

Inkslingers Blended Session

24th August 2024

The Prompt from The Bag Was:

have an inferiority complex, but it's not a good one.

And the Visual



Yo Ho Ho

The Drop

Gerard Byrne

Detective Graham Smith couldn't tell what was pounding louder in his ears. The sound of his feet

hitting the pavement hard or the thumping of his overworked heart that cried out in distress as it

wasn't used to being used this much anymore. It was normally only pushed this hard once a month

for a couple of hours when Graham made his monthly visit to the local brothel with a small bag of

cocaine for personal use. It was the only bit of freedom he allowed himself. There was too much

work to get through back at the office. Unfortunately tonight wasn't one of his usual investigating

moments. Only seven minutes previous he had come across a long wanted suspect in the weeping

children triangle case. A David Moore. He'd had alibis for every time a child went missing. But he

couldn't deny his whereabouts this time because by pure chance, Graham had spotted him kerb

crawling across one of the more quiet streets of Drogheda. All had seemed quite normal until David

Moore's car stopped by a group of young teenagers. Probably only thirteen or fourteen years of age.

Graham had watched on until one of the young girls got into David's car. He'd followed them to a

secluded carpark. That's when he heard the muffled screams of the young girl.

Graham had jumped from the car and ran towards David's. Unfortunately David spotted him coming

and had jumped out the door of his own car and took off down the road towards town. The young

girl was crying in the passenger seat but the detective hadn't time to comfort her. At least she didn't

wind up dead like the rest of them.

Graham panted and sweated as he tried to keep up with David. He really wished that he had of gone

to the gym more regularly. There was one in the station and it was free for all to use. He was just of

the opinion that his flabby bloated body was something that none of his colleagues should have to

look at. Bad enough that his prostitute friends had to see him like that. But at least they were getting

paid for the visual nightmare.

The distance between the two of them was growing greater, but there was more and more people

watching on as they got closer to the Main Street of the town. Graham roared at them to stop David,

but nobody was stepping into help. Suddenly David turned right and ran down the hill towards the

river. Graham couldn't believe what was happening. Was his suspect about to kill himself?. This was

really not how he wanted this case to end. The little shit had to be brought to justice.

David reached the side of river and jumped out into the darkness. Graham waited for the splash but

it didn't come. It was replaced with a blood curdling scream. Graham reached the edge of the river

and looked down below him. There was David lying in a heap on the rocks below. The tide was out,

but it was starting to come back in. David's right leg was bent at an angle that wasn't humanly

possible without breaking something important. The left ankle was twisted the wrong way totally. It

looked like he wasn't going anywhere fast.

Graham stopped to catch his breath, before lighting up a much needed cigarette. David was still

moaning in pain on the ground below. He tried to pull himself across the rocks but that just sent

another wave of agonising pain through his body, "help me for god sake"

Graham sat down on the edge of the riverbank and dangled his feet off the edge, "why would I

wanna do something stupid like that. You don't deserve any help. Especially not from me. I've been

cleaning up after you for way too long. Meeting the parents of your victims. Breaking the bad news

that their little girl has been brutally raped, tortured and mutilated. No, that's all gonna stop here",

he tapped the ash from his cigarette off the edge of the riverbank. It was one of those man made

cement walls that you get in towns and cities. It was cold to the touch and left Graham worried

about his piles acting up. But this moment was well worth it.

David tried to drag himself towards the edge, but the pain was too much and he screamed out in

agony, "please, for the love of god help me", he lay on his back again and tried to take the pain.

"Did Julie ask you the same thing?", Graham noticed the cars passing by on a road that ran the

length of the other side of the river. He hoped that no one would notice them. He highly doubted it,

but you could still never be sure.

Julie had been David's first victim. The first of eight. The case had been bungled from the start. The

deadbeat mother has declared that her twelve year old daughter had run off with a fella. That left

nobody really looking for her for a couple of days. That was until her father, who was estranged from

the mother, found out about his missing daughter and demanded the guards get off their fat asses

and do a bit of work for once. Unfortunately it was all too late. Julie's mutilated body had been

found the night before and was identified forty eight hours afterwards. There had been evidence,

but the whole crime scene had been mishandled, so none of it could be used. One disaster after another.

“Just fucking help me”, David demanded angrily.

“Then answer my question”, Graham roared down at him.

“She never begged or pleaded for anything”, David rested his head on a cold rock, “I drugged her

before she knew what was happening. It was my first time and I was petrified about how it was

gonna go. The sweat was pissing out of me. I can still remember how damp my T-shirt was

afterwards. I was scared of her fighting back. Didn't wanna hear her begging for her life. You don't

know this detective but there was nearly another victim before Julie. A young girl named Orla.

