

# **Inkslingers Blended Session**

**25th May 2024**

**The Prompt from The Bag Was:**

**Jurisprudence Fetishists Gets Off on Technicality**

**And the Visual**



**El Capitan Mountain Texas**

## **A Mountaintop in Spain**

**Greg Fields**

On the loneliest days, the days when no one was around or, if they were, they were too bored and boring to be much company, DaShawn Roberson would make his way alone. And, if he were in the right mood, against all reason, he would wander to the library. Like the neighborhood it was old and barely maintained, but it was there, and that's what counted.

At first he went there just to step off the streets. In the summer, the heat would pulsate off the concrete, a visual thing, almost an animal unto itself, and the library offered coolness. That was its first allure. He would walk through the door and feel the shot of cold air almost like a slap, and he would breathe it in, free for a bit, and wholly human once more. The library was air conditioning.

But once inside he would wander the aisles. He had never been much for school. A waste of time, it seemed to him, where the teachers droned on about stuff they'd never need to know and where the kids looked for every chance to act the fool. Nobody learned anything.

In the library, though, none of that applied. There were no limits, and DaShawn could let himself relax, let his imagination take hold and send him to places he had never imagined. A wonder, it was, and completely unexpected.

On the hottest days, the library became his refuge. And there he was never disturbed, never teased, never challenged except for the ways in which he would challenge himself. In the library there were no thugs, no cops, no one tugging on his sleeve and asking for a buck.

On a day in late August, a day when the heat had risen to new levels and the humidity had wrapped itself around his throat, DaShawn sat in one of the soft chairs and looked through the book he had pulled down from a nearby shelf. Europe in pictures. DaShawn had no hard conception of Europe, or its countries. It was somewhere out there, somewhere remote. That alone made it special. Europe was not here.

And in this book were avenues where people strolled under the old buildings, and great structures that reached to a distant heaven, and the old temples and monuments of antiquity. Another world, and all of it as wondrous as if DaShawn had stepped through a space portal and landed in another dimension.

He turned a page to a place in Spain. Ordesa y Monte Perdido, and even though he could not read the words well, he felt the poetry in them. There was space in this picture, and air, and blue sky, and no people. DaShawn leaned back in the chair and closed his eyes. 'All the places I ain't never gonna see.'

When the librarian nudged his shoulder, he woke with a start. "I'm sorry, young man. We really don't allow napping here. I'm sorry."

DaShawn looked up with a scowl. The book still sat on his lap, and with the scowl he reached up to hand it to the lady.

"This is yours," he said. He stood then, and headed toward the door. Late afternoon now, and the heat wouldn't be so bad. He'd leave behind him all the places he would never see.

At the corner he stopped to feel around in his pockets. The pills were still there, and he knew he'd need a few tonight. Almost every night now. They would jolt him alive. They would make him feel something, anything, even if it were sad and brutal. Better than walking these streets. Better than being dead.

DaShawn Roberson turned toward the park where his friends might be. 'Maybe someone'll be hanging around,' he told himself. 'Ain't no mountaintop in Spain. Just these damn streets, and the fools who walk them.'

## **Bridin Mar y Harnet**

### **Political Entities**

I suppose I am politically imbued in an existentialist sort of matter. Yes, rather...

You see, what I see I take to heart and sometimes unconsciously by osmosis. Yes, I consider a kind of osmosis as I filter that which attempts to latch onto me - and I mean ideas, people and living contexts in a semiotic sense. This osmosis as termed in consideration is a socio-cultural filtering as it happens, albeit subconsciously. Call it an ever established protocol for living from which my guarded intuitive sense develops and sustains itself via a constant referral and self-monitoring system. Yes, I absorb people, places and things and as I interpret them to make meaning to bring to myself and I forage the benefit.

Sometimes my honing sense rather frightens me and I have recently thought that it is not my eyes which see rather it is my heart which sees. My heart is a seeing heart as I have trained it to be. Mind, it has a tendency to be subjective and resentful at times, but for the most part, its vision is sound. The problem is that I don't always follow its vision to take the recommended actions one might be expected to take after purveying on any given heart to figure something out. Yes, the tendency to procrastinate in the participation of life may be interpreted as a political stance by some, depending on the contrived or otherwise notions of a given interlocutor or interactant – present to the context.

