his head, he was royally fucked, "keep it down. Someone might here you"

"Thought this was all in your head?", a rare smile splashed across Mary's blood speckled face.

"It is. I'm sure of it", protested Colin. He was quickly losing faith in his own words, "just don't talk so loud"

"I won't talk so loud if you answer my fucking question. Deal?"

"Deal", Colin wearily took another large sip from his whiskey. There was no way out of this situation for now, so he had to make the most of a bad situation.

"Then answer my question. How long have you been thinking about killing me?. And make your story long and drawn out. We're gonna be here for a while and I don't wanna spend my last few hours bored out of my fucking mind"

"I've been practicing with my swords at home. Your head was played by a cushion. Kept at it until I got the swing perfect. It was only supposed to be a way of reliving stress. Nothing more than that. I can promise you that here and now", Colin was telling the truth. It was all in his imagination and fantasies. Like wanting to ride most twenty something women that he met. It was all in his

head for the wank bank. But that was all it was ever gonna be. Yes, he had shagged the cocktail waitress, but that had cost him five hundred euros and it just made him feel cheap. Yes, the sex was great for all of twenty minutes. But the fallout afterwards had left him feeling hollow inside and he had a worryingly itchy penis as well. That couldn't be good. It annoyed him even more that she was getting paid ten thousand for the footage. You'd think she would have shagged him for free. Why chance looking for a small amount of money, when you were expecting a large payout. He could have refused to pay. Then she wouldn't have gotten the opportunity to get the money from Mary. At least she wouldn't be getting it now. That was one positive about this awful situation.

"Promises, promises", laughed Mary, "just like our wedding vows. All lies that spilled from your lips easier than drool. You never loved me. Just used me for the connections that I brought your way"

"That's not true", protested Colin as he shifted uncomfortably in the armchair, "I did love you, many years ago"

"So when did you stop?", she fired back.

Colin couldn't answer that so quickly. Not because he wanted to lie to her, but because he wasn't actually sure himself. That detail had disappeared with time. They say that you forget all the good things in life over time and only remember the bad. That seemed to be a fairly true statement. He couldn't even remember a time when he truly did love her. He definitely did when they married, but he couldn't latch onto how he felt at that time. It seemed alien to him. A bit like trying sushi for the first and last time. It didn't feel natural or normal.

"I honestly don't know", he blurted out. It felt good.

"None of that really matters now. I'm a headless entity and my body is now at the bottom of the ocean, never to be seen again. And it doesn't matter what lies you come up with to cover up your actions. People will know what you did. You've left so much evidence behind. You're going to jail Colin. Mark my words my dear. You've fucked up and now our kids will have to pick up the pieces. They'll have to deal with the news headlines, the journalists at the front door. Banging and ringing the bell as they wait for the next big scoop. Like a pack of hungry wolves wanting their pound of flesh. Do you really want that for them?"

There was a long pause as Colin mulled over the possible futures in his head. A difficult thing to do with alcohol and drugs fighting for a place in his brain to party. But now wasn't the time to party. He had to perform more damage control before the crew started to knock at his door wanting answers.

"They won't have to suffer. I'll make sure of that. Your body was weighed down and probably will never be seen again, and soon your head will be joining it. No evidence of me killing you will be found"

Mary laughed loudly, “you weren’t even planning on dumping the sword you dozy bastard. Weren’t you?”, she didn’t even wait for an answer, “you honestly thought that you could bring the murder weapon home and hang it on the wall. Then there’s all the evidence in the room. The missing carpet”

“Easily explained away”, Colin fired back.

“The vanishing ornaments, that didn’t look cheap”

“Easily explained”

The blood splatters all over the floor, wall, and furnishings”, she fired back, “you can scrub all you want, but those stains stick around for years afterwards. All it will take is a half competent detective to check over this cabin and you’re royally fucked. They could be the next inspector Clouseau and they’d still find that cut in the balcony frame from your sword. I’m sure there’s some of my blood in there as well. They won’t need a body to convict you. There’s enough circumstantial evidence for that. Everyone knows you hate me. Everyone knows that you were playing around. The kids will suffer for your actions. Hope you can live with that”

Colin couldn’t answer her. He got up from the armchair and opened the balcony doors once more. He looked down at the dark waters below him. The spotlights were still scanning the ocean. They hadn’t stopped looking for whatever fell from the ship. It looked like they weren’t gonna give up either. Mary seemed to be right. Colin hated having to admit that. He had to think about his kids for once. Besides their level headed kids, Becky and Matt. They still had three more children who had a long way to go before they found their place in society. Donal would never be able to go into politics and complete his dream of driving all the refugees out of the country. Anastasia would never be taken seriously as that Instagram model and influencer that she hoped to be. And Dillon would never become that big grime artist that he dreamed of being. Yes, he couldn’t sing or rap. His bad stutter wasn’t helping much. But he’d have even less of a chance of achieving his goal if this all came out. Maybe it was for the best. Maybe Mary was right. He’d acted abruptly and without questioning the consequences of his actions before he swung that blade. Now it was too late to go back. He’d dug himself a deep hole and there was no way of scrambling back out of it.

“What do you suggest?”, it was hard having to turn to his dead wife for help, but beggars couldn’t be choosers.

“Kill yourself”, she fired back without a pause, “strap the sword to your back. Tie my head to your belt. Then find the heaviest piece of movable furniture in this room, attach it to your legs and throw it overboard. Then let your body get dragged into the waves along with all the evidence. It’s the only way to save our family. Protect our name. Do this for the kids, Colin. Be a man for once”

It wasn't long until Colin was standing on the balcony with everything Mary had told him to attach, on his person. He'd found another heavy lamp in the bathroom and he had tied it to his body with the electrical lead. It was difficult to move, but thankfully it wasn't a far walk across the cabin. He was dressed in his best suit. The one he was going to wear to the captain's table that night. He knew he looked good in it and there seemed no harm in getting his money's worth out of it.

He looked down at the swirling waters below. Colin didn't want to die, but other choices seemed far from his mind, "are you sure about this?"