Picked her up in my car, raped her and was just about to kill her. But all that crying and begging. It

got the better of me and I let her go. Biggest mistake of my life. Thought that I was gonna be

arrested the next day or the day after that. But it never came. She never told anyone. Got away with

it. You don't know how that boosted my confidence to go after Julie. Didn't make the same mistake

though. You must have noticed that her body had no signs of defensive wounds or marks. She just

lay there the whole time. Even when I cut through her skin with my serrated knife, she never once

moved. Actually worked in my favour in a way because it lowered her blood pressure which meant

that it didn't spray everywhere when I cut her open and pulled out her organs. Do you know that it

gave me a strange pleasure when I knew it was you dealing with the case. Knowing that every time I

set up a crime scene for your attention, that the more shocking I made it, the more I hoped that

you'd be traumatised by it. It's funny the simple pleasures we get in life. A bit like you with your coke

dealer and monthly prostitutes"

"So you've been following me?", Graham didn't like the thought of him being watched during his

down time, but he didn't show it. He knew better than that.

"On and off. Wanted to see what your life was like. Did you have anyone close to you. Someone that

I might hurt, just to get your full attention. But you have no one. You're even more of a loner than

me. I was tempted to kidnap one of your brothel girls, but they were all surprisingly too old. Not

even one of them was under twenty. What's up with you man?. Why waste your money on a

battered loose fanny. Probably diseased as well. At least I go straight to the farm to get my girls. No

prior experience. Tighter than anything you ever experienced in your life. Thing is, you never know

what you're missing out on until you try. Just most men are unwilling to take the risk. I got over it

quickly enough after my first few tries. Now I just torture them to hear their little screams. You

wouldn't believe how hard that gets me. Don't need viagra or cocaine. Just their little screams are

enough to make me rock hard. You'll never know the joys of that"

"You're one sick puppy", Graham flicked away the butt of his cigarette, "the more you talk, the less

of an interest I have in saving your ass. And the reason I go to that brothel is not just sexual. I like to

talk to those women as well. Yes, they aren't in their teens or younger like your sick appetite

requires. But I like a woman to have a few years on them. That means they've lived. I can talk to

them about things, other than work. You wouldn't understand how important that can be at times.

Allowing your mind to turn off from the stress of the job. You like living in your sick fantasy. You

never want time off from that. I on the other hand need to get away from the sick shit you and other

sick shits do to people in this world. I need to get away from it all and those girls are the only chance

I get to get that. You wouldn't understand because you're a fucking psycho weirdo who is about to

die"

David suddenly remembered that his mobile phone was in his back pocket. It was turned off. He

always did that when he was kidnapping his latest victim. Just to make sure that his location couldn't

be tracked and used against him in court. Now he wasn't sure was it in his best interest to ring for

help. There was still this thin hope floating around his head that he still might be able to get out of

this whole mess.

"Insult me all you want", David noticed the water starting to creep up onto the rocks a few feet away

from him. It glinted eerily under the moonlight, "but you can't let me die. You're throwing away your

career if you do this. They'll fuck you into prison for killing me. And you'll have no solid proof that I

did any of the crimes. Is it worth ruining your life over?"

"If I pulled you out of there and rang you an ambulance. You'd just deny everything that you just

admitted to me. You'd spend a few months in hospital. Then you'd probably make a full recovery.

You'll get hopefully three years in prison for sexually assaulting that girl. I'd probably be fired

because you'd paint yourself as the victim and moan about Garda corruption. Then who would be

left to stop you?. No one else is watching as closely as me. No, this ends here. I wanna look into your

eyes as the water stifles your chances of ever taking another breath.
You wouldn't believe the

amount of bodies I've pulled from that river over the years. And every
time I wondered why

someone would want to end their life like that. But this time will be
different. A body will finally be

pulled from this river that fully deserved that death. I only wish that I
had the stomach and balls to

cut you open like you did to your victims. That's the death you deserve.
It's just a pity that I don't

know anyone that would be happy to cut you open"

"It's an acquired taste", David fired back with a smirk on his face. He
couldn't feel his legs anymore.

That was probably a bad sign. It was time to pull the phone out
discreetly and turn it on. Better to be

in prison and alive, rather than dead on the bottom of the Boyne.

Graham lit up another cigarette. His throat was sore from the chain
smoking but he needed the

nicotine hit, "not long left until the water reaches you. You wouldn't
believe how cold it's gonna feel.

You'll probably be dead before it covers your nose and mouth.
Hyperthermia will set in. I'm looking

forward to this show"

"I kill because it turns me on sexually", David fired back, "you're only
doing this as a way of punishing

me for my crimes. You'll never understand why I did what I did because
you haven't the balls to do

what I do. We all have dark fantasies. I was willing to explore them. You should try it sometime. Then

maybe you could understand your prey better”

A sly smile spread across Graham’s weary old face, “maybe this is my dark fantasy. Who’s to say that

I haven’t done this before. I’m sure you’ve looked into my past.

