

Inkslingers Blended Session

31st August 2024

The Prompt from The Bag Was:

“Believe you can and you're halfway there”

“ Theodore Roosevelt”

And the Visual



Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Montmartre

The Church of Paris

Greg Fields

When she was nine, she went to Paris. Not on her own, of course. At the time she had only a vague notion of where Paris might be, and she would have been hard pressed to find France on the globe father had bought for her. But her parents insisted that Rosie not be isolated, that she would come to know that there was a much wider world than the one built by her house, her street, her school and their small suburban New Jersey town. Her father had travelled a bit, the tours that come to an enlisted man in peacetime, the bases in Germany and Italy. It sparked his own curiosity, and it was that curiosity that he sought to pass on to his only daughter.

Rosie remembered the plane ride, the long overnight flight where she could not sleep, alive with the excitement of the experience. She remembered her mother leaning over to her at one point and telling her, "There are dancers in Paris, Rosie. Did you know that?"

"Really, Mom?", and she sat up in her seat, for Rosie loved to dance.

"Oh yes. Ballet dancers that are the finest in the world, and even cabaret dancers. Parisians love to dance."

"Can we go see them, Mom, when we're in Paris?"

And Rosie's mother grabbed Rosie's hand and squeezed it, then leaned in to whisper, "We might have to spend a night at the ballet. Just maybe." And Rosie's mind then danced away the rest of the flight through visions of light and air and colour and the fluid, lovely graces that mirrored the soaring beauty of the human soul.

They spent a week there, in Paris, and saw all the usual sights, and Rosie's world opened like a springtime blossoming lily. The museums awed her. She was drawn more to the Musee D'Orsay's intimacy more so than the Louvre, which she saw as immense and somewhat confusing. They walked the streets, the three of them, and sat at sidewalk cafes eating fine chocolate croissants. They rode up the Eiffel Tower, and knelt respectfully in the majesty of Notre Dame.

Her mother proved true to her tease, and late in the week they went to the Paris Opera to see a performance of La Sylphide. Rosie spent the entire performance on the rim of her chair, eyes wide and heart racing. She had never seen such beauty, such strong and fluid movement, could not have imagined how powerfully the human form could tell its story. And in her fancy, she saw herself there, on the stage, in full costume, mature and full, filled with music and at the core of what she meant her life to be.

She did not sleep that night, nor much of the night following, their last night in Paris. Images recalled, and lights that continued to flicker behind her eyelids. If only she could be one of that beautiful troupe, and show the world that Rosie Carter, too, could move with grace and purpose and power.....

For reasons she could not know, among her images and fantasies was the sight of a church far up a rise that they had seen from a distance during one of their walks. To her nine-year-old eyes it looked like a sugar sculpture, light and delicate and delicious.

“What’s that, Mom? Up there,” but it was her father that answered.

“Sacre-Coeur, Rosie. It’s a beautiful church that’s been there forever.” He paused, then said, “I’ve been inside it.”

“Really, Dad? When? What’s it like?”

“As beautiful as you might imagine. Like Notre Dame, only smaller and quieter. I was in the army and a bunch of us came up here for a weekend. They went to the clubs. I went to the churches.”

On the flight back, Rosie thought mostly of the ballet, but she gave a thought, too, to her father’s strange admission. The churches, he said. She reached over to him, seated adjacent, and placed her hand on his. He did not wake when she did so, nor when she whispered, “Thank you, Dad. Thanks for the ballet. And thanks for the churches.” Then, at last, she let herself fall into a light sleep, one that filtered through the dreams that would press against her, and through her, and build another pillar in the framework that would become Rosie Carter.

A Matter Of Policy

Stephen Brady

Fintan Gall TD opened his front door that Sunday morning to be greeted by a young man in an ill-fitting suit, a phalanx of lights and cameras behind him.

“What is the meaning of this?” he demanded, still bleary from the Party fundraiser the night before. “Do you people know it’s the Lord’s day? My lady wife is still asleep!”

“Mr Gall!” said the pup in the suit. “Brian Glibby from This Week Tonight. How do you respond to these latest allegations?”

It took Fintan’s brain, still pickled from hours of Jameson and repartee, a few seconds to process this remarkable gambit.

“What in God’s name are you on about?” he bellowed, in a tone of righteous effrontery.

The young scut produced a clipboard. Declaiming loudly, like a slow child at a blackboard, he said, “A source has told This Week Tonight that they had an in-depth discussion with you just last night, in the course of which you said... and I’m quoting here... ‘Everybody who ever voted for me is a gobshite.’ Mr Gall, what do you have to say to that?”

Fintan was flabbergasted.

“I never said any such thing! And I resent the implication.”