"It's for the best", cooed Mary as she hung roughly from his leather belt. Her long hair knotted around the material.

"But what are people gonna think when they find us missing?. There's gonna be so many questions being asked after we're gone. What will they think in the end?", Colin was sweating profusely from every pore of his body.

"That doesn't matter", replied Mary calmly, "they'll never be able to prove anything. It will be all speculation. The tabloids will gossip. An investigation will be launched. They'll struggle to come to a definite conclusion. Our death certificates will leave an open verdict on the causes of our deaths. Conspiracy nuts will think we were murdered by someone else on board and it was all covered up. There will never be a definite answer. That's the best we can do for our kids now. So let's get on with it"

Colin didn't answer her and climbed over the railings of the balcony and clung onto the outside. The winds hit his face hard. The storm was showing no signs of calming any time soon. His feet were barely holding onto the bit of surface that was available to him. Fear was growing in his heart and was endangering stopping him from carrying out his final selfless act.

"I'm scared", he blurted out.

"Don't be", Mary replied calmly, "this is how it's meant to be. We started this adventure together. Seems only right that we end it the same way. Now, jump"

Colin turned his back on the waters, took a deep breath, and let go of the railing. As his body fell through the air towards the surface, Mary bit him roughly on the tip of his penis, "and that's for fucking cutting my bloody head off, you prick"

Colin screamed out in pain as his body hit the cold ocean. But it didn't take long until his mouth filled with water and he couldn't scream no more. A spotlight shone down in his general location. But it was never gonna find them. Colin had seen well to that.

Strange Lady

Ciaran O'Melia

I was sixteen and attended an Irish College, Beal Atha an Ghaorthaidh. Ballygeary, West Cork, was near Gougane Barra where in the forest the river Lee shows herself.

I should add I had two Dublin friends with me and as it was the Irish College was over. We travelled down from Dublin and out west of Cork City about 60 miles. We then travelled through the village of Ballygeary, over the bridge, and instead of going right to Gougane Barra, we turned left and about 500 yards on this small road we turned right and up the mountain.

It was then we met a woman with a baby in her arms, looking out on the new arrivals with two children by her side.

We asked if we could pitch our tent in the adjacent field, and she readily agreed and advised us to come down for water if we needed anything.

We drove about 50 yds up the mountain and decided to pitch our tent in the suggested field. We had to climb over the wall, which was not more the three or four feet in height. It was about 20 yards into the field and a perfect place to pitch our tent.

We asked one of the group to go to the farmer's wife to get some water. The remaining two got to raise the tent, and we lit a fire to heat the water. Now it should be said that a peg was missing from its sack, and any good camper should know what that means.

When the water carrier came back, he professed 'she was a strange lady', when we asked for clarification, his reply, was 'just strange'.

It was still daylight we could see the field and surrounding countryside.

The tea was made and as it started to mist, which put out the fire, we poured the remaining tea over the fire and peed over the embers to ensure it was really out. The mist turned into rain, and darkness fell. We turned in, I was in the middle of the three.

I would swear I was not asleep, yet the other two tried to get me awake. There was a commotion in the tent that night, with frantic calls for me to listen, as the flashlight was on nothing was heard. With the flashlight off, there were guide ropes being pulled and a heavy sound, as if a cow was at the guide ropes. I called out and the noise got louder and the pulling got worse. I turned the light on and it was quiet. This allowed me to gather protection for myself and unzip the fly door.

I turned the light off again, and the noise was deafening, I jumped out of the tent and ran around the tent, but nothing could be seen.

I reported this back to the others, and we quickly made a decision to leave the field.

It was raining and about 3 to 4 hours since we went to bed.

As I was the last to leave the field and it was left to me to climb over the wall, I cast a glance over and back to where the tent was only to see the fire was blazing away. We got away from this place.

The strange thing is when ready to pitch the tent, the missing peg was found in the sack.

Many years later with my wife and some of the children, we paid a visit to the lady.

She recalled the night and her only comment; "When she mentioned to the postman, 'Dublin lads' he inquired, 'They might have killed you.'"

Hecate

Elaine Reardon

Yearning, longing, slow dance
Brings me to her
She, calling me to the crossroads
Where I cry "which way now?"
My hands, deep in the earth
My nails broken Howling at the darkening year.
Take me to her worn heart.
Mistress of the dark night
Help me to Bury All that no longer serves the muse.
Sharpen my teeth and claws.
Once more, wild, climb and hide
Within the dark Where I am she and she is me Breathing as one soft breath.
Hecate, Hecate,
Find my lost heart To bring it to the muse once more Where I will find my song.
I will bring the gifts of
Words that can heal
With a passion that she demands And lay them at her feet.

Killing Time

Fergal Canton

The buzz of the spud against the front tyre made a reassuring sound. The light on the black Raleigh flickered and dimmed in the darkness before dawn. It illuminated the shadowy country road leading to the hill of Uisneach. The cyclist had made the transition from the horse's saddle to the bicycle, retaining the traditional leather but drawing the line at motorised vehicles. He frowned at how the roadway to the Hill of Uisneach even in the dark still had cars and jeeps cluttering its verges.

He padlocked the bike to a fencepost and retrieved his college satchel from the wicker basket below the handlebars. On the hill he could make out a crowd of people standing around a bonfire. As he drew closer he nodded at colleagues from History and Archaeology departments. Of course there were new age pagans here, who added to the drama about to unfold. He was pleased to see that many had brought their brightly dressed children in the fire colours of yellow, orange and red chasing hither and thither in games like flickering human flames among the sober adults. Bodhráns and bongo drums throbbed in pulsating heartbeats reminding him of rituals from the past.

Slipping away from the main group he made his way to where a gnarled hawthorn tree had split a stone. Its trunk allowed him to conceal himself from view and utter a spell beneath the magical tree. A shadow out of time opened up before him and he slipped through it disappearing from view. Everything was still.

On the far side of the shadow he remained on the hill but now it was silent and dark. Looking overhead he saw the night sky brilliant with the light of billions of stars. In this place the white Mayflower blossoms competed with the stars for glorious light. He returned to the crown of the hill now empty but for the ring of stones. He was in good time to recite the required spell.

