

Inkslingers Blended Session

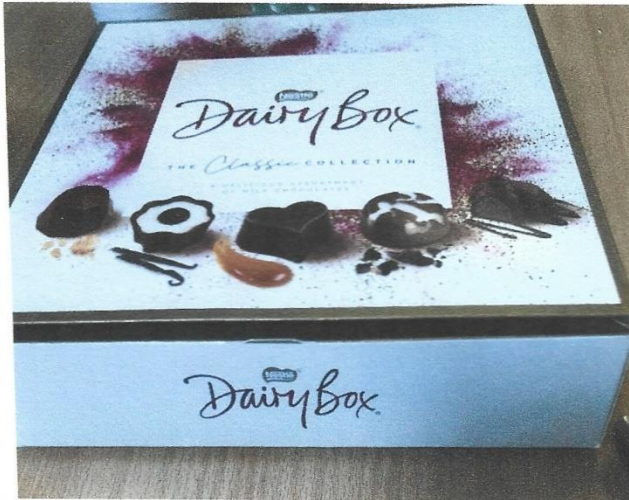
24th February 2024

The Prompt from The Bag Was:

“I Started Dating A Zookeeper, But It Turned Out That He Was A Cheetah”

Lorna Rose Treen

And the Visual



What's in the Box?

In The Zoo

Matthew Tubridy

In The zoo,
The Orangutang have their enclosure beside the cheetahs
They converse,
A live goat is lowered into the cheetah enclosure,
The goat looks around,
Cowers in the corner,
But ze cheetah is getting fresh salmon and so isn't hungry,
Goat and cheetah do the river dance for the visitors to the zoo,
They get fresh salmon thrown into them for it,
The flamingos go hopping from foot to foot,
To get an eel or 2,
The pandas hug each other
'They look so cute!' says a little girl,
Panda gets a bamboo shoot for his trouble.

Outside the Box

Greg Fields

About Dashawn Roberson's early years, there was nothing remarkable, certainly not for that part of the city. Southeast Washington, near the Anacostia, sprawled in low, dirty tendrils, and even on the brightest summer days, no light shone. The sun rose gray and set even greyer. The young men hustled, the young women preened and dreamed, the old folks watched it all go by. Occasionally there were gunshots, and young people fell down from them, some never to get up. On the streets one could get whatever he or she wanted, licit or otherwise, and the options seemed limitless – pills, powders, smokes, guns, women for the hour, men for the night, muscle, revenge – all of it and more for sale.

And it was within those streets that Dashawn Roberson came to be the boy he was. Innocence burns away almost at once in the heat of this crucible, and by the time he turned eight Dashawn had seen his first dead person, an old junkie everyone knew as Joby, stretched out in an alleyway, eyes open and staring at things no one else could see. Dashawn had been playing tag with his friends and had run around the corner to escape Tyrus, older, stronger and faster, when he ducked into the alley and nearly tripped over Joby's legs.

Tyrus followed him, slapped his shoulder. "I got you, Dashawn". But Dashawn did not move. Tyrus looked down at Joby's taut body, and the two boys stood there, saying nothing. The game was over.

Jayson, his little brother, followed Dashawn as best he could, mimicking Dashawn's actions, the things he said, the way he stood. Dashawn became father, teacher, playmate, entertainer, disciplinarian and watchdog. Two years younger, Jason was always there – in the morning when they awoke in the single bedroom they shared, at the breakfast table, in the whirling hours after both had come home from school and the streets opened up to them, holding on to each other through thunderstorms and arguments. No burden in any of it. Jayson was his brother, as much a part of him as arm, leg or heart.

"Dashawn, you ever want to have nice things?"

"Like what?"

“You know what? I wish we had a nice car that Mama could drive us around in. Something big and white, with soft seats that can go a hundred miles an hour. We wouldn’t have to walk nowhere and we could just drive by our friends and honk the horn.” Jayson paused. “That would be something.”

“Yeah,” Dashawn replied. “Yeah, I want nice things. A big box with all kinds of surprises inside. Gonna have ‘em someday, too.”