Researched all the cases that I’ve

been involved with”

“You don’t interest me that much”, David could feel the cold water finally reaching his left foot. The

liquid poured into his shoe. It should have welcomingly shocked his body. But it didn’t. All feeling

was now gone from down there.

“We both know that’s a lie”, Graham continued his story, “don’t know if you noticed or not, but

there was several cases that I was involved in were the main suspect either committed suicide or

was murdered by one of their gang rivals. Well, that’s what I wrote in my report and nobody

questioned it. Wanna know why nobody questioned it?”

“I’m sure you’re gonna tell me anyway”, David had a worrying feeling were this was going.

“Because nobody cared”, continued Graham, “law abiding friends don’t wanna be associated with

someone suspected or charged with a sex crime, criminals think their mate got wiped out by another

gang and family just want all the headlines in the papers to stop. And they do stop. People forget the

names involved. The whole thing becomes a distant memory to one and all. But I don't forget", he

put his index finger to the side of his head, "it's all up here. Every crime they committed, every victim

that suffered at their hands and the look in their eyes when each one took their last breath. Now

you are gonna join those ranks. I'll wait till your dead, call it in and tell my bosses that you ran away.

But they're gonna say, why didn't he scream out in pain or shout for help?, and I'm gonna say, don't

know boss. Maybe he was just too damn afraid or me and going to prison for what he did, that he

stayed quiet and let the river swallow him up. They won't question it. The media will be too busy

vilifying you, and your family will be happy when it finally leaves the interest of the media. So let's

just sit here. Lie there in your case and wait for the ending that we both want"

"What's all this we business?", the water was now up to David's left shin. The river was rising quicker

than he expected, "it's only you that wants me to die"

Graham laughed to himself, "so you really want me to pull you up out of there. Call an ambulance

and cart you off to hospital. Then you'll be put in prison while awaiting your court case because

you're a flight risk. It'll be a short trial because of the weight of evidence against you. Tonight's

events being more than enough to convict you"

"But I'll get out in a few years", moaned David, "they can't give me that long of a sentence over

trying to attack that girl tonight"

"But your name will be forever tarnished", Graham lit up another cigarette, "you won't have the

same freedom that you used to. Everyone will know your name, what you look like and what you did

to those poor girls. You could move to a new town or city, but I'll be there to make sure your new

neighbours and employers know all about your sordid past. Every fucking detail down to the age and

features of each of your victims. Your life is over either way. So accept your faith and let the river

claim another victim"

David pulled the phone from his back pocket and pushed the power button. He didn't care if Graham

seen him or not, "I'm not dying here", unfortunately the phone was slow to turn on.

"Go on then", Graham laughed, "ring for help. It's too late for you now. All they can do for you is

make sure that your body is recovered for the funeral"

David thought about his situation for a brief moment. Then something dawned on him, "I can tell

them about you. Tell them that you are just sitting there, watching me die. I'll tell them about all

those people you killed. They'll have to investigate it"

Graham wasn't even flustered by any of this, "go ahead. It's still your final words against my whole

career. A career that has shown results time and time again. My bosses wouldn't believe it and even

if they did, they'd still rather turn a blind eye to it all because the fall out from an investigation into it

will destroy a lot of good work I've done over the last few decades. So go on and do it. I don't give

into threats and especially not from someone like you"

"Fuck you", David fired his phone towards the side of the river, but it fell short and clattered off the

rocks nearby, "you're a murderer"

"Now that's the pot calling the kettle black", Graham watched as the river enveloped around David's

waist and started to take the rest of his body as well, "this isn't murder, just retribution. Somebody

has to make you pay for your sins. Being stuck in a cell for the next forty years is not a punishment in

my books. This is. Now please take one last breath before the water reaches your face. I wanna look

into your eyes for one last time before the end reaches you”

David did just that and stared at his nemesis. He could feel himself fading away. Losing all control of

his thoughts. Everything seemed to be out of reach in his mind. His proverbial fingers clawing at the

little thoughts he had left crawling around his mind. Soon it all went black and David was no more.

Graham waited a couple of minutes before making the call to the station. He made out to the Garda

on the phone that he just came across the lifeless body of David and that there was nothing he could

do. While he waffled on with his well thought out story, Graham never noticed David’s phone

disappearing under the water. The call it was connected to dropped off as the water damaged the

circuits inside. But the tabloid reporter already had enough for his story. A story that was about to tear apart numerous old cases and destroy the career of detective Graham Smith.