But the oily whippersnapper was just getting started.

“Mr Gall, the same source told us that you went on to say ‘the dole queues are full of in-bred scroungers,’ ‘the Green Party are all lesbians,’ and... yes, that ‘the Department of Social Protection is entirely staffed by gypsies who’d rob the balls out of your sack.’ Mr Gall, how do you respond to that?”

Fintan was waking up now, and becoming agitated. “I won’t respond to anonymous allegations. This is just scurrilous scuttlebutt from some louser who resents my popularity with the Irish people.”

The little shit was fiddling with his clipboard. To Fintan's alarm, there was a second page.

"Mr Gall, the same individual told us that you said the Minister for the Environment is 'a yogi who howls at the moon', and that cyclists are all 'as queer as a nine pound note.' You also referred to the current Minister for Housing as 'a sheepshagger,' and the head of the Equality Commission as 'a painted jezebel who's spawned more bastards than the Emperor Nero.'"

"I'm sure I said no such thing."

The trouble was, vague memories of the night before were starting to surface. He'd been propping the bar, surrounded by sycophants from the lower echelons of the Party machine. He'd a few Jemmies under his belt, and he supposed he had gone on a bit. It was the occasion – the golf, the sunshine, the heavy dinner. And the libations, of course. A bit of loose talk was to be expected. But now one of his auditors, no doubt a little climber with his beady eye on Fintan's seat, had spilled it all to the media mandarins in D4. With the result that he, a two-time elected servant of the people, was being doorstepped on a Sunday morning by a weasel in a confirmation suit.

"Mr. Gall, is it not also true that you described the French as—"

"Let me tell you something," Fintan announced. It was time, he'd decided, to take this thing by the reins. "Wolves don't lose sleep over the opinions of sheep. And that's all I have to say."

With that, he slammed the door on the lot of them.

Fintan leaned back against the doorframe, and surveyed his grandly-appointed front hall. He mused, through his hangover, on what had just occurred.

He'd either just committed political suicide, or ensured his re-election as a copper fastened done deal. Knowing his constituents, he suspected the latter.

It all came back to the wolves and the sheep.

They have it wrong though, he thought. There's more of us than there is of them. Why do they think the world's the way it is?

A thin smile creased his face as he wandered off to the kitchen. From here on, his day could only improve.

Mindfulness

Bernadette O'Reilly

Mindfulness suggests you say I can instead of I can't.

Easier said than done. I started out an enthusiastic writer, at first, hoarding my writings like precious gems. Eventually I took my first step into submitting.

The rejections from journals outweigh the acceptances. I get good feedback from writing sites and my blog.

I have learnt that this positive feedback does not mean publication, editors have standards and those writers submitting have got that standard in their writing. I

left school at fourteen so can I be a writer? My writing is different from other writers, I am glad of this as in my life outside of writing I do not follow the sheep.

Two years ago I made a decision to become a mentee, my mentor was someone who knew my work. She supported me, encouraged me. Pushed me to be more confident.

My writing community including the Inkies have given me great support and encouragement. The result is a collection of senryu, haiku, haibun, which has just been published. So yes, dreams do come true, believe in yourself, say I can instead of I can't.

Mrs Franklin gave a great creed to the church and priests in the endeavour to see the light. This she passed on to Tom; it was as if they had met by divine inspiration.

In his youth, he was treated with kindness and a gentle hand. Gone were the days when he avoided his father, and the brutality he inflicted on Tom and his eldest brother, John.

Tom gave a wry smile when he thought about the Fair Day long ago, when John stood up him, and his father backed down. Thinking back now as a priest, he wondered what would have happened if his father had not backed down, and he shuddered at this. Still, a debt of gratitude is owed to John.

He thought about his mother, who had passed away and the quiet funeral she had. The father sobbed as he cried crocodile tears over his loss, and no John in sight. Mrs Franklin felt duty-bound to attend the funeral. But the father was up to his old ways; as they made their way back from the grave and before getting into the car, he witnessed the scene,

“You're very good to keep him.” Said the father, meaning Tom.

“Sure what else would I do.” Replied Mrs Franklin.

“Will you be wanten him again next year, Madam?”

“Sure, what business is it of yours.” The bitterness of the bargain she had, when deciding the value of the child, was still fresh in her mind.

“In case you forget, I am still the child's father.” He said.

“And when did you look at test scores, or for that matter, religious duties?”

“If I had me way, I would be up every hands turn to check on him, but you must remember, I don't have a car.” He said.

“That is not my problem, and I must tell you that I have a letter assigning Tom to me as a caregiver, signed by your wife.”

Defeated he was, but not dead yet. “Can you offer something for the funeral?”

“No.” The silence from her was deafening.