Jayson sat up and turned to his brother. Dashawn went on. “I’d live large, Little Brother. None of this scrambling around, and no one telling me what I need to do. Mama almost never smiles no more. She’s always hustling, looking for the next bit of money, looking to score some work. And even after all that we’re still living here, on this ratty street, in this little place with bugs running around the floor and old men on the sidewalks doing nothing, drinkin’ from their bags.

“Nah, I ain’t gonna live like that a day longer than I have to. I’m gonna get me the good things. And then we can ride around all day in my big car, the white one with the soft seats that can go a hundred miles an hour.”

“How we gonna do that, Dashawn?”

“Don’t know yet, Little Brother. I just know we gotta find a way out of all this dirt. Maybe we just get mad enough to stand up for ourselves for once, and just take the things we want. Maybe we just say to hell with it and walk through this world like men on a mission. Maybe that’s all it takes, and no one’s ever told us.”

“You think so, Dashawn? Just take it?”

Yeah, maybe.” Then he turned back in his brother’s direction, and a smile came to him. “Besides,” he said, “What the hell do we have to lose?”

It was there on these streets. Something immutable. A gas that wafted through the atmosphere, odourless yet toxic, or a spore hidden in the water that was drawn through the pipes and washed over tired bodies and was swallowed by tightened throats. It was there; it would always be there, a parasite that burrowed into the soul.

The young men and women in Southeast contracted it at birth, subtly at first. But it grew with them, filling whatever space it could claim, an intractable part of who they were to become. And as it did so, it devoured the most tender tissues of youth – the sense of wonder, the joy of waking each day to an ever-changing world, the quiet and steady thrum of aspiration, and promise, and that most precious of things, hope. It left behind the numbness of resignation. It left behind the embers of anger, and resentment, and despair.

Blame the schools, blame the economy, blame the constantly overwhelming press of racism. Blame the genes that congealed in the womb and made the skin black. Blame families that splinter. Blame the temptations of alcohol, drugs and cheap sex. Blame the politicians who live on the empty rhetoric of bland promises. Blame the rain that falls in spring and wets the trash on the streets. Blame the snow that promises a pristine whiteness but turns to grit and soot.

Blame everyone, or blame no one.

But do not blame Dashawn Roberson. Ever.

Til Tuesday

Matthew Tubridy

Echo's of sadness,
They play their songs in a currach off the Connemara coast,
The sharks swim around the currach,
The lead singer sings at a higher pitch,
There's a big loudspeaker,
In the cave which the songs are played,
The music reverberates in the cave,
My Dad listens to it as he gets dressed after a swim in the sea.

I Started Dating a Zookeeper, But It Turned Out He Was a Cheetah.”

Angelina Kelly

I had often heard that a person could embody the traits of an animal. I never believed it but recently I got a chance to change my mind.

It had been a while since I had been to the zoo so I thought it was a good idea to pay it a visit. Making my way around the enclosures I happened to meet a man wearing an official zoo jacket with Zookeeper emblazoned on the back of it. We chatted for a while and he beguiled me with animal stories. We got on so well and before I knew it, we started dating. When I met him first he was all sweet and nice, with a hard edge – like a box of chocolates.

I discovered that in his spare time he was a gifted sportsman excelling in running long distance. In every way he looked like a human, but it turned out he was a cheetah. His long lean legs and flexible spine allowed him to gain incredible speed quickly and then maintain it with no effort.

Recently we went to a charity fundraiser and he took part in a race, naturally he won which gave him favourable recognition from the female spectators, which he lapped up and wallowed in. I left him to it and went to the bar to get myself some liquid refreshment.

About a half an hour later he joined me, flushed and beaming from the attention and asked me what I thought of his prowess. I told him that I wasn't particularly impressed with his achievements - it's how he treats me as a person that matters to me. He nodded, looked over at his admirers then stood up and joined them, once more basking in their adulation.

I finished my drink alone and just before I left the bar I noticed him wrapped around a pretty blond bombshell who looked like a gazelle. I never saw him again – nor did I want to.