He removed his tweed fishing hat and laid it in the turf turned upside down creating a cloth bowl. Within it he placed his spectacles, his watch and his bicycle clips. Sitting down he removed his brown boots and speckled woollen socks and placed the rolled up socks in the boots beside the hat. Standing up he removed his tweed jacket and laid it beside them. He removed his leather belt and began to unroll his linen tunic from within until a full white linen robe fell around his ankles. He re-tied the belt and then reaching up released his long grey locks from the strip of cloth that bound them behind his head. He shook the locks loose around his shoulders and wrapped a headband of red cloth around his forehead.

From his satchel he removed another cloth and unrolled it upon the grass. Within it were the precious poet's willow staves etched in ogham with the

ancient spell. He arranged the staves in the appropriate order, reading them from memory. Next he plucked a phial of water from Boann's pool on the Boyne and unstopped it. He drank the cool liquid and his eyes shone with an inner light. He retrieved a bundle of dried hawthorn sticks which had fallen from the tree and gathered them within the stone circle. He lit them with a simple spell with his hazel wand which he plucked from the bottom of the bag. With wood and water, fire and air assembled, he inhaled and raised his arms. He began the ancient incantation wondering at the eminent scientists and historians who thought that the megalithic monuments had been built to measure the movements of the sun, moon and stars when it was the monuments that in conjunction with magic oriented the motions of the celestial bodies instead.

As he chanted to summon the bright half of the year the stars overhead began to pulse and swirl with a mazy motion, in chevrons, lozenges and finally in the spirals that he sought. A million trillion points of light were dancing in rhythm to his words which reminded him of Van Gogh's starry night or of the spirals on the entrance stone of Newgrange.

It was as this thought passed through his head that a long dagger passed through his spine, his lung and partially severed his vena cava before emerging through his chest. His spell suddenly stopped, and as below, so above. The stars were arrested too. He fell to his knees and then on his side. An arm in all concealing black gathered the willow staves and tossed them heedlessly into the fire. The incalculable loss drew a gasp from him.

He was horrified, not at his own death, more by the wanton destruction of the immortal spells but mostly at the crime against the order of the universe itself. To violate the spell of time in this sacred space and at this sacred time plunged the future into chaos and disaster. He realised that it was almost the perfect crime. The crime scene was outside of normal time and space. Without a body who would suspect the murder? Then he saw a small flaw overlooked by the murderer.

A spark of hope glimmered in his heart. As his druid's lifeforce drained away he realised that there would be one witness to the crime. She must come for the death of one such as he. She was under geasa to be the messenger of impending death of the ancient lineages. He reached over to within the hat and retrieved the watch and smashed it on a nearby stone. The killer must have forgotten the messenger of death who existed outside all time and space, even here. Grasping a shard of the cracked watch glass he tore at the flesh of his own forearm inscribing it with ogham runes. He wrote two words, "tell Lugh". He looked up to see her emerge from the Hawthorn. She was old, older even than him. She wore only black and she combed her long grey hair. He closed his eyes for the last time.

Thus died, Professor Cathal Boyd of the Mediaeval History Department of Maynooth, once known in King Conchubhar Mac Nessa's court as Cathbad the Druid.

Luke Connolly heard the sound on the dawn wind. The high pitched wail cut him to the quick. It had been centuries since he had heard that sound and at first he thought he was hearing things. Imagine after all this time hearing things. He grabbed his walking stick, left his cottage and stood in the orchard under the apple trees and listened. It came to him again, a lament from the old world, from a creature not of this time or place. Bound to him by blood and duty, she existed to lament the death of one such as he, to mark the passing of the fairy folk.

He saw her standing in the shadow of the trees. He approached her but a bony hand raised threateningly. He stopped. She pointed upwards. He looked. At first he saw nothing, nothing but the blackness of the night sky lit by the scattered milkdrops of Boann. Then he saw its stillness, felt its immobility, was astounded by its deathly cold stare. "Show me," he said and now the hand beckoned. A deep shadow opened up between two trees and she floated through. Luke hobbled after her.

They came upon the body of Professor Boyd with the blood spreading from the wound. Luke caught sight of the burning spell staves. His grief nearly overwhelmed him. Cathal had been a foster father to him. Everything he knew he had learned from the dead man. Luke bowed to the Banshee and she left. Luke knew what he had to do.

He noted the stab wound. Then he stood behind the hawthorn tree and muttered a few words.

He saw Cathbad coming through the portal. He observed the ritual being performed as he would have done it. At a key moment he saw a portal open up and a dark figure slip through. The figure held a sword in its hand and went to stab the druid from behind. Then Luke shouted "Stop".

The figure whirled and his cousin Bres faced him. Cathbad turned to face them, interrupting the Ritual. "Continue Cathbad," said Luke pointing his walking stick, "Bres is unwelcome here."

Bres went to move but his feet stuck to the ground. He threw back the hood and said "Why do you let them live?" "They won, Bres. To the winner goes the spoils. I never doubted that you hate them but to hate them enough to kill one of our own, to interrupt the spell of time, to bring about the end of time? What new madness is this?"

I have killed nobody. Luke waved his stick backwards and forwards and the three of them watched a dim reenactment of it all. Cathbad's preparations, Bres's stealthy killing, Cathbad's dying message to the Banshee and Luke's arrival.

Bres sneered. 'So what, I know your spells are powerful but you and Cathbad are bound by the geasa never to harm another. You cannot raise a hand against me. I will never cease from looking for that which was taken from us to be returned. This land is ours and I will do my utmost to end their power.' Luke shook his head. I will not raise a hand against you. Nor need I. Your feet are bound to Eiriu in this sacred space by the very blood you shed. However I have been keeping a ferocious beast from destroying you and now it comes to devour your flesh. I will not lift a hand to protect you."

"Where is this beast?' scoffed Bres. "Bring it here and my sword will rip it limb from limb. I will bleed and break it. I fear no beast of yours. Where is it?" "It is all around you." answered Luke with a wave of his stick. "It is time itself." and straight away Bres began to wither and age till nothing remained of him but dust and rags floating in the wind.