However, a pause in speech can be very useful indeed, often covertly overridden by an idiolect repertoire of donned fillers, 'er' 'um' 'very' 'quite' which sometimes appear in the dialectics of the interaction of speech. Pausing in life to see can be meaningful indeed as energy and resolve are strengthened and sometimes redirected. Yes, it appears my heart is a seeing heart, imbued with spiritual intellect and with those persons, places and things, in fact life experiences, that I may have selected to reside in it.

I consider that I perceive with the eyes of the aforementioned as I write just now and in reflection I am aware that the greater part of myself is not me at all. For the most part I exist as you expect of me. Yes, I

consider that the selection of individuals to partake in my life process is rather a political matter. Indeed, my vision, call it perception if you would like, is as true and clear as those who reside in me, their experiences, their feelings and thoughts, the best of which become me .

And all is sheltered by a belief system in fervour which raises me to the presence of the Almighty God.

You are much loved and much valued. Do you know?

Probably not...

I say this in completeness and without a single political ploy of trickery. Yes, I believe in foraging depth in the faces of the beloved and in the familiarity of favourite locations, and I harbour as I have earned there – however selfishly. And, yes, I look deeply in the faces of the loved ones. Their faces I cannot leave as I drink their expressions so that I do not forget them when they leave my presence - so that I remember, so that I recall the beauty of each individual who has ever touched me, however presented in the myriad of humaneness.

‘What are you staring at?’ He might have said.

I might have answered as such, ‘I stare at you, at your lines and your creases, your intent and your purpose, at the light in your eyes. I stare at you to see what you might be for me. So don’t shout. I mean it and I shall never tire to look. ‘

Yes, such might be my retort in consideration.

And as for the rest of you there - at the beloved of my blood in whom I breathe when I rest and in whom I have lived for a very long time. The maps of time cannot extinguish you from me.

Didn’t you know that?

Yes, I shall call it a practice of political fielding, that is the actions of weaving social relationships to develop my recognition in God’s world and it’s not a game.

Yes, it does matter what you think of me. In a strange way, what you think of me defines me, unless in deliberation, it is all a lie.

But you are in my moon's arc and I swallow in the dance, my neck up-  
stretched and long every day.

## **A True Friend Never gets in your way**

**Mark L'estrange**

He dropped Mary home and before he left, she asked him. "Where are you bringing me next, I really enjoyed that meal?" "How about the cinema, I heard there is a good film on called What Women Want, do you want to see that?" "Yes, I would like that I will pay for the popcorn if you give me your card?" She said half joking but not really. He got home for Mary's house happy that he had met someone to spend time with, because he never had much luck with women before.

He got a call from his friend Fred who asked, "Are you around for a few pints in town on Friday night?" "No, sorry I am taking the girl from my job Mary for another date, we can maybe do something Saturday night." "Ok hope you guys have a good date see you Saturday." They went to the movie on the Friday, and they had a great night, but Mary didn't put her hand in her pocket, Simon being a kind person didn't mind, as well as that he had a bit of luck with the music work starting to pick up, so he wasn't short of a few quid.

Simon was about to head home but Mary invited him in for a night cap and then he stayed with her the night. She asked him the next day "What are we doing tonight?" "I'm going to meet my friend Fred for a drink tonight can we do something Sunday or next week?" Mary didn't seem happy with this saying. "Whenever can you fit me in?" "Mary, I have arrangements to meet him I will ring you tomorrow."

He headed home and rang his friend to arrange to meet. They met for a few pints in town and Fred was asking all about Mary. Simon said. "She is really attractive, but she seems a bit clingy for example she wasn't happy I was meeting you tonight and she doesn't seem to like to spend her money." Fred said. "We have been friends for a long time and would never get in your way of being happy, but if she is like this now, think of the future." "Thanks for the advice but I really like her I will give it a month and see how things work out."