Rosie in the Rain

Greg Fields

At the end of the day Rosie Carter shut down her laptop and bundled it up with the rest of her things, grabbed her coat and headed into the rain. It had been raining all day, had rained the day before, and the day before that. The sidewalks were puddles, and everyone who walked them hurried along with or without umbrellas, heads down and silent. The gutters were ponds waiting to be sprayed by passing cars, the sky hung low and dark, and the evening lights blinked on throughout the city with no effect.

Autumn in Washington, and Rosie knew herself to be a part of it. A part of the pouring rain. She felt as if she were one of the discarded papers that blew along the wet sidewalk.

The metro was a few blocks away, and by the time she reached it she was soaked. No umbrella could block all that water, coming at her it seemed from all directions. She jammed into a crowded train where bodies sloshed against one another, and no one spoke. Once she emerged at her stop, she thought about running the short distance to her apartment, but then, what would that accomplish? She was already drenched.

'A glass of wine will be needed,' she told herself, and after changing into her sweats, she poured it. A few minutes later she poured another, the warmth of her first pour now fighting to tamp down the day's wetness, and its cold, and the tremendous boredom that always seemed so much worse when the rain would not relent.

Dinner was a leftover burrito from the place down the street, and, because that was not enough, a granola bar. The remnants rattled through her stomach as she settled into the lone soft chair in her small place. Nothing on television tonight, and not much of an urge to binge anything. Netflix was for the weekends, anyway. She'd not disturb the rhythm of her binging by indulging herself on a Thursday.

Rosie shifted in her chair, sighed once more, sipped from her third glass of wine, and picked up her phone. On the third ring, her mother answered.

“What’s up, my darling daughter?” A pause, and then her mother became her mother once again. “And where’ve you been all week? You can’t spare a few minutes to call home?”

“Ah, hi, Mom. It’s great to be missed,” she chuckled. “A busy week, that’s all. Lots of stuff, and not much of it good. How’s your week been?”

“The same. Always the same. But what’s the problem, girl? You sound low. And you’re calling me on a Thursday, so it must be something.”

Rosie sighed, “I don’t know, Mom. It’s been raining all week, I’m always wet, and I’m always grumpy. How’s that?”

“And why would my big-city reporter daughter be grumpy? You’re a rising star, or so I’ve been told,” and Rosie could hear the subtle lilt of pride in her mother’s voice. She had been paying attention.

“Ah, Mom, I’m no star. I don’t know if I can even do this anymore. Something seems off.”

“The awards, Rosie. All those things you’re being nominated for because of that story, that Dashawn thing. Those should be proof enough that you can do this. You know that.”

An accident, that’s all it was. I wrote a story no one else thought to write.” She sipped her wine, and this time it hit her throat with a new bitterness. “I don’t think I can do it again.”

Her mother spoke softly. “You know, ever since you were a little girl, you’ve worried about the things you had no call to worry about. You were brilliant in school. You danced like a swan. You had friends and boys chased you from here to there. All of it, Rosie, and all of it was good. I don’t know where you got it, this inferiority complex. Believe in yourself, please.”

Rosie stayed silent. But for the first time in days, it seemed, her shoulders relaxed and the tension softened. “Ah, Mom. You know, even my inferiority complex is below standard,” and she laughed, then marveled at the strange sound of it.

“I’m glad I called you, Mom.

”“Knock off this self-pity. You’re good at what you do. You always have been. And when they eventually give you the Pulitzer you’ll have permanent proof of it.

“Now, when are you finally going to get yourself a man and make me a grandmother?”

Inferiority Complex or What?

Ciaran O'Melia

They sat on a bench along the canal.

"You know-- and I'll repeat myself here, please stop looking at me." He continued,

"Ye see, I have an Inferiority complex, and it kicks in when I am with a crowd."

"You are joking with me. I never knew that." Said the looker.

"Ye, it's impossible, living with this now please stop looking at me."

"What does or how does it Manifest itself?" The looker got confused, as he talked fast.

"First, I get a tinkling in me feet. No, don't look down at the feet. Jesus, look at your own feet if you want to."

"Why is that?"

"My feet. Stop looking at me feet In case it gets worse."

"Jesus, you have it bad." Replied the looker. "I knew a man with the same or similar problem."

"What did he do with it? In other words, how did he get out dat."

"He instead went to the crowd, mainly Croke Park or Dalymount, or in fact, he played the triangle symbols in the RTE Orchestra, and you know them. One minute, you're on stage, and then you have to get up, and the whole crowd is looking at you."

"I don't like dat, playing in the RTE, sure I afraid to go on the Late Late Show, have you any more suggestions?"

"Have you tried an island?" Replied the looker, although his head was turned away. As if he was talking to somebody else.

“An island, ye say.” Now he was drumming his fingers on the bench like horses galloping along.