"You killed him." commented Cathbad. "He killed himself." replied Luke, "But I was dead, and now I am alive." wondered Cathbad. "See to the stars, Cathbad, and let Time take care of itself." "Lugh, why won't you come back to us?" Luke paused, "He was right Cathbad. When they took the land they took everything, everything but our learning. I only live in places outside time. Guard those staves. One day they may be all that is left of us." He stepped through the portal and was gone. Cathbad looked at the ticking watch. He looked at his bare arm. He still remembered the pain.

Midnight Shenanigans

Angelina Kelly

Paddy and JohnJoe O’Hooligan, fabulously rich landowners, were regarded as pranksters and mischief makers. The people of the town never knew where they would pop up or what they’d get up to, so their shenanigans were a source of amusement.

On Halloween Night, in the local tavern, “The Wobbly Witch”, they created quite a scene. Paddy propped up the bar, and having consumed a half bottle of whiskey, expounded on the theory a witch, who would brew up a concoction that would put the whole town under her spell. The townspeople listened in awe not believing a single word but enjoying the story anyway.

JohnJoe, his twin, on the other side of the bar - nestled between two lusty blonde bombshells - fumbled with the younger one’s stays and ties in an effort to get into her dress and have his way with her. Cupping a bottle of whiskey in one hand, and hitching up her skirts with the other, he fell forward on top of her drenching them both.

The young girl squealed as the cold liquid soaked into her hair and clothes and tried to extricate herself from his roaming hands. JohnJoe, pinned her down and spread her legs with the intent of causing her as much harm as he possibly could. She screamed and fought, pleading for mercy but he was oblivious to her cries and shrieks. Their fellow revellers looked on helpless knowing that if they interfered he’d turn his attention on them, and all hell would break loose.

Just then the church clock strook Midnight, the tavern doors burst open with a loud crash and a colony of bats flew in squealing in a blood curdling tone. Everyone ducked low and covered their drinks but turned their eyes to the ceiling. A loud cackling pierced every ear, and a witch filled the door frame - her garments shining and her cloak billowing around her. Her eyes shone with an evil hue of red and her long black hair cascaded around her shoulders like flowing tar. A sleek black cat wound its way between her feet hissing and arching its back.

“Oh no. It’s Esmeralda.” One of the men exclaimed. “We’re done for now. Run, hide, get away from here.”

The doors slammed shut, the shutters closed with a loud crash. Esmeralda looked over at the distressed girl and let out a spine-chilling banshee howl; everyone cowered in fear. In three long determined strides she made her way over to the frightened girl, grabbed JohnJoe by the scruff of the neck and flung

him across the room. He landed in a dishevelled heap just in front of the hearth gasping for breath.

The girl curled up in the foetal position holding her head in her hands whimpering. Standing over her, Esmerelda bade her, "Stand up. I mean you no harm. You have done nothing wrong child; you are not at fault." The girl slowly got to her feet, smoothed down her dress and scurried to the far side of the room.

2.

Esmerelda turned her attention to JohnJoe and strode across the room towards him. Looming over him, in a voice like a hissing snake, she said, "How dare you disrupt the peaceful life of this town. All these people came here for was a quiet drink and a brief moment away from their cares. Get up and get out of this establishment immediately and if you ever darken its doors again with your presence, you'll end up in the graveyard forever haunted by ghosts."

In an act of defiance JohnJoe got to his knees, pulled down his trousers and exposed his bare posterior shaking it from side to side. In the blink of an eye Esmerelda whipped out her wand, the door flew open, and she zapped him out through the doors onto the street. The revellers clapped and cheered, and the young girl smiled. Paddy ordered a round of drinks for everyone and hastily left to join his brother.

The story became a popular topic of conversation within the town and every recounting of the tale became embellished with fantastic detail. O'Hooligan Mansion became a place for curious people to visit, especially at Halloween.

Many years later an innocent young girl out trick or treating with her brother, pushed open the door expecting to see the twins she had heard so much about. In shock she exclaimed , "But they are skeletons. How could they have done what you told me they did?"

"Magic, sister, magic." He replied.

Monster BFF's

Katie Keeley

Jim the werewolf and Tim the vampire sat in front of their fire on an unusually calm but cold Halloween eve. They just finished their extravagant meal and were comfortably digesting it before their nights work ahead of them. Naturally their conversation turned to their favourite aspects of Halloween that included which scares they preferred.

“Well, personally I find it hilarious when people figure out all of this hair is in fact not stuck on and I am in fact a real werewolf” Jim said smiling at the thought of it. He was lounging on the rug in front of the fireplace preening his fur with his exceptionally long tongue.

“For me it's outliving mortals and taking their blood for myself” Tim flashed his pointy fangs. He sat in a high-backed elegant armchair with his legs folded and drumming his skinny fingers with their long nails against the soft material on the armrest.

“What's more difficult to choose though is a favourite scare” Jim raised his hand in the air and scratched behind his ear.

“Oh, that's easy” Tim scoffed puffing up his chest.

“If it's so easy tell me what's your favourite scare?” Jim asked the vampire before coughing up a hairball.

Shifting into a different position Jim said “What I do is I lure a group of tourists into the dark forest, and I pass myself off as a guide bringing them on a tour of the scariest parts of the forest. Once I bring them deep enough among the trees where I know they won't be able to find their way out again I turn to them and with a flash of my fangs and an evil chuckle I turn into a bat and chase them away as they scream, petrified for their lives knowing their blood is going to be drunk. Seeing their reactions to me changing and trying frantically to find their way out of the forest always makes me hoot with laughter”

This made Jim chuckle and he replied with “I can't decide which is my favourite scare. Between setting up a scene for people to come across me eating from a carcass and then dramatically turn and growl at them with blood dripping from my mouth to pouncing in amongst a group of unexpecting humans and giving my best howl before turning to the humans around me and bound after them as they run as fast as they can screaming in terror. There's just too many to choose from”

Before their conversation got to go any further the doorbell rang to their mansion on the edge of town.