## **A True Friend**

### **Fergal Canton**

In the heel of the hunt, Patrick Nee turned out to be a true friend to Lugs McConaghy. From the Brownstones of Manhattan where they played stick in the cascades of summer hydrants to the cold winter nights of stick 'em ups in the liquor shops around Brooklyn Avenue, the boyhood pals plied their trades. Lugs the apprentice locksmith, and Patrick the journeyman boxer never encountered a problem that couldn't be picked open or beaten to the ground. Brains and Brawn was their nickname in the Lucky Shamrock on Ocean Parkway.

Then came Carmencita Del Fuego. She was a sultry cocktail waitress in Whitey Carmichael's club The Happy Palomino on 7th and 82nd. With her dark hair and smouldering looks the two brothers in arms fell for her. Carmencita was conflicted. Little did she care for Patrick but his brutal looks and manners frightened her. She loved Lugs but knew if she revealed herself it would tear the childhood friends apart. So she acted aloof driving the two men wild.

Then Sonny Bufalino came into Whiteys and put hands on Carmencita. Lugs lunged towards the made-man, but before he could get to Sonny, Patrick stood and broke a barstool over Sonny's head, killing him instantly.

Patrick looked into Lug's eyes as he was felled in a hail of pistol fire. As Lugs cradled Patrick in his arms he heard the croaked whispers. For Carmencita, remember me. By the following day Lugs and Carmencita boarded a plane to Europe. So I'm pleased to meet ya. I'm Patrick Manuel McConaghy, now let's get this safe open.



## Ciaran O'Melia

### Gorge, Spain.

A true friend never gets in your way unless you happen to be going down.

Oh, how true that is! I had many friends after I hired out my eldest child, John, to a local farmer. Back slappers all of them, as I bellied up the bar, I was a great guy.

"Pints all around." Said I.

The barman looked at me quizzically, "Have you enough money to cover that?" I feigned shock and disappointment; I asked him, "Why did you say that to me, of all people."

"Did you see how many of my newfound friends are in the pub?" The barman said.

This is Ireland in 1951.

"I have a good idea how many are in here, but it is a county fair day, and the thirsty farmers are a lot of them."

At this stage, my head was spinning with the drink. I was trying to calculate the price of a pint to make sure I had the funds to meet my needs.

I blurted out, "Let me see, how much is a pint?"

"3 pence," he said. Although I was not asking him, I think he was trying to help me out.

Frankly, I did not try to get annoyed with him.

"How many are in the place." I asked him.

"200" he replied.

"Jesus, that is the whole mart,"

"That's about right."

'200 x 3pence a pint = 600 pence, over two pounds and ten schillings.'

'Now some of the cronies are on the third pint.' The barman knew what I was thinking, and the barman chirped in, "O'Donnell is on his fifth pint." "I draw the line at that," I said.

Yet, the back slapped me (as all back slappers would) and said, 'What a great man you are', so much so that I fell on the floor; I scarped out of the bar on my hands and knees.

"Where are you going." Said the publican.

"Did you see the crowd in there?"

"I did, and it's great, but I hope you're not trying to skip out of the bill." He said.

"Oh, I'm going to the jacks."

"Well, it's the other way," said the publican.

"Oh no," I said, "I'm a true friend who never gets in your way unless you happen to be going down, and I'm on me hands and knees looking for him.

I thought, 'I was in a gorge, living the hermit's life, forgetting about the Back slappers and spoofers.

## Going down?

By Angelina Kelly

Julia couldn't believe that Darren could leave her at the moment when she needed him most. The operation had been a complete shock to her, and recovery afterwards took longer than anticipated. Darren had flown home with her for the surgery and seemed concerned and supportive at first. He made sure that their house was equipped with the appliances she needed, the food required for speedy recovery, and that a steady stream of carers and assistants arrived each day.

When Julia came home from hospital they continued to sleep together but the drains in her side, and the fresh scars, the discomfort and pain disturbed her sleep and made her restless. After a week she was so distressed that they agreed to sleep in separate rooms while she recovered. This worked out well and she began to relax allowing the healing to return.