“I'm sorry, but you're not the only one with a problem like dat.” The looker slipped into the language of the shy one.

“What do you mean by dat?” Asked the Inferiority complex one.

“What, the drumming or dat.” Asked the drummer.

“I am talking about your problem with the fingers – drumming.”

“Ah, Jesus, we must get you sorted out first.” He continued, “There is an island off Skerries which looks deserted.”

Tom Thumb

Gerard Byrne

Tom Thumb lay on the long leather couch as he waited for his psychiatrist to arrive. It had taken him

twenty minutes to get up on the surprisingly high piece of furniture and he was still trying to catch

his breath. He looked up at the books on the shelves. They all had black and red leather bound

covers. Tom reckoned they were just for show.

Suddenly Doctor Feel Good strolled into his office. His surname came in handy when it came to

advertising his business. Wanna feel good again?, then call Doctor Feel Good. Back in college it was

even handy for picking up the ladies on a night out. No self respecting Dublin woman would turn

down a date with Doctor Feel Good. Unfortunately now he was sixty eight and when he mentioned

what his surname was to younger women, they thought he was some kind of creep.

“Hello Doctor Feel Good”, Tom’s voice was very low, but thankfully could be heard in the quiet

room.

Doctor Feel Good jumped with surprise, “Jesus Tom. I didn’t even see you there. I’m really gonna

have to get you a bell just in case I might sit on you”

“That’s not helping doc”, whined little Tom, “my inferiority complex is bad enough without you not even noticing me”

“I’ve an inferiority complex as well. But it’s not a very good one”, joked Doctor Feel Good, who

cackled with laughter at his own joke.

“I don’t get it”, replied a confused Tom Thumb.

“Doesn’t matter”, Doctor Feel Good picked up his notepad and pen and sat down in the chair beside

the couch and started to doodle scantily clad Amazon warriors as he pretended to take an interest in

the young man’s woes, “okay Tom. How can I help you today?”

“I’m lonely doc”, Tom pushed himself up on the couch as he spoke, “I’ve never met a woman the

same size as me. There’s not even one in this world and no self respecting woman would be caught

dead dating a guy my size. I’ve even tried those online dating sites. Posted just a head shot and lied

about my height and weight”

“Lied by how much?”, asked Doctor Feel Good.

“I didn’t push it too much. Said that I was five foot tall and a hundred and forty pounds”, Tom went a

little red in the face with embarrassment.

“And you’re actually?”, Doctor Feel Good was already onto his second Amazonian warrior. This time

with a pet tiger in tow.

“I’m not even two foot tall and I only weigh thirty pounds. You should see some of the blind dates

I’ve been on. I’ve even lowered my standards and still they look down on me like I’m something on

the bottom of their shoe”, Tom was nearly crying.

“Be fair now”, Doctor Feel Good stopped doodling for a moment, “they haven’t much of a choice but

to look down on you”

“That’s not helping doc”, Tom wiped a few tears from his eyes, “I don’t wanna be lonely my whole

life. There has to be something I can do”

Doctor Feel Good thought for a moment and suddenly he had an idea”, I know what you can do.

Saint Patrick’s day is just around the corner. You can dress up as a leprechaun and stand around

O’Connell street until one of those American tourists takes an interest and offer to show them your

pot of gold. They love all that Irish shite”

Tom had had enough and lunged at the doctor in a blind rage. Unfortunately he didn’t clear the

distance between the couch and the chair, breaking both his legs as he hit the hard wooden floor. As

Tom was being brought off in an ambulance, Doctor Feel Good reminded the young man that he still

owed for today’s appointment and the bill would be put in the post. Tom was in too much pain to care.

The Dental Mental

Miguel A. Rivera, Jr.

“A short, fun, trip to Tijuana.”, Like so many things in life, it sounded like a great idea when suggested. But as we all know only time and circumstance can determine what is a good idea and hindsight tends to be twenty-twenty.

My story began in a seedy bar just south of the United States border in Tijuana, Mexico.

On that particular day, my friends and I had closed yet another lucrative deal that enriched us further, albeit at the expense of many workers' hard-earned pensions. So yes, I was a monster.

A shared bottle of tequila led me to bite the worm or whatever was at its bottom. I remember it having a crunchy, spicy taste and texture, instead of the squishiness I'd anticipated. Immediately the room spun and the next memory that my mind carries is one of my molars spewing onto the bar smothered in blood from my own mouth

After that I had glimpses of my friends dragging me by the arms toward a small building with the word “Dentista”, which my limited Spanish translated to the word “Dentist”.

I awoke in what was a dental chair. One with rust and cracked leather as though rescued from the bottom of a scrap heap.