Smiling at Jim, Tim smiled bearing his fangs and asked, "Are you ready for another Halloween of scaring the bejesus out of everyone?"

Jim stood, bowed before Tim and said "After you Mr. vampire"

Scary Story

Mark L'estrange

The family lived in the city for years, Sean lost his job and wasn't able to pay for his home, the rent on the home in the city was costing too much and they were looking at a move to the country where the property was cheaper.

They looked around various property's and they found a big house detached from any other properties. Sean said to his wife Sonya "Look at this house how on earth is it so cheap there is so much room for us all will we check it out?" "Yes we should head down and have a look." They had two kids who were very excited to check it out. They headed down to view it.

When they got there they met an estate agent who let them in to the house, they thought they were dreaming when they walked in, the place was all nicely decorated with a brand new kitchen, the smell of new in the place was very nice they all said.

They said to the estate agent "We are very interested can we make an offer please?" "Yes of course I don't think you will have any problems they are looking for a quick sale." They made the offer and headed back to their rented home in the city.

They woke to the sound of the phone the next morning it was the estate agent letting them know the owner had excepted the offer. The man said, "That's great we are mortgage approved for this amount." "Great come in and sign on Monday."

They were all so happy that they got their new home they all went out to celebrate when they were at the restaurant Sean got a phone call on his mobile from a private number he never answers private numbers, he just let it go through to voice mail, and continued on enjoying his food.

Later that night he was checking his phone when he remembered he got a voice message, and checked it, a spooky voice on the phone said So you are moving into the house hope you don't mind sharing it with us ghosts. Sean just laughed saying to his wife, "Some kids are pranking us saying our new house is haunted and they are ghosts." They both laughed we better not tell the kids.

The next day they packed the truck with all their belongings and headed to the new home when they got there, the key of the house wouldn't work so they had to call the agent who arrived about ten minutes later, when he tried it he was able to open it no problem. He said, "remain calm there is always a few problems with these new keys."

They had a busy day moving all their belongings into the new home, they all agreed let's have a Netflix night. They got take out and settle down to watch a

movie. They were about a half an hour into the movie when they heard a house phone ring Sean said to his wife quietly not to worry the kids. "That's strange there is no phone connected in the house yet." "Maybe it's the ghost that rang you yesterday." Sonya said laughing. It kept ringing, Sean went to find it. He found an old style phone on the floor under some books. He answered it and it was the same spooky voice as yesterday.

"Why did you not answer me yesterday, leave this house if you know what's best for you." Sean hung up and left it off the hook this time even though it wasn't plugged in anywhere, he went back down stairs to continue watching the movie. Sonya said, "You look like you have seen a ghost what's going on?" "It's nothing I'm sure someone is just playing tricks on us." The phone started to ring again this time Sean threw it out in the bin.

When he came back in to the sitting room he sat down with his family and thought that's that sorted no more phone to worry about.

Then another chair appeared in the sitting room out of nowhere, which made them all jump because it was the creepiest old chair you have ever seen. It got worse a few moments later when the strangest looking person appeared on the chair shouting at Sean why did you hang up on me, I warned you to leave now it's getting too late. When they turned around the whole house was changing from the modern fancy home into an ancient haunted looking house.

Sonya and the kids were all terrified Sean said, "Let's get the hell out of here." They went for the door and as they went to pull the handle down to open the door the handle was so old it fell off in his hand then he tried to break it down but it was solid and wouldn't budge.

When they turned to find another way out the ghostly looking figure was staring right at them they ran up the stairs to get away but it followed them up the stairs everything looked like it could collapse it was so old he was afraid it would fall apart any second. At this stage there was ghosts all over the house they found an empty room that they ran into and locked the door there was a window in the room Sean said to Sonya there must be a way to open the window it's our only chance to get out of this place.

He went over to the window to see if there was a handle that opened it but again it was so old it just fell off he found a chair he threw at the window but it bounced back off the glass. He found his mobile and tried to ring his friend to see if he could come to the house and help but his phone had no signal. He said to Sonya "Is your phone working?" "Yes it seems to be." She phoned her dad and told him what was happening he said, "Everything will be ok I will get a few of us to head over there now."

Things were starting to get a bit crazy outside the room they were hearing chairs been flung around with a few of them hitting the door. They were hoping the room they were in was safe because there was no strange activity yet.

He looked out the window and saw Sonya's dad and their family and friends outside the house

He knocked on the window to get their attention luckily they saw them. His dad rang the fire department to let them know they were stuck in the house. The fire man didn't seem surprised he said. "We had to get another family out of there a few weeks ago."

Meanwhile back in the house it started to get bitter cold the whole family where shaking and the ghost was shouting at them saying "You should have left now you're stuck in the room we can't enter but you can't leave." Followed by the spookiest laugh. Then like a light switch the whole house went back to normal or so they thought as the door flung open Sean said to his family "Come on this is the best chance we have the house looks new again, lets move." They ran down the stairs and headed for the door and opened it they could see all their friends and family and as they went to leave it switched back again and the door slammed shut and things started to fly around the house, they had to dodge the chairs and other things flying around and they noticed there was now more ghosts in the house it was terrifying for the family. Next thing they heard someone calling them.

"Sean this is the fire department we are in the room you were in, Where are you now?" We are downstairs be careful there is things flying everywhere." "Do your best to get up here we have the window broken we will get you out." Somehow they managed to make it upstairs. They could see the door into the safe room and the fire man had his hand out to help them. Sean pushed his wife and two kids first and the fire man was able to get them out, and when they were out Sean ran for the door but it slammed shut.

Sonya and the kids were devastated that there dad was still in the house. The fire man got more of his colleagues and a priest to go into the house and while they were breaking the door the priest was blessing the house and after about ten minuets they got to open the door, Sean wasn't in the hall. They had to search the house which seemed to be back to normal again. They found him passed out on the floor of the kitchen. Luckily they were able to get him out safe. They were only out of the place five minutes when the place collapsed with the sound of the ghost laughing and saying, "Told you we would get rid of you."