A care routine was established and his mother, Theresa, kept everyone in line and on their toes, his father, Douglas, ensured that all bills were paid immediately and in full. The Irish weather began to annoy them both – Julia couldn't sit outdoors and get much needed fresh air and her room became stuffy and stifling increasing her bad mood. Her family called every day bringing her flowers and gifts to cheer her up. Darren couldn't engage in his favourite water sports, and he missed his friends, and their party lifestyle, the sunshine and the warmth. Slowly but surely they both began to fuss, fight and fret and Julia descended into a morose silence.

Darren didn't know how to handle her in this state, and he became frustrated and annoyed. One night, alone in his room, he rang the Waterproof People and when Matilda answered the phone the sound of music, excited voices, the clink of glasses and merriment drowned out her voice. Moving to a quieter area she asked what was wrong and when he explained his situation her only reply was "I told you so, but you wouldn't believe me."

They spoke for a while, and she updated him on their current life in Florida and how their reputation as Water Sports experts was now

making them famous with the tourists and celebrities. He immediately decided to return to his friends believing that he was leaving Julia in the capable hands of her carers, her family, and his parents. When he broke the news to her she glared at him and went into an even deeper silence. The following day he boarded the Lear Jet and returned to his friends.

Julia couldn't believe that he could be so cold and uncaring and when she confided in her best friends, Sophie, her reply was, "A true friend never gets in your way unless you happen to be going down. Darren is not your best friend, he never was. For now, you are better off without him so that you can concentrate on getting better and perhaps rejoin them when you are strong enough.

Julia nodded and replied, "That will give me something to aim for and dream about."

Sophie and Julia continued to chat for a while, updating her on the goings on in work and, when Julia fell into an exhausted steep, Sophie covered her with her cozy pink blanket and left her to sleep peacefully.

Friend??

Gerard Byrne

The rash spread across her body like McDonald's outlets over a major city. Big red sores began to develop along her arms that oozed a mixture of blood and some kind of white bile. Siobhan was beginning to regret petting that rabid monkey while in Spain the week previous. She had been on a hiking trip to some gorge in the centre of a fairly remote park. It wasn't her cup of tea, but she had been trying to keep Roberta, her half Spanish boyfriend, happy. His mother was from Madrid. Something he liked to slip into conversation when talking to young women. This has drawn Siobhan to him in the first place. The chance of getting with a guy who tanned on a sunny June day, rather than going all red and blotchy. All her mates wanted him when he first entered Siobhan's life in that chipper on the corner of Barrowman's estate. He looked so sexy on his electric push bike with his pink Bermuda shorts and tight vest.

That bitch Becky had been her main rival for his affection. That skinny slapper with her boob tube and mini skirt. Flirting all over him like he was an off duty Chippendale. Dragging Roberto around the back of the chipper, lying about needing his opinion on something. Siobhan had knocked her out that day. Friendship over, but she got her man in the end.

Siobhan had only been reading one of those novelty beer mats in the airport the other day and it had a quote on it that really struck home with her. A true friend never gets in your way unless you happen to be going down. It had stuck in her mind. Not because she found it thought provoking. More to the point, she couldn't understand why a true friend would stop you going down on a fella, unless he was absolutely minging. She figured that had to be the answer. Siobhan just wished that these quotes would be better written so that your average Joe could understand them a bit better.

Siobhan stumbled over to the sitting room to see the trickles of blood running down from the corner of each eye. Her mouth had now frozen in place like a block of ice. She tried to touch it with her right hand, sending a wave of pins and needles up her arm. She figured it was time to call an ambulance.

Roberto swished in the door like an theatre actor who had seen better days, but still milked the encore for all its worth. He had flowers in one hand and a bag from Ann Summers in the other. He was about to kiss Siobhan on the cheek when he seen the state of her face. Poor Siobhan could of gotten a job as a stunt double in the exorcist. All she was short of was her head spinning right round. She put her arms out for a comforting hug. Anything that might mask the pain and anguish for a few brief moments. But Roberto was already out the door. He was on his phone to Becky by the time he hit the street running.