I was surrounded by bottles, plants, and a scaly, green iguanat hat sat on a shelf, staring at me with the intensity of an accusing, angry spouse. An equally ancient door swung open and through it walked a grey-haired, olive-skinned, Mexican man in a white Doctor's coat. His hair was a snowy, white, mane. Something on the order of Albert Einstein, and his face could scarcely carry one more wrinkle. Each of those wrinkles however, seemed to tell a story.

This peculiar little man glared at me for a few moments and then touched my right cheek, causing my mouth, to inexplicably and quite involuntarily open wider than ever, so that I could feel the joints of my jaw straining and cracking.

Unable to speak I began attempting to rise from the chair in protest. Instantly, metal bands looped over my wrists and ankles, rendering me a prisoner of this elderly faux healer.

As I squirmed and let loose every undignified, animal-like sound, he carefully observed the inside of my mouth, studying each individual tooth as one would a relative who owed money.

My uncontrolled saliva covered my neck, face and several puddles on the floor of this strange torture chamber. After some five silent minutes of contemplation, my attending captor finally spoke.

“Nathan Anders Corrington.”, He said in a deep, impactful, Professor-like voice. His discourse was in an utterly perfect, American-sounding, English accent. One that belied his ethnic, burrito-stand face.

“It seems you’ve led a horrid and sinful life, Nathan.”, was his follow-up comment. He continued;

“Teeth tell a story of the journey of your soul. This incisor hear for instance, is the one you used to bite Suzy Ackerman’s ear in the second grade, causing her to scream while the teacher was reviewing the times tables.

This other one speaks of how you broke your first wife’s heart by dating your housekeeper, and that one back there screams of your many shady business dealings which have impoverished countless families.

I could go on, but I believe you get the point. Now, what would you do different if I were to let you out of this chair?”

I could not imagine if that were a legitimate question, amidst the shock of all that had happened and how this tiny, creature knew with such painful accuracy, intimate details of my life. Tears of helplessness,

resentment, and finally repentance ran from my red face to join the growing mess of saliva on the floor.

“Remember, it’s not what enters the mouth that makes us dirty, but that which comes out.” The Dentist announced. He smiled and seemed somehow simultaneously satisfied and at peace with my acceptance at being a horrible human being.

The room spun once again and the next moment I was on the deck of my yacht, surrounded by friends and ladies in bikinis. I had a drink next to me. I felt different and wondered if it was all a dream, but then I touched my mouth and realized that one of my rear molars was indeed missing.

A bottle with a worm sat next to my drink. In utter disgust, I hurled it from the deck of the boat.

It now sits, untouched, at the bottom of the ocean. Upon arriving at my hotel that evening however, I found that very bottle sitting on the table of my room. It was then that I understood my mission. A mission that would change my life.

I have an inferiority complex

Laura Alves

I have an inferiority complex, but it's not a very good one. You see, when I get to a big party with a lot of very well dressed people, in the latest fashion and full of jewellery and beautiful shoes, with their hair done and full of make up, I think:

“Wow!!These people look amazing! But I don't think these outfits would suit me that well. I wouldn't feel comfortable in them and if I was out in the streets with all this jewellery I would be so concerned about it all the thieves would notice and even people who had not stolen anything yet would think about doing it just for the sake of removing them from me, just because these shiny bright things don't suit me at all”.

It's true I don't have a lot of jewellery because I don't have the spare money to go around buying them. But I do have a few pieces which I have been given on occasion mainly by my godmother and very rarely see reason to wear them. And if I did have a lot of money to do anything I wanted without worry, I would still think of better ways of spending it than on jewellery, beautiful dresses and stiletto shoes, which would probably have me fall and go to the doctor for injuries...

I do feel like a fish out of the water in these big glamour parties, but it's not really a sense of inferiority. It's a feeling of difference of priorities in life. I always put comfort above appearance, and if those who don't know me may take a while to notice me in the middle of a crowd, once people get to know me they will understand my point of view.

Johnny's Inferiority Complex

Mark L'estrange

Johnny wasn't happy when his dad gave him his shoes as he said. "It's far too warm to wear shoes dad, do I have too?" "Yes, unless you want to get glass in your foot and end up in hospital." He finally agreed to put on a pair.

Meanwhile Larry looked worried, Johnny asked him. "What's wrong?" "I am very scared of the amount of things that look like lampposts and you know me and them don't go very well." Johnny said "Remain calm." He had only finished saying that when he heard his friend Larry go ouch, as you can guess what happened, that's right he crashed into you know what a Lamppost he saw the funny side of this happened a lot with him being very clumsy, and with his name. Thankfully he was fine and they continued to go on all the fun rides.

Then they were walking by the food stand, Johnny's dad saw something very funny, there was a burger called the double lamppost burger, when he showed the lads they said. "We got to try this." They all got one, Larry said "I am full now, that was yummy." They all agreed.