They had to bring Sean to the hospital he was ok after a while he had a slight concussion.

They are now back renting in the city vowing never to buy down the country again.

She was a Friend of a Friend

Clíodhna Joyce-Daly

Sinéad was having an odd day. In fact, Sinéad was having an arbitrarily strange day as she shuffled along the uneven cracked pavement. It was misting, the typical mist that regardless of the accompaniment of an umbrella covering, she got soaked through the skin anyway.

To make the day even more palpable Keith O'Reilly came speeding along the narrow lane splashing every possible puddle across its route. Keith was a bit of an bollocks, but he was harmless all the same. The only object in his trial was Sinéad – the only person in the town who would dare step into the weather's wrath.

The willingness to go out into Irish storm – was lacking more than reality Sinéad's mother would not let her use the car to go to the shops. Statements like and "I've taken you off the insurance," and "sure you could do with the fresh air and the walk" consumed her thoughts. There was nothing more startling than your mother to snap you back into reality.

Sinéad was only back a week and herself and her mother were already at wits ends with each other. Crippled with fatigue from months of tedious labour work, her body was projected into permanent hibernation and she longed for her much needed holiday. Despite this, Sinéad's mother thought 7am was an ideal time to start hoovering the hall and 7:15am was the optimal time to utilise the nutribullet blending frozen berries to add that extra clamour.

With a time clock warped and quiet hours relinquished, Sinéad was exhausted.

Although, the morning commotion routines was exasperating, being home after two years did allow Sinéad some breathing room and she was able to sigh in relief.

Connaughton's lights illuminated before her highlighted her rain soaked saturated pants. Its structure had not altered since she saw it last. The cracks still stood beneath its roof, the windows were freshly cleaned against the bright colour of the building vastly contrasting from its grey background. Its warmth, however, was a much needed respite from the Baltic day.

The door chimed open with the wharfs of fresh brown bread, consuming the air. The aroma was specifically unique to Bridie's bread and its favours were sorely missed by Sinéad.

"Well if it isn't herself," Bridie exclaimed as Sinéad wandered through the autumn filled aisles. Bridie stood in her usual position – her smooth arms crossed across her unwrinkled perfectly trimmed apron that displayed characters of tiny daffodils against her dark shirt. Bridie stood 5 feet tall with a mop of greyed black hair that despite its wild nature suited the round angles of her face.

"Suppose it is", Sinéad replied.

"Heard you are back for the summer from Australia," Bridie responded.

"Yeah."

"Isn't the weather is shocking here, pity you came at such a time where the weather isn't in your favour. You know Bernadette told me you were here. She was a friend of a friend, of a friend, of a friend of a very good friend. Have you found work out there? Bernadette told me you were waitressing or something of the like."

Projected right in front of her was the existence of small town gossip, Sinéad couldn't help but notice the tone of judgement in her voice.

"You've gotten awful gaunt looking there," Bridie continued. "You would think working in a restaurant would fatten you up. Sure the food must be desperate there so. "

Sinéad nodded in compliance getting more irritated with the rising shrewdness in her diction. *Why is it with that generation they need to make comments about weight?*, she thought browsing through the shelves.

"Come here I'll give you a loaf of bread, sure the weight is practically falling off you," Bridie exclaimed as she fussed invoking more noise with every step she took. "You must just walk now and not be doing that walking you are so keen on."

As Sinéad settled herself after the line of questioning she began to appreciate how stocked the local shelves were for a tiny grocer and became engrossed in searching for the ideal cheese to go with her fresh bread.

“My brother’s in Australia,” Bridie interrupted Sinéad’s inner thoughts. “He said the Irish over there are finding it difficult to find accommodation over there and work. Now, I suppose it’s not as bad as Dublin, but all the same it must be hard being away from home. Sure you have a job though must be making money plenty. But do you have somewhere to live?”

Spoke too soon.

The temperature in the room began to elevate and Sinéad began to feel slightly uncomfortable.

“Who are you living with over there?” Bridie continued. “Bernadette said it’s not with an Irish person, are they Australian or where are they from? Do they work with you?”

Sinéad remained silent, engulfed by Bridie’s rant.

“My brother said there was an issue with some people partying and going missing. Wasn’t there a girl recently, who went missing, did she end up murdered after a night out? I hope you’re not doing loads of partying Sinéad.”

Angst, fear and dread rose in Sinéad’s throat. The floor became uneven and the once welcoming heat encompassed her now and sweat began to form under her brows. In the moment of panic, Sinéad began to frantically organise her shopping – bumping into every bit of loose produce along her route to the door.

“Are you alright pet you look a bit sick?”

Sinéad closed her eyes longing to feel the drop of rain against her cheeks. Instead it was met with a unforgiving bright light that inflicted tearing with her eyelids closed.

As she braved to flick her eyelids open, the setting was vastly different from Connaughton’s shop. A stern burly man sat before her. His head and beard were shaved to illuminate light, but intense eyes glaring at her. He wore a blue button down with a badge that read ‘Smith’. The space was cold, freezing in fact as she shuffled in her frigid seat to find some sort of comfort. Under the man’s hands were stacks of papers and what appeared to be photographs of a room.

“Sinéad, do you know what you are here for?” the man said in booming voice looking over her.

Sinéad stared at him. In all honesty, she was completely puzzled by the whole ordeal and was reminiscing about the smell of the turf and loaves at home. *Unless*, she thought *it could be-*

“Sinéad, are you listening?” the man bellowed. “It appears to us that your housemate, Maria Clarke has been missing for over three weeks.”

Had she?

The man continued looking through stacks of paper “Sinéad - you went out with Maria that night. The two of you were going through a rough patch. You weren’t particularly close at the time, but decided to go out together.”

Sinéad was perplexed.

He continued, “Sinéad, eye witnesses have stated they saw you and Maria get into a massive argument on the night in question, the night Maria went missing. These eye witnesses this argument began at around midnight. They said you were both very drunk and specifically remember Maria stumbling around. The eye witnesses, further, saw you push Maria during this argument. And that she tried to get away from you, but you followed her out of the club. The rest of your night is unaccounted for.”