My Relatives

Matthew Tubridy

My Aunties and Uncles,
Verging on old age,
They should put on a cream,
For eternal youth,
Put their brains into robots,
So they can live for a 1000 years,
Robot Peter,
Goes clunk clunk,
Aunty Meave had wires coming out of her,
Uncle Peter is saying in a few years he can upgrade to a silver robot,
Their eyes will be made of glass,
Or maybe after they die they're out in a computer game,
Which I can visit to say Hi,
They can assume different animals,
My Dad will be a tiger,
What ever animal they want to be,
Or be a man made of metal,
You can go into any war and the bullets will deflect off you,
When a bomb lands on you,
You survive it,
But it's only the rich who live on in this world.

China Cabinet

Ciaran O'Melia

I always wanted one. But my husband says the clutter and dust would follow the China cabinet and there is no room for dust or the cabinet.

Then his father was sick, with flu. He is gone for the week.

By chance I met Peter Mulready a carpenter and old family friend.

"Hey", I said, "Have you any experience at making cabinets." "Just finished one down the road from you for a Mrs Eldred, as a matter for fact. Why do you ask."

"We need one in our kitchen." I said.

There and them we sealed the deal on a brand new cabinet.

Within one week that himself was away Peter finished the cabinet including the glass door. I stocked it before himself saw it.

I must say Peter done a fine job, but he needed to secure it to the wall, he promised to drop back. It was stable enough to put the heavy box my mother gave us as a wedding present

My husband was annoyed with me and the cabinet, he started to denigrate the work Peter done.

"Look at this" He said as he ruffled the cabinet and would you know it, the heavy box fell and hit him on the head. He died.

He had a moving funeral and was cremated, the ashes put in the box which I stored on the cabinet.

At the funeral and festivities Peter said he have to get the clips for the wall cabinet.

Every time someone would walk by it would rock, soon in fell off the ashes scatter

around the floor.

My husband would say, we can't have clutter and dust collectors in the kitchen.

So I swept his ashes out the door.

Dating a cheetah

Miguel A. Rivera, Jr.

Lorna Peters stared at the shared screen on the mahogany desk. The desk belonging to one of the two Private Investigators whom she'd hired. Robert and Martin Inc., also known as Bob and Marty, an affordable service of men willing to track down cheating husbands and wayward lovers. Those pesky males who often wandered off the beaten path of proper love into the bedrooms and arms of competing women.

The footage showed her Henry engaged in very flirty and overly friendly behaviour with one of his co-workers from the prison where he worked. It was some seedy bar that regularly hosted the jailers both male and female when they wanted to blow off some steam after a hard day's work dealing with the dregs of society. As Lorna sat watching the footage one touch became two then three and soon she lost count at how "handsy" the blonde in the video was getting with her man. Eventually, and after numerous rounds, Henry shook the hands of his co-workers kissed a few of the female guards and then seemingly left alone.

Approximately forty seconds later the loose blonde did the same and then the tape cut to a second man's recording from a parking lot perspective. It showed Henry sitting in his pickup truck with the engine running and moments later a slim, blonde figure mounting the passenger's side. After that Henry pulled out and the footage ended. Bob cut the computer off and looked up to see tears in the corners of Lorna's now very red and angry face.

"Now Miss Peters, I can see that you're upset but I'm going to tell you the same thing I tell every client. Wait till we get the conclusion of this investigation. Even if your significant other is actually unfaithful, you don't want to confront him without concrete proof.", Bob explained.

"I think I've seen enough, Bob! And the only reason you called me in here today is to charge me for more surveillance hours. I've spent a chunk of my wedding dress money on this. So thank you but here's a check for what I owe you and I'll take it from here." Lorna said, storming out of the sleuth's office.

The drive home was a dangerous one with her emotional state at great heights. Her car screeched into their driveway, and she began talking to herself. "I started dating a zookeeper, but it turned out he was a cheetah", she whimsically considered as more tears slide down her face.

As she entered, she could see a blond head of hair sitting on her couch and two cups of coffee on the living room table with steam rising.

"This pig brought her to our house? He's a dead man!", Lorna considered.

"Hi honey, this is Betty. I had her come over to show you some of her work, she designs wedding gowns and I thought she could help us.", Henry said.

"Oh, that's wonderful dear. You're so considerate", Lorna said, extending her hand to the blonde.