The man selling them couldn't believe it when he heard Larry's second name, he even took a picture with him holding the burger. In return he gave them a meal voucher for the week. That made them happy. I bet they have no, no shoes burgers, his mam said "I am sure if they had they would be very tasty." She said that because sometimes Johnny can feel a bit of an inferiority complex, but it's not in a good way.

Qibla

Bridin Mary Harnett

Erratic weather really, I note. Even the trees sound irksome, or perhaps, it's me – ever so confounding as I imagine myself to be. As if seemingly they, certain identified personages wish to indicate that the otherwise considered attainable for most people may be beyond my capacity to grasp.

It's quite an expression that, 'beyond the grasp of an individual,' and rather an admittance of a state of unattainability. Then I consider benchmarking and the conditions of unattainability itself – here.

Exactly how can we construe the meaning of unattainability?

It's always someone else who miffs about such an individual of the 'beyond the grasp' variety, indicative of an inferior typology.

Not that I am given to lending my ears to the internal dialogues of individuals, but given normal circumstances an individual might mentor himself or herself into such a statement of defeat in an admittance of deficit and as inferior as you like.

'It's beyond your grasp.' People say that sometimes.

There is a myriad of ways of reaching for an apple which might swing from a high bough on a tree. In fact, anyone with the slightest iota of ingenuity might figure it out – unless...unless you are indeed led to believe that the given apple is out of reach and perhaps in deliberated attempts to make you believe so.

At this juncture, I recall family fun evenings as I might try to take a bite of an apple with my hands tied behind my back as the apple would float in water. Not palatable that at all, to be left with a wet nose and a shiny virginate apple, intact as it would float in the water of a half-filled basin, used only for the purpose of the retrieval of apples.

Aside, I tell you that the same basin is stored in a darkened corner and under the stairs for the rest of the year in its entirety.

Infuriatingly out of grasp that apple. Ah ha! I tried once and then with my broken resolve, I almost vowed never to try again.

And then there are those who would console me.

Consolations usually begin with 'Never mind' to cover an individual's disappointment of not quite being able to reach that benchmark at that pinnacle moment in time. However, such consolations are not meant to function to offset one's future endeavours, whether or not there is opposition in taking up such worthy struggles as the fight for life.

'Oh dear, that's terrible!'

The rain hisses insistently and I'm distracted and out of my shoes again.

Ah, there you are in all latent apparency.

Quite a smelt you are too by all accounts as epistemic ally bound as you are.

'And what third space do you inhabit – exactly?' I ask quizzically.

'Well,' he says. 'I'm boundless actually. It's quite a creative ability I have really. When I can't have what I want, I leave myself and I go there.'

'Really,' I say. 'Did you take me out of my shoes just now?'

'I won't tell you at all,' he says.

He looks down at my warring sandals and says, 'Then why do you feel that you are not in your feet and how strange is that?' He surmises.

'What do you call that discipline – phenomenology?' He thinks.

'Yes, I want to know what part of the epistemic space you have managed to grasp in its complexity.' He asks.

'Timely, I daresay. Yet I dare not wear it. I think that the strap itself might grip my incomplete self in it and then I might die in its surrounds...happily, mind.'

'Hmm,' he says. 'Gripping,' he says, 'And without a rendition,' he says.

It's the voice of the man a woman is closest to. My heart's shield I say.

I have a treasured dichotomy indeed.

September

Elaine Reardon

There's foggy chill coming
up from the river every morning
that burns off after breakfast.

Grass is covered with enough dew
to soak through shoes, and
trees drip their own small rain.

Morning sun finally rises higher than the
pines, pushes butter-colored
light through their dark branches.

Small sparrows and wrens appear
to stand on gemstone-cruled limbs
rather than dripping rainbowed branches.

Raspberries are the last jewels left
in the overgrowth. The groundhog
stood on two legs this morning

chewing coneflower leaves,
ears cocked for any noise.
He's become bolder now—

enters inside the garden fence, has eaten
all the melon and squash vines within reach.
Now he walks into the weedy corners to find

any last bit of summer sweetness.
I get to the raspberries first.

Sea Shanty

Anna Horgan

a boy of ten
when they captured him

yo ho ho
the waves do flow
pull on the oar
and on we go

a chain on his legs so he could not stand
a wooden oar tied in his hands

yo ho ho
the waves do flow
pull on the oar
and on we go

at night he called for his mother dear
the saddest sound you ever did hear

yo ho ho
the waves do flow
pull on the oar
and on we go

if his oar lost time, they lashed him red
Many's the day he was not fed

yo ho ho
the waves do flow
pull on the oar
and on we go

God took pity and his soul did take
hardly a splash did his body make

yo ho ho
the waves do flow
pull on the oar
and on we go

the sea in fury rolled and roared
Cursing all that were on board

yo ho ho
the waves do flow
pull on the oar
and on we go

Evil triumphed and the ship sailed on
For the work of the devil is never done

yo ho ho
the waves do flow
pull on the oar
and on we go.