The man flicked across a photograph of Sinéad and Maria both wearing identical black silk dresses. A reliable that was frequently sported on nights out.

Yet Sinéad found it hard to believe that she had even gone out that night. In fact, she had not seen Maria is quite a while. However, this was typical behaviour from her housemate and Sinéad attributed that to her love for going home on the weekends and surfing in throughout the day.

“You are not listening,” the man now frustrated stood up and began to walk around the enclosed room. His looming presence intimidated Sinéad. “You both were close at one point? So close you went away together. She was going to visit you in Ireland. What happened.”

“Those that knew you both said that you started getting aggressive with Maria after you found out you were dating the same person. Maria wanted to let it go and remain friends, but you didn’t. You started spreading rumours about her and stealing her things. You went on a war path against her. Maria’s friends said she started to become afraid of you.

When Maria began to pull away from you, you became even more erratic. You threw her stuff out the window, you changed the locks without the landlords permission, you flooded her bathroom. For what Sinéad?”

The words hit her like glass shattering across her skin. The reality of this man’s saga seemed every bit as horrifying to her as it was to him. She sat there in disbelief that her friends would say such cruel words.

“I am just confused on what you’re saying – see I don’t think this is true and besides I was in Ireland last week,” Sinéad croaked in an attempt to salvage her reputation. “And I didn’t really know Maria I met her through a friend of a friend.”

“See Sinéad, I think you are a manipulator,” the man responded getting extremely aggressive stomped towards the table. “First, you said you were in Ireland around for the time Maria went missing. But yet there is no evidence of you even stepping foot in Ireland during the course of the last couple of months. Second, you said that you were not there the night Maria went missing, but there is CCTV footage of you walking out of the club with her. Third, I think you were friends until you began erratic. So what is it Sinéad?”

His hands began to coil around the edge of the table making the chair screech with his movement.

“What is it?”

Blackness.

Sweat rolled off her left furrowed brow as the heat encapsuled her entire body. The heavy duvets no longer served its purpose as a warm refuge. Sinéad bolted upright. *A nightmare*, she thought. The sweat soaked sheets stuck to her as she moved the duvet cover to the other side of the bed. She felt rattled.

The clock read 4am. Another night of dreadful sleep.

The drop of sweat splashed against the top sheet in an effort to relieve the consuming puddle that was spreading across her face. She wiped the moisture off. It became worse with thick heavy liquid trickled down her face causing her vision to blur slightly. *What was going on?*

Sinéad looked down at her hands its dark colour glistened as her hand turned. As she inspected herself further, she noticed in the fit of heated panic – she was wearing a silk black dress. The very silk black dress that

man had described when interrogating her. With a lasered focus she concentrated on the dark colour, it was red – *blood red* engulfing her entire hands and arms.

She screamed.

Tweedle Dee and that again...

Bridin Mary Harnett

It's the hair twiddling thing. You know the twiddling hair-stress thing in front of a desirable which is the current bone of contention. Not that I would mind except that the desirable in question is married to another woman sitting in my proximity. The hair twiddle asunder is a blatant account indeed. Apparently, hair twiddling is a code developed to indicate an assent to...that. You know what I mean! Hair twiddling means yes, I want... that... if you are willing, by simultaneously casting aspersions on the targeted male under exploration. I had seen it happen before. The indication and the reciprocal acceptance of a hair twiddling invitation as a preamble to... that...that desire... is a quiet nod. It is habitual that I bow my head so I that I don't see. I bow my head but not in fervor. I bow my head but not to cry. My bowed head is to charge my eyes down and I feel enveloped, in fact, gloved and garmented in my veil, a veil which guards me from the negativity of the onslaughts of a verbal or active deliberation to assail my feeling. I wonder if there is an expression for that. Maybe a person who engages in such practices can be defined as a Feeling Assailant in a deliberated attempt to cause rancour or some such thing. Anyway, my veil by its very nature rather prevents such hair twiddling signals - in the aftermath of my prolific hair shearing - as ordered - the agenda of such hair twiddlers.

Hmm...I rather consider that the action of assailing the feelings of another is a crime. You know, the pelting of words, the flung insults, the spearing barrage of stilted fated words, the strings of curses in full illocutionary force to pierce the very rib. Yes, I am rather used to personal assails which reel my senses out of synchronization with the supposed physiological mechanisms of my carcass. Thank God the physiological system is an independent system capable of sustaining itself. Even in the event of an individual being knocked senseless in such a wordless sense defying action as the hair twiddle, my heart pumps blood regardless of the adjustments the other parts of the body might have to make in terms of pace and rhythm and function. Yes, I can sustain myself and in the adversity of a hair twiddle. Yes, physiologically and in spite of myself I am sustained, by not by the intended deed. It seems that I'm leaning off on a tangent somewhat. But to all accounts, it seems that all roads must lead to Rome. Consider that the heart pumps blood regardless of quality and the workability of the organs receiving sinew, however palatable in the throes of an adverse attack on its system. Anyway, returning to the ethnographic essence of the afore-fronted account. Yes, indeed I bow my head in a show of obedience, trained as I am in compliance to enact the saying and the ideology of - thy will be done, my lord, sort of response, pleading my case with God, but not to hair twiddle dee dee.

But I am hurt to my very core in all effect.

The gall and the lack of grace of man to condone such flirtatious solicitation in the presence of the sensitivities of the tried and tested woman of his married variety, who has been through it all and with him, so to speak.

Imagine.

'The woman who never flounders,' they say in commandability.

But she didn't matter to him at all. In fact, he had no worldly concern for her it would appear to the world. On the contrary, he had slandered her to whittle her reputation to protect ill-reputed others and with gusto in a state of great resentment.

'Her sense of resilience,' they say, 'What she didn't do for that man,' they'll say. 'And look at what he said about her,' they'll say, 'and in front of her - and they went off at the end of the night!'

And they - they twiddle needfully in hench-like synchronization and apparently with the knowledge of his real wife who does not engage in such hair twiddling signals at all.