She and Tom left the graveyard and went home; he did not ask, nor she did not say

What type of discussion she had with his father. Yet she sent by mail a Postal Order annually for one pound, as dictated by Mrs Hines, to be sure he had no come back.

Mrs Franklin mothered him, and soon he forgot where he came from; ‘the past is the past.’ he pleaded to himself and started to call her Mom. They settled into domestic bliss.

There was nothing he appreciated more than a warm house and grub, and working with the gardener in the spring and summer months.

He finished the primary and went on to secondary school, where he got his vocation for the priesthood. From there he went to Maynooth College, to complete his education.

Mrs Franklin her heart bounded with joy as he lay on the steps of the alter to take his vows.

Tom now Twenty-Five was assigned to the Benedictin Nuns and they in turn sent him to The Basical of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre.

Daily he climbed the steps as it brought him closer to God, and he whispered his wish to be sent back to a rural parish in Ireland.

The Naf Table

Bridin Mary Harnett

'I'd like to book a table for five, please. About 6.30 pm, if that's alright.'
He requested a table for five persons.

In actual fact, it wasn't me who made the reservation, it was my son.

Anyway, apparently, there had been a glitch with the booking on the part of my son – my second son who took the step of postponing the initial booking. In doing so he delayed the anticipation of his siblings and myself, his mother, the reception of himself and of his lovely young wife.

He then rescheduled the booking for 7.15 pm Irish time.

His wife in all apparency in purchasing necessities at a well-known store had lost track of time in the consideration of the opportunity to shop and had rather left us temporarily on the lurch as to what to do in the half hour period, (between the original booking and the rescheduled timing).

I deliberated as to what I should do in the interim period and before I knew it, my heels had taken to me and there he was – a seated man of cultural consequence looming in his glory and on Wilton Terrace.

I sat beside him - Patrick Kavanagh.

I looked at his crossed leg as he sat on the given park bench in declension and in perusal of life as he rested albeit as stiff as a poker.

In fact, he had been unveiled by a former president as a drink to mine eyes bronze gilded sculpted statue, rendering him poetically defunct in his human capacity and in his present state however straight his leg may have been crossed, leg upon leg as it is.

Of course, I refer to the esteemed statue of Patrick Kavanagh as afore mentioned.

Yes, I must admit that I rather stared at his fine human form and I appreciated the freedom to do so since Patrick was not likely to return from the grave to inhabit his statue being of the dead variety of human.

Yes, there is a certain fear abound of souls who search for imbueement, a phenomenon to be avoided indeed and I have to say that I am not about to don my breath of life to a statue.

The following repartee may have occurred:

'Well Patrick,' I might have said, being on first name terms with Patrick since I pass the very same statue en route to work every morning. "You did manage to raise the mundane to significance, the banal to the extraordinary but you left me without an iota of consideration.'

'Patrick,' I exclaimed, 'I am a neglected woman indeed. In fact, I am not worded at all in any of your accounts.'

'No, don't look at me when I speak to you in sincerity, look at the stagnant water and raise that in importance.' (At this juncture, I imagine that Patrick is a real attentive and loving man.)

'What about using the word dredging, dredge and derivatives thereof...' I suggest.

Whoops, I in momentary recognition, I had forgotten that Patrick had indeed written about the canal whilst seated at the very same spot.

In fact, as Patrick is unable to respond to my repartee, I continue in the same vein of conversation. In hindsight, I should really talk to my therapist about... about... I don't know, about something.

Yes, then there's the restaurant. As I sat on the banks of the canal, I imagined the following conversation.

'She likes plants,' they said. 'Put them there so she can consider the merits of botany as she eats.'

'You know, the peering above the rushes movements to see what is on the other side, sort of thing... It's a pity that the plants are plastic though. Don't squash them against the table, mind. The best service, mind.

Pure Chinese and appreciative of the value of customers, mind. The table is a bit naf, it's too near the door – drafty, perhaps. Near the exit, but it will do.'

They might have said such a thing.

Yes, indeed, I might have heard such a rendered conversation. This reminds me to tell my children to indicate the description of the desired seating area when making a reservation so as not to fall prey to the exit variety of seating.

And where were we?

Well, in fact we were late. Late arrivals are better late than never, better late than to earn the description of a serial reservation canceller. We filed in, one after another after awkward hugs on the Ballzie with lithe arms and – not received very well - as I considered so.

A reticent hug might indicate that one is not liked – perhaps.

The table, imbibed with many evenings of banter and food of guests was overridden by palatable meals which were served with precision.

Our sizzling dishes were delectable indeed.

Pity about Patrick sitting on the bench and in remembrance of the same...

When we find him on God's right hand.

In appreciation thereof.