Siobhan was left alone with her thoughts as she waited for the ambulance to arrive. No amount of years of studying makeup was gonna cover up the scars from this mess. She vowed to never leave the house again. Well, at least not for the next two weeks. There was a massive illegal rave coming up and no rabid monkey disease was gonna stand in her way. It was at that very moment when her bowels gave up and her bladder decided to join it in sympathy. Maybe three weeks of recovery was a bit more realistic.

## Lordello part 2

Michael O'Brien

The leader nodded.

"Let's get to it",

The driver pointed to his right at the giddy biker at the end of the arc while looking at the leader.

"You can let ole' Shep here walk round to the trunk and take out my bag, where's yours?"

A mountain of a man to the leader's right threw down a haversack, thumping dust off the ground.

"Now understand if I have to put ole' Shep here down, don't let things go to shit, we can still do business, it'll just be cos he got jumpy is all".

The driver said this figuring that like all packs, the weaker less significant dogs were always on the periphery, farthest away from the leader.

The leader nodded his understanding,

The driver pointed to the man in question,

"Take off your jacket", the driver smiled as the biker did as he was told,

"Now turn around",

There was a Sig Sauer pistol in his belt at the small of his back.

"Take it out with the hand you don't clean your ass with, no use saying the hand you don't write with", the driver sniggered, still in his southern drawl character,

The biker's nostrils flared and his shoulders rose with deep breaths,

"Donny don't let him rile you", the leader roared.

"Good now walk back here and take out ma 'satchel",

Donny did as he was told and walked back past the driver, as he walked back to the gang the driver stood directly behind him and fired two shots from his pistol killing two men at his right, two men on the left of the arc both dropped dead in silence, Donny turned back to the driver

but as he'd no gun he stood off him, the leader fired off a shot as his man mountain bodyguard fell dead beside him, one more desperado let out a death roar and with his gun drawn ran towards the driver, who shot him dead from behind his car. The leader stood wide eyed with a hole in his abdomen, he knew the driver hadn't shot him as he was busy with the other gang members, he didn't hear or see where the shot came from. He dropped to his knees watching as Donny ran across the desert having dropped the drivers bag, but then suddenly Donny dropped like the haversack earlier, and lay dead. The leader followed suit and lay down looking in amazement as the driver approached and knelt beside him.

"Do you have a prayer you'd like to say?" the driver whispered in his own voice, massaging the left side of his chest now.

The leader nodded no,

"From what I hear there is nothing to fear, just relax into it", the driver stood and fired two more bullets into the biker leader's chest.

The driver put the two bags into his car and drove a little into the desert, he stopped and waited as a camouflaged figure emerged from the landscape and put the A-Tacs AU desert camouflage and Barrett M107 rifle in the trunk of the car and sat in the passenger seat.

"How much is it?" she asked, taking what looked like a cactus needle out of her hair.

"Don't know, I'll count it later and tell you" the driver replied.

There was a man who looked like a boy who lived with a woman who looked like a girl, they were both wise beyond their years, which was very wise indeed as they shared one hundred and sixty years equally between them. They had the feel, knew the scent, saw the sights, and heard the sound. They laughed often, never prayed, but were still, always. Their frugal pension was a king's ransom, they lacked nothing and wanted less. Each morning before dawn they sat on a cliff overlooking the ocean, they could feel the vibration of the sun rising. They sat like two teenagers in a cinema watching the opening credits of a blockbuster movie, they didn't need a man to bang a bong, nor a lion to roar in a circle, no digital screen could replicate this scene.



They smiled at passers-by, spoke to those who stopped, and soothed those who were shocked at the cruelty of this world. It was rare to see them leave or arrive, though they must have done both.

One morning a woman stood before them with a young child of about eight years of age, it was hard to tell if the child was male or female as its head was totally bald. As the sun began to rise, their silhouette made it impossible to make out their facial features or the colour of their clothes as they stood totally still facing the old couple. Sunlight began to shine on them and between them, like heavenly rays, which of course is exactly what they were, giving their shadows an extra-terrestrial air. Not a word was spoken, so no promises were broken.

Relax, all is and will be well, were the words carved into that bench they sat on.