Millionaires Chat

Matthew Tubridy

Elon Musk a talks to Bill Gates,
Elon invites his children up to his computer game,
But Elon is switching from creature to creature so they can't find him,
Elon can make music come from the clouds,
Elon assumes a constant animal, a antelope,
He talks to his children out his antelope mouth.

The Diary Box

Elaine Reardon

The past winter was the first Christmas Celebration with family gathering in four years. Covid had receded, but people need to be careful still especially older people. The emerging world was no longer the same. Dinah saw her grandchildren rarely now, as one of them always had coughs, colds and drippy noses. They were young enough to sneeze and cough without thinking of germs flying in all directions. Dinah's doctor had cautioned her to be careful.

She'd grown isolated. She took her half hour walk each day to keep her bones from stiffening up, but avoided crowded areas. The family Christmas gathering had been her exception, and it was grand to be in a room with people, everyone exchanging gifts and song before dinner.

Her favourite gift was a boxed daily calendar from the National Museum of Art. Each day had a photograph of artwork, and on the back there was a prompt, something to write about, day by day. She kept the calendar on her kitchen table and began the month of January, looking at the day's artwork. Dinah wrote her mornings thoughts, perhaps what she'd done the day before, or planned to. Sometimes it was a short sentence, other times a cramped paragraph.

In Late February day Dinah read through each day she had written. She realized that most of those days were spent alone. She went to church on Sundays, sometimes to confession on Saturdays, and to the grocery store. When had the grocery store become a high point of her week? When had she last gone inside a public without looking like the Lone Ranger, masked up but with the mask covering mouth, rather than eyes? Tonta she thought, Fool. Life is passing me by, and there isn't enough to squander.

They'd be a change. She looked at bus routes and at how far she could walk. She got a local culture map and drew a radius, and each day began to walk. The first day it was to visit the bones of St. Valentines at a church in Dublin. The next day took her for a walk along the canal, then past a bookshop that drew her in. It was morning, not many people were out. Inside Dinah followed the books to the back wall and found a

back door that opened to a shared yard. Rain dripped off the rooflines. She moved across the yard to a sign in a small bakery window, CAKE, it said. She went in, ordered cake and tea, and sat a few tables away from a couple that spoke German. The cakes were tall, coffee steamed.

Life was sweeter. From this day forward, the Daily Diary described newly found corners of Dublin, bowls of soup, slices of carrot cake. Some mornings there was blood pudding at a breakfast cafe or an hidden cheese shop. Other times it was a newly-found statue in the corner of a park. Once she went into a fancy shop and tried on dresses she had no intention of buying. Dinah walked a new route each day, sometimes going into bookshops, or dropping into a museum. Yesterday she'd been up to the Chester Beatty and had a lunch at the Silk Road Cafe. Then she'd taken the elevator to the roof and looked down at the chimneys of Dublin. She took in an afternoon concert at Saint Patricks Cathedral. Her boxed calendar diary was fuller, with bright moments written. Life was looking up, painting by painting, day by day. Alone didn't mean lonely anymore.

Voice Remembered

Venus Crow.

I can only now allow myself to remember your voice.
That one time you were so beautifully free. Your head above me, a halo
of light, saint Anne.
Sunday Goddess Ma.

Us, walking home from mass, you singing
"Hi beautiful Sunday"
Your joy contagious, no one but you and me alive.
You always sang like no one was listening Sunday Goddess Ma.

The one thing you did without fear or care
Of what shrinking other's
Thought of your naked ,unselfconscious joy as we cringed in pews,
embarrassed by your unfettered joy Sunday Goddess Ma.

Oh but that one, beautiful day, I can see 0 you clearly Mam,
Truly happy and moment golden and
I can hear your voice
I can hear your voice.

Monkey Business

Tadg O'Brien

I started dating a zookeeper,
but it turns out he was a cheetah.
I caught him in bed with a zebra,
Sitting up drinking their margaritas.

I regret I was just so upset,
I decided I should call the vet,
to report this unholy duet —
unrepentant with their cigarettes.

But the vet he did answer his phone,
and somehow he was not alone,
And behold how his cover was blown:
Underneath the bed chimed out his phone.

The zebra he gestured with zest,
At cocaine lined up neat on the desk,
With a wink said join if you're able,
Our purpose here is to enable!