The Rider List

Gerard Byrne

Slane 1992. A big year for Seamus Murphy as he was finally given full trust in dealing with the headline act. He'd been handed the rider list for Guns and Roses earlier that week and he personally felt like he had gone above and beyond to satisfy their every needs. A rider list for those not in the know is a list of items that a band or singer demand be on hand in their dressing room before and after the show. That can be from as little as a fridge full of beer to something quite extravagant.

Seamus felt that Guns and Roses had been relatively easy to please. He was just putting the final few touches to the dressing room when one of the band's roadies wandered in to check that everything was ready for their arrival. The grizzled fifty something year old ex Hell's Angel looked around the room in shock, "what the hell is all this?"

Seamus was placing a number of straws on a nearby table when he noticed the large beer bellied man at the door, "don't worry sir, I've got everything ready for the band's arrival. I have everything on the list. No expense was spared to keep Axl and the boys happy"

The grizzled roadie picked up a large see through bag that was filled with a liquid that looked a lot like Pepsi,

"what the hell is this?"

"That's the large bag of coke that you ordered", Seamus held up one of the straws that he had been placing neatly on a nearby table, "that's why I got the straws for the band. Be hard enough to drink it straight out of the bag"

The grizzled roadie rubbed his balding head as his stress levels raised fairly high in a short amount of time, "the band meant cocaine. That's what a bag of coke is. I'm sure you've got cocaine in this country"

Seamus was shocked by the roadie's outburst, but he wasn't backing down. He'd put a lot of effort into all this and no one was gonna knock his good mood, "if you wanted cocaine, then you should have wrote cocaine on the list. All these slang terms are confusing. Way easier to

write down what you mean, rather than expect others to just understand your American slang terms”, he even did the inverted commas symbols with his fingers as he said the word American.

“I don’t care where we are in the world”, fired back the roadie, “everyone knows what a bag of coke is”

“We’ll I didn’t”, Seamus fired back.

“Look”, the roadie had enough of this stupidity already, “forget about the coke for now. Did you at least get the selection of hookers?”

A sly smile spread across Seamus’s face as he moved across the room towards another door which he opened. In walked three young men in different sets of shorts and T-shirts. The roadie was really confused, “who are these guys?”

“You wanted hookers”, replied Seamus, still smiling, “so I got you three of the best in Ireland. Paul here plays for Mayo, Dougal is a Meath man and Fergus plays for Cork. Three of the best rugby players in the country”

“We meant prostitutes”, roared the roadie as he lit up a much needed joint and began to puff away on it.

Seamus went briefly quiet. He was beginning to sense that he wasn’t as hip and up to date with all this new lingo that was being knocked around these days. He knew that he had to save this situation somehow. He searched his mind for a solution, “I know a few girls from the village that are fairly loose willed after a few pints. I could ring them and see do they wanna come over and hang out with the band. But Mary needs a wheelchair ramp to get into buildings and Siobhan has a bad hip. She broke it last year coming out of the bingo hall. But she’s doing well with her recovery”

“Bingo hall!”, the roadie pulled hard on his joint as he dreaded the answer to his next question, “what age are these two women you wanna bring over to entertain the band?”

Seamus thought for a moment before answering, “I’d say early sixties. But they look well for their age. They’d pass for late fifties. Early fifties if you squint your eyes a bit”

The roadie sat down in a nearby chair. His legs couldn't support his body anymore, "I'm gonna get fired for this. The band will never trust me again. No band will ever trust me again. I'm finished", he noticed a see through plastic box sitting on the table next to him. It was filled up with bits of melon to the very top and the lid was sealed tightly, "what the hell is this?"

Seamus double checked the rider list before answering, "Axl requested a square melon. Didn't know where to get one so I improvised. To be honest, I think that I've done pretty well getting all this together. Maybe in future just write it down properly"

The roadie picked up the plastic cube filled with melon pieces and smiled to himself, "I'll have to remember that for next time. But for now, I'm gonna ram this fucking cube down your throat until you shit it out your anus whole"

Seamus was a bit taken aback by the foul language but that was soon overshadowed with the threat of violence. In the end it took all three hookers to pull the roadie off a frightened Seamus. The band went onstage and Axl couldn't help himself from announcing to the crowd that it had been the best watermelon that he had ever tasted. Seamus kept his job in the end with the stipulation that all future acts would have to write down exactly what they meant on their rider lists. Problem solved.