This couple lived in a small town called Lordello, fifty miles inland, but they regularly had business on the coast with an ambitious young lawyer, and the drive on the excellent highway was no problem to Vanessa and Albert, taking a little over an hour.

After they finished with their young lawyer they would help out in a local hospice by the sea. It was strange to witness the transition on their drives from Lordello which was a dry dusty town on the edge of a desert, to the verdant green landscape of this coastal hamlet they regularly visited.

## Sketches from Naples

Shea Walsh



You don't have to climb  
To stand on the rim of a volcano  
Take a train from Naples to Pozzuoli  
When you get there you  
Are standing in an active caldera  
That stretches fourteen kilometres  
Not to worry, they will warn you  
If you have to hurry

Take the ferry to the island of Procida  
Worth just for the boat ride



White lighthouse on Cape Miseno towering above  
Ishia in the distance  
And the curving shore  
Vesuvius from this distance  
Looking harmless  
And compared to  
Where you are standing it is  
Sunlight and clouds creating Undulating coastline and then



Dramatic sky and seascape

Ever changing dark to glaring white

Mesmerised poets artists silent

Thoughts bursting at the seams

Where have they seen this before

Maybe in their dreams

Dreams like the clouds

Creating ethereal shapes

Only to dissipate and recreate Into the port

The quay stretches to the church

Separating the two sections of the harbour Beyond fishing and pleasure  
boats



Some arriving back with their catch

Men working hard and fast

Unload and clean the boat

They do this with pride and care

It is their life

Then home and rest



The quest begins again tomorrow  
Still wrestle with the fact  
They are floating in a volcano  
Sailors here watch the weather  
As all sailors do  
And seismic changes too  
People have been here since  
Two thousand BC or longer  
And I wish I could linger







## **Friendship**

**Laura Alves**

A true friend never gets in your way unless you happen to be going down. And even so, if you're learning to ride a bicycle, your true friend knows: Falling is the step to the next learning stage: get up and try again. You will fall again, but further down the road, until you realise you have fallen into all traps and there will be nothing holding you back now. So your true friend won't be preventing you from falling as, if that happened, next time you were to try if your mate was not there you would be afraid to have a go at it. "Who will be there to protect me now"?

The true friend will be there to listen to you when you are going through a bad patch in life. When life is hanging by a thread, he will be the needle to sew it in. When you're about to cross the bridge and feel it's falling to pieces, your friend will show you just what stones are hard enough to hold on to your weight and get you across safely.

The best thing of having a true friend is not just you can count on him every time you need, but you will also be ready and willing to help, to talk or just to sit down in silence if that's what the situation demands.

And when you don't have each other any more for any reason, you will still always be on each other's mind. If only I had my true friend here now...

## **'... or if you take their lover '**

**Max McCoubrey**

Gemma looked up from her crossword. Maggie was a last-word freak, she thought as she noticed the look of anger on Jessica's face. This time spent in the doctor's waiting room, for the three friends, every Wednesday at ten o'clock, was enjoyable until one of them opened their mouth. Then , the air would fill with the heaviness of recognition of faults and hidden resentments.

Reading the books splayed on the table was their only way of passing the time. Gemma always grabbed the crossword book, Maggie the English Irish Dictionary and Jessica loved the book of quotes.

Jessica, who came in here once a week for her injection had been told by the parish priest that she had dulcet tones in her voice. Ever since she had chosen to read aloud. The fact that he was only cajoling her so that she'd read at Mass had not entered her mind, or her vast ego, so all the ladies were subjected to Jessica's reading aloud until the nurse called her in at ten.

Gemma was keeping her usual Monday appointment. It was time for her check-up. She didn't need it but, since the doctor had become a widower she found every excuse to see him. She had never really gotten over the fact that he had chosen her sister to 'walk up the aisle. She lived in hope.

'A five-letter word for appointment book' Gemma heard a voice say and then realized it was her own. 'Diary' said Maggie as soon as the next patient had been shown in by the nurse. 'Not just a pretty face' said Jessica.

'Not even a pretty face' Maggie added.