The whole scene it was a bit naff,
or so I said to the giraffe.
But him oh no he did not laugh,
For they were admiring his staff.

And for me this was all a bit funky,
For I am but only a monkey,
A monkey from a strange country,
My nature it is not so spunky.

So I grabbed the zookeeper's keys,
And I jumped out the cage like a breeze,
As I locked them inside I did tease,
And out of the zoo I trapezed!

The Slave's Release

Bridin Mary Harnett

'I'm a specialist, sir. My designation, sir. In stitches, sir. In avoidance of collateral damage.'

'Against trade, sir, human trade, sir.'

'Sir.'

The sixth day death –it's called apparently. It's done with thread, surgical thread, any thread...

The inside of my mouth has been stitched up on the left side.

Cleft split, for being of a perceived origin and for the religious practices of the other,

Spells stitched into the roof of my mouth of a crossed hex

Cheekbones,

Fever beads.

Mouth stitching is a kind of ritual performed in preparation for funeral rights and burials

Of any given dead body,

I think that glue is used nowadays, but they used to stitch the mouth before death – to make sure that the mouth doesn't open.

You know, an open mouth doesn't catch flies, don't you?

Except that, I'm not dead yet, although the feathered blackness of the angel of death came to my left side this week,

My fingers,

I'm peeling skin on the inside of the roof of my mouth so that their stitches become undone after yet another assault and...

What have I done? Or not done in sins of omission and not of commission, I should think.

Alveolar, velar, soft palate, however, you want to name it. The opening of the emittance of letters, they say in Arabic. The body's portal, you might like to call it. I travel out of myself and I ascend way up there and I hear the distraught voice of a man. I am in his company in an epistemic space there. We are elevated to the same plain beyond pain ...into the rays of a satellite star.

And I hear him retrieving a recount in his memory.

'Target practice,' she had said.

'Fire,' she had said. And he, threatened with the disappearance of his son, the loss of his son's life, as bewildered as he was, fired at the drop of a hat.

Domino dead and for what reason he did not know. Just people. He had trained himself to think like that.

Incarcerated in a lofty attic back room for following an order against targeted innocence.

Quick fire, single, a reflex automated action from a barrel of a piece because, you know there are people she doesn't like – the superior. Her takeouts are a matter of her discriminatory perception, based on a list of origins, religions, nationalities, in accordance with her darling hit list.

'He's in training now, I believe,' said an officer.

For herself.

His suffrage.

'Fire,' she orders.

Except this time, he's on his back, bare.

His life almost spent in misuse of battened battery. Hammered on a mission of justice.

She wins a sickening victory.

Old enough to be his grandmother, with white hair,
I can see them.

And then I hear someone say that man is not like woman in that. His organ must release. It's a kind of defeat.

Organ rises, organ releases, done as he surmises.

And what did I do to earn this?

He thinks.

The disease of disgust is evaded.

And how did I know?

The sun told me. Don't tell anyone.

Flecks of light, radiant rays bent on his room. Rays of brilliance on such a demeanour that I did not quite understand and passers-by lolling on the path on the way to a football match.

Covertly hidden, behind perfect red bricked heaped into a house of lesser grandeur.

'He's unshackled. He's free.' They laugh in glee.

'He's ours,' I heard them say. 'Yippee. We won him.'

Break him out, I say.

He has a gun, but he refuses to use it, I'm told.

Fervent faith in his heart, I think.

Jerusalem. He thinks to distract himself. Jesus, peace be upon him is in his mind. But he's Christian apparently. It gives him a sense of relief to in that moment so that he can release without resentment into a dammed orifice in his oppression.

She says gruffly, 'You are not very manly.'

I hear them.

He released into you, I think. Isn't that manly enough?

I descend from my meeting of the voices.

And I, undoing the stitches in my mouth in pain of surgical thread, I push back my gum with my finger.

The stitches are undone.

I pick out the paper spells sewn into my feet and arms.

And who is firing in Rafah?

I thought there had been an agreement brokered between the Egyptians and the Israelis?

Whom shall we ask about that?