'How crass is that?' The real wife might pontificate and without a sense of a snide remark. Indeed she knows her man well enough to know that hair twiddling is a temporary activity conducted on the basis of needs analysis activity in the field. You know what I mean.

The rudeness of it all, I think, without a mannerism and without an iota of consideration for my feeling. And you know what?. He will defend himself in deliberation to say, 'I only wished to fulfil my needs and she - she twiddled her hair and I accepted the incubation of her bound hair twiddling.'

'Now, what's wrong with that,' he will say. 'Why are you feeling hurt?' He might inquire.

'Me?' I might retort.

'Did you pay her by check?' I might ask.

He will smile. I am sure of that.

Now such a question might appeal to his hard head.

I might say - if I were to afford such an opportunity, something like this,

'In fact sir, I am your responsibility and I am your charge. Now what do you think of that? Now what is the reason you hold neither love nor mercy in your heart for me, and all of that hair twiddling in deliberation and then, you defy my struggle in efforts to usurp my efforts for your hair twiddling heart's desire? I am human and furthermore I am a woman. Shouldn't you treat me in equity like the

women you solicit – I mean that I don't wish you any offense but isn't there a duty incumbent upon you according to protocol? In fact, the art of twiddling hair in defiance of the institution of marriage, albeit polygamous in variety rather suggests that you hook, sir?'

Is it not so?

'No,' he might say. It's all legal really, the legality of such transactions...The institution pays for it.

'Don't you consider the defilement of the sanctity of marriage?' I sniff in hurt defiance.

'No, I consider my needs...'he might say.

'Is it possible that you are married to a woman ...women for whom you have no desire? Is this the reason for your consequent hair twiddling reception?' I ask.

He will smile indeed and then I will say in equity, 'Then do not placate the woman who does not please you, but divorce your heart by all means and fill the desire of your eyes if it pleases you, my lord. If hair twiddling is your desire, then let it be so on occasion. Such is my love for you and I bow my head in humility to you, so that you will not discount me as hateful as I seem to you.'

In such a hypothetical sense, I find that my lord will not be able to discount me at all, until I find that which causes him to hold resentment in his heart against me. In fact, he rather tests my resilience.

But twiddling rather defies my code of living I have to say. I am indeed a veiled woman and therefore I cannot by such definition twiddle in public...for... that. In terms of practicality, my veil renders it impossible to twiddle as I have mentioned at the beginning of this rhetoric. You might advise me to remove my veil and twiddle to my heart's delight. But sir, removing the veil is not an option for me since such an action might rather peeve the angelic presences around me. Rather, for the same such reason, I am flummoxed by this issue.

Then how should I indicate my desire for you, glowing in my veil as I do for the sake of God and yet it appears that I have not caught your eye and I wish to do so. In fact, under these layers of loose clothing there is a cradling space prepared for you. Yes, indeed, a worked out lithe frame of elegance and grace of delectable surprises. Then pray, what is your indication? I know you have feelings for me and indeed I have quite jaded feelings for you. Then what should we do in this regard? How should we begin?

Religious protocol proffers such etiquette at the outset. I look and then I look away. I drink in your hands and your face with my eyes and you look at me. Just like that. And then...then...you might just ask me something?

Indeed, I consider that man has a spell in his heart for woman and he casts it. I imagine that there are angels to put mercy and love between the hearts of people who love... Then what about the usurp twiddler who makes you look and to whom you agree to cast your formed self upon in wilful engagements of some such thing?

'You said yes before I could declare a sense of explicit verbal pronouncement of , I love you...' I might have said. 'Then I can presume that you would rather twiddle, that perhaps your intentions while seemingly honourable are contractual and hookless in a kind of manner.'

And while he is being satiated, then, how am I expected to love?

Spider Writing

Paula Sweeney

“What kind of writing is that Flanagan, did the spider jump out of the inkwell like ink Or are you caught up in a web of deceit, well sir it’s a Drama”

Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Sony the Robot started it first.

Sometime I feel like I’m falling, falling like free falling, you know, spirits free you just push a button and say whatever you like. What comes into your head, like I love you, No don’t get me wrong I’d love a woman who was magic, now she ran away.

If you ever come up with one of those fantasy stories again you are barred from this school.

Sir it’s not my fault, Buffy dressed up and made me real horny, and I felt I was falling, falling down, down and I was asleep and nowhere to go, burning flames all over the place and I couldn’t stop falling and Sony the Robot tried to help me.

I clung on to a rope but we were falling together.

I was in a dream and then I saw snakes. He opened a box in the basement and they were all over the place. Bring me back to life.

Someone said, ‘You can come out now’ and Will Smith is sitting with his mother eating her fancy apple pie. He had brought new Bobber Boots ‘They look great on you Baby’ he said. ‘I have to run to catch a thief, his name is Danno the Engine and he tells me many lies.

Now run off with a woman’s bag and get Buffy to catch him from Venus forever. Catch the little fucker and send him to hell, he can turn into a vampire if Buffy gets to him in time.

If he gets his teeth into you you’re knackered, get rid of the fucker or he’ll be coming back for more , he’ll bleed you dry.

No funds, No fun

If you love a person who is falling into the rabbit hole you can’t get them out unless they really want to keep some line of communication’

It’s a really long process. And it needs a suit, not of armour, but empathy and trust.

The rabbit hole is a big one so at this time of year when people are thinking of dressing up in their birthday suits a rabbit is an easy one. Get a pink one or a black one in a charity shop now.

Get down that hole and you're barred, you don't get out of the dungeon until you pay up.

Its like something on the side or pulling in different directions. This character is in the gutter at this stage.

Please let me breath, take this zip off my mouth.

I didn't do anything wrong. I was put up to it.

Well you're not getting out of the rabbit hole until you tell us what's going on in the conspiracy theory. If you don't tell the screws will be even tighter.

Please sir, please sir, no more, Subconscious are the ones who see the world in different ways.

The government, the pharmaceutical companies, lying to you if they get lost along the way in their life then they get to snowball.

What's that?.