The World will hold its Breath

Gerard Keogh

(Operation Barbarossa)

Like the great migration of wildebeest across the East African savanna, thousands of civil servants were dispersed around the country in that other wonder of the natural world, the decentralisation of the Civil Service. On the face of it, the relocation of some parts of central government to towns and cities outside Dublin appeared to be a positive thing. It brought employment and increased spending power to areas that had been lacking in both. It also helped move some of the focus of policy-making away from the capital city, and it helped assuage some of the concerns of rural Ireland that the machinery of government was too Dublin-centric.

For the people who worked in the affected parts of the Civil Service, however, it brought enormous upheaval. It was true that nobody would be forced to move against their will; but it was also true that if your section was earmarked for decentralisation, and you did not want to go with it, you had no option but to transfer to another section within that department or to a different department altogether. As a carrot-and-stick measure to persuade reluctant staff to move to Buncrana (no offence to the lovely people of Buncrana), or anywhere else, for that matter, some promotions to higher grades were contingent on the successful candidate taking up their new post in one or other of the decentralised locations. In addition, there were more opportunities for promotion on offer to those prepared to move than for those who chose to stay put, for whom possibilities for career development were few and far between. (These measures and others, such as the acquisition of suitable office space, came at a great cost to the exchequer.)

Another cost to the nation came in the form of a loss of collective memory that had been built up over decades. For all its many faults and failings, the Civil Service had managed to keep the engine of State running fairly well since independence. With an almost entirely negative portrayal in the media, it was hard to get the message across that the Civil Service got most things right, short-term political priorities

notwithstanding. As staff with many years of experience left one government department after another, they took with them the knowledge they had acquired during their time there. The subsequent change in conditions of employment for new entrants helped usher in the era of “here-today-gone-tomorrow” civil servants, many of whom are highly unlikely to spend their entire working lives in the Civil Service, as so many of their predecessors had.

Anthony Armstrong was caught in this maelstrom. Garda Payroll was among the sections of the Department of Justice that were designated for relocation to Killarney, County Kerry. Not for one second did he even contemplate going with it. As a result, he was presented with three options: move to head office on St. Stephen’s Green (not great, he was told); transfer to the Department of Social Welfare (God, no); or accept a post in the Department of Education (“How bad can it be?” he asked himself). He chose the third option, and quickly discovered how bad it was.

In 1941, Adolf Hitler declared, “When Barbarossa commences, the world will hold its breath and make no comment.” The barbarism that characterised the fighting on the Eastern Front was of a kind and on a scale that had no precedent in human history. Recent events in Ukraine have highlighted the Russian way of warfighting; it has shocked Western observers with its complete disregard for the welfare of its own troops, and with its willingness to attack civilian areas with indiscriminate artillery fire, guided missiles and drones, and by aerial bombardment. Civilians in the West are now being told to prepare for full-scale war with Russia, including the possible use by the Russians of so-called non-strategic nuclear weapons, or NSNW.

June 22, 1941, marked the start of Operation Barbarossa. The chain of events that followed the beginning of that campaign has led us to the edge of the precipice on which we now find ourselves. The world is the closest it has been to nuclear Armageddon since the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962. Actions have consequences, and this one was a biggie.

Anthony’s transfer to the Department of Education went through, and he found himself on the bureaucratic equivalent of the Eastern Front in 1941. There was an initial rapid advance through Soviet lines, leading to

the encirclement and destruction of whole Soviet armies. However, Anthony ran into stiff resistance outside the city of Smolensk, otherwise known as the Irish Life Centre, on Abbey Street, Dublin.

Like so many German soldiers of that former era, he became a casualty of war.

Rabbit

Matthew Tubridy

Dr Seamus O'Cheallaigh has a rabbit,
He gives the rabbit serroquel,
He gives it ECT,
The rabbit is his experiment,
He's called Fluffy,
Dr Seamus O'Cheallaigh,
Keeps Fluffy in his rucksack,
He shows her to other consultant psychiatrists,
He shows them how Fluffy was and how she is now,
Fluffy used to put her ears over her eyes,
After treatment she sings songs,
A weird rabbit song.

Two Pieces

Steve Huenneke

Sensual Sensible Intellectual

I'm not creative
I don't think outside the box
With dark chocolate

After The Revolution

Sitting behind bars
The zoo keeper looks quite old
Wouldn't you agree?

What's in the box prompt.

Mark L'estrage

The judge called the defence and prosecution lawyers to come up to him and asked, "Have any of you any requirements before we start?" The prosecution solicitors who were representing Stephen asked, "Stephen needs to get Zoom ready because if people have to support him from Ireland." "But he is not on trial here he is a witness." "I am not convinced because there has been a lot of accusations made."

Then the judge butted in "I Will get my clerk to set up zoom, and can we get this case started?"

The two sets of council returned to their seats, and the judge asked the defence to call their first witness, they called on one of the gangs family members who was a police officer and also a friend of one of the gang who was a bent cop.

He was asked loads of questions about the gang members. It was clear he was trying to get his police friends off the hook because he kept saying "I don't know about all the gang members, but I know the cops that are accused of being involved are good men and excellent at solving crimes."

He gave loads of examples of this from robberies and even murders they solved, the jury were believing this, until the prosecution put holes in what he was saying proving things that they did like holding Paddy and Stephen hostage the last time they were here. And coming over to Ireland and stalking Stephen, and storming the police station and making an illegal cloning machine.

They were done with that witness and the judge asked him to step down. The defence had a lot of witnesses lined up all singing from the same hymn sheet about the accused gang members talking about all of them being of great character. Which had Paddy and Stephen worried about how one sided this trial was turning out to be.

Then it was time for the prosecution to call there witness, they called Paddy and got him to explain all the problems they have had with the accused gang. He explained all the events he has come across since he

first met Stephen and all the problems he has had. The jury seemed to be very sympathetic towards Stephen at this stage.

One of the gang in the court started shouting "This is all lies Stephen is the one who is behind this, look at him, Paddy noticed one of them holding a box he asked, "What's in the box?"

"None of your business." The judge said, "You are in my court it's my business bring it up here." A police officer took it off him and brought it up. "I will have to give this to an army specialist to check it" He said to the cop.

Paddy looked down at Stephen and he seemed to be sweating and acting strange he asked

the judge "Is it ok if I go down and see if Stephen is ok" "Yes work away don't be long." As

he approached him he noticed his ears were getting big he thought Oh no I seen this before.

Stephen was turning into a monster.

To be continued.

Dr Miriam O'Doherty

Matthew Tubridy

Dr Miriam O'Doherty,
Finds the right pills for the right person,
We have a friend called Clozapine who is right for you, he will sit with
you in cafe,
He will be in the passenger seats when your drive,
He will be a hat to wear in cold weather,
The tag on the front of the hat will say
'Clozapine'
Dr O'Doherty was holding your head with her large warm hands,
But suddenly you go to a warm place,
And she takes her hands away,
Quickly replacing it with the hat made by clozapine,
The patients in her hospital all have different colour hats,
Saying different brands on them,
Olanzapine, Serroquel, Risperdal,
They think of their warm consultants hands.
Patient Roger used to have his head cupped by his mother, but then she
died,
He need the warm hands of a consultant psychiatrist,
And the inevitable loss of that warmth.
But he wears the Seroquel hat,
He still thinks of his mother and cries,
He lies in his bed,
In his darkest moments his psychiatrist moves her hand towards Roger,
His Psychiatrist understands Roger,
When Roger is half asleep he thinks his mother is floating towards him,
Psychiatrist stands where his mother is and clicks her fingers,
Roger had taken off his serroquel hat to sleep,
But Dr O'Doherty says he must wear his hat in bed,
In university Dr O'Doherty was taught how to warm up her hands,
Cup someone head,
How to quickly take it away,
The different hats to put on instead

What's in the box?

Clíodhna Joyce-Daly

He sensed this day coming, he supposed. The hand shaking. The “sorrays”, the “we can’t imagines”, the sweaty palms, and the awkward pauses in-between the blaring silence and the shuffling of the chairs. The staring into the eyes of those lingering in what to say to repair the blankness that would soon engulf him when the dust settles.

He spent the morning by the sea. Just as the sun began to peak from the mountains illuminating a clear sky much to the shepherds delight. The pull of the waves pacified the tumultuous night easing the morning into a new beginning. The fresh air would do him good, he thought.

The night was a treacherous one. Despite cocooning himself under the warmth of his guest room, he felt out of place and laid most of the night in uncomforted. The only sound that encapsulated the room was one of rain pelting against the slighted windows persistently throughout the early hours of the morning. He began to long for the sounds of sirens and disorderly lads shouting on the way home from the pub. After much effort, he sat up in combination of confusion and despair.

The promenade was empty, only the gulls singing their song in a search for food waddled along the footpath. It was peaceful in a sense and in another, a place to be left with growing thoughts.

Imagining life beyond the waves. Those who have passed. Somehow in the break of nature where reality had become stripped back, might be the point where the two worlds collide. Focusing on the growing light highlighting the cracked uneven pavement, perhaps might be the opportunity where so many growing questions could be answered. Silence.

He had to celebrate the remaining years, she had been happy unphased by the realities of her illness. Encompassed by moments with family and the last holiday abroad, he took comfort in knowing that they shared moments that was permanently painted in his thoughts. She lived a long life and a fulfilled one and although, the pain of losing her seemed paramount, he knew the last 93 years she lived made the world or at least his world a brighter place.

The promenade had been their own safe haven, the older they got. When their bodies once nimble and strong became frail and fragile, seemed like it was failing themselves. Despite the growing age, the taste of ice cream mixed with the sweet saltwater filled joy into the aging body and mind.

His grandchild asked what was in the box before them. Quite innocent, in a way, unsure of the long faces and quietness of his mother. Sometimes the comedic innocence of a child can alleviate a much sombre atmosphere. Much like his grandchild, he refused to look towards the box. That was not her. All pale, motionless and still. She was colourful, life-like and vibrant. That's how he wanted to remember her.

As the day passed and the mourning slowly became a celebration. He relaxed. The music filled throughout the pub singing of the time passed and the time yet to come. She would have relished this, he thought, such a beautiful celebration of life. The notes of the song encompassed his mind highlighting a reels of vivid memories of the many years he shared with his wife. Perhaps he would go to the promenade tomorrow and gaze into where the earth meets the sky. Perhaps he would find her in the distance, eating ice cream as they once had.

Driving to Connemara

Matthew Tubridy

You're driving to Connemara with a psychiatric nurse,
As you go past Athlone he says
'Time to take your pills!'
I open the car door and jump out!
Nurse radios his hospital,
We have a non-compliant patient!
I crouch in a field beside the motorway,
I sustained some injuries, grazes,
The nurse calls the Ambulance,
It parks beside the field,
The paramedics shout at me,
Come aboard!
I shout back
Will I have to take the anti-psychotics?
They say 'No!'
They drive me to a hospital in Athlone.

The Box

Nieve Nichol

I was milling around the old graveyard in Southtown. It had been raining heavily in our area. The ground was saturated. I often walk around old graveyards. It clears my head.

I look at the names on the headstones. I wonder who they were. What were their lives like? This helps my writing. I see names I haven't seen before. It's not for everyone but I find it relaxing.

One day while visiting one graveyard I saw something shiny. I moved towards that grave.

You see, it's 2090 now. The world is....

How can I describe it? In the 2020's, the northern countries were at war with the Southern countries. Most countries were bombed. The only countries that survived the devastation were the larger islands. We were one of those islands.

Back in that graveyard that day where I saw something shining I leaned down and picked it out of the muddy, wet ground. It was mostly rusted. I managed to open it. There was a small, sealed package inside. I lifted it out slowly. I removed layers of brown plastic to find an old postcard.

I could read what was written on it.

"The wars of the 2020's have eased off. Not many people are left because of the North South wars. They say they think we are two million on the earth now.

Believe in God and always pray."

I stood for a long time staring at these words.

Whoever wrote this must have lived through that time. There are only two and a half million of us left here. The Internet is gone. There is no air travel. It's very quiet. Some trains run on this large island. I walked out of that graveyard thinking about the postcard. Who was he or she who wrote those words and sealed them in a box.

Full moon thoughts

Venus Crow

I watch a documentary and think, I would have loved Pete Docherty back then.

Believed he was the shits, the animus to my anima. Not him you see , but the archetype.

The phone rings. Now i think what a fucking mess, that relationships are hard work, and I don't feel like working right now.