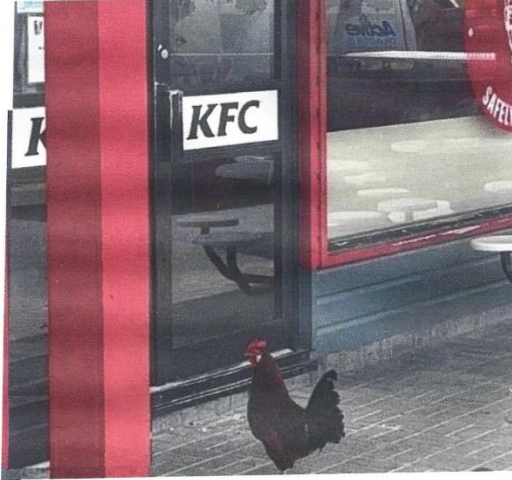


# Inkslingers Blended Session

19th October 2024

The Prompt from The Bag Was:



*"I just deleted all the German  
names off my phone.*

*It's Hans free."*

*Darren Walsh*

## **Glint of a Badge**

**Greg Fields**

Officer Rojas never ducked an assignment. After fifteen years he had learned that the badge provided both protection and provocation, and that those with less than honorable intent would do whatever it is they would do whether he had his shield or not. What mattered to Rojas was being alert, being sensitive, and, in the end, recognizing that not all stories had to have happy endings.

When the echo from the gun that ended Dashawn Roberson's life has wafted away, when all the reports had been filed and the adjudications dispensed, the city discovered once again that some wounds do not heal either quickly or well, that some fester and are picked at by those who feel them most deeply.

There were a handful of news conferences in the days that followed, angry denunciations of the city's inaction in curtailing gun violence coupled with the fiery resentment that a young black boy had been gunned down by an older white man. There were distortions and exaggerations, the skewing of circumstances into realities that may or may not have been relevant.

Below it all there was anger, and the Roberson shooting had been a catalyst for its release. But it could have been anything, really. A traffic accident in the wrong part of town, an argument between friends that got out of hand, even the home team winning a championship – anything that allowed an emotional explosion. This time it happened to be a shooting, and the community vented a long-simmering anger that represented every frustration, every slight, every hardship that they collectively shared. This time it showed them the suggestion that their day-to-day struggles for dignity, the struggle to be heard, might not be worth the effort.

A group had coalesced to march along K Street all the way to city hall. The group was relatively polite, and relatively small, maybe a few dozen. But they were loud, and they took enough space to warrant police attention to keep them safe from the traffic on the streets and to ward

off any of the loose acts that frustration can engender. Thomas Rojas stood near city hall as they approached.

It was there that they stopped, and the leader, an older woman in whom Rojas could read the anger, and behind it a subliminal fear, stepped forward. "We need to claim these steps, Officer."

Rojas stepped aside, and in fact offered his arm to lead her to the side of the main entrance. "As long as you don't obstruct the comings and goings, ma'am. I know you have a permit."

The woman grunted, and others in the group followed her steps. "Never thought I'd be taking the arm of a policeman." She paused as they got to the place where she would make her remarks. "You know, if that old cracker hadn't shot Dashawn, it's just as likely that one of you blue-shirted thugs would have done it."

Rojas had heard such things before, and he knew enough to shrug it off. "Sorry you feel that way, ma'am," then turned to his usual font of humor and charm to diffuse the woman's smouldering resentment. "You're making me feel like a chicken who walked into a KFC."

The woman stopped and turned to him, eyes firmly on his. "But you're the one holding the cleaver. This ain't no joke, officer."

"I know, ma'am. It's a tragedy. Don't think I don't know it. Don't think I don't feel it. I see it everyday, ma'am, and in ways you can't imagine."

Officer Rojas released her arm, then turned to the side, giving her and her group all the room they needed for their remarks. He noted one, maybe two, reporters taking disinterested notes that would go into yet another bland story that normalized it all – the anger, the shooting, the needless death of one too young.

'Just another day in this goddamned city. And here I am again. Like always,' he thought to himself as the sunlight glinted off his badge..

## Education

Ciaran O'Melia

Innocence is running home, away from indoctrination,  
He is etched with a fear that drives him on at a hectic pace,  
'She'll know, she'll have the answer, it can't be true'.  
"Hello lovee", calls out the dammed, 'oh no'.  
No pleasantries now as he bursts in the door,  
"I heard a terrible thing today, you must tell me" She is not alarmed, this  
is the sixth of six,  
each with their own drama.

"Will Mrs. Steinberg or Mr. Wren go to hell?"  
An infectious benevolent smile  
'Oh, dear what are they putting in his head now'  
"Well if Mrs. Steinberg is very good she will go to Heaven"  
"What about Mr. Wren?"  
"Again, he has to be very good"

English for 14 year olds, with (swaggel toothed) Gandhi conducting,  
Leonidas has the shite beaten out of Xerxes,  
Street door burst open, "howye boys", with a wild wave of the arm, he's  
back, scraggly long haired , unkempt, dirty, our intermission,  
"howye" chorus reply, expecting the fun to start "SHUT UP" Gandhi  
roars at the learning sponges,  
"and you, get out", he screams, with no yoga salutation, "Heads in the  
books boys" smiles the victorious raggedy one, slamming the door  
behind him.

Cook St., five years later, 'was that him?',  
The hair and appearance has not changed,  
He presses to the wall, as if in preparation for some misdeed  
'please say he is not--- my hero , he can't be' Turning swiftly he drifts  
into the passing crowd, un-noticed leaving behind "Kilroy was here"  
white chalked.

Camden St. a clear Spring afternoon, no cares, with time to spare.

Hawkers beckon their customers with “the last of the oranges” I see her walking, old, emaciated, grey hair pulled tightly back, gabardine coat, dirty, held across her by two spindly arms.

Students ? maybe, office workers?, accountants?, Two suited conversationalist walk towards her, oblivious.

They are going to collide!

But like a river passing an island they part, as they do

She flashes them, “what do you think of these boys”

Biafra body with sagging breasts,

On the lee side they turn a questioning smiling head,

She also smiles a wicked smile,

‘I’m terrible bold, me Mammy will kill me’.

Dorset St. happy days are warm days, soft winds lift, whirl dust, paper, mini tornados. They too are happy, four toffs after a liquid lunch in their enclosed comfort paused at the lights, the deal is done, the hair is down, their faces hurt with laughter.

I see him close by, knew him as a mad man,

never any trouble, but stay away and leave alone.

Dark clothes, never changes, 3 piece, with trilby,

Stands out in a crowd, never mind an ‘after liquid lunch group’,

“How about the races” cries the leader of the pack,

“Races” he lets out a shout “I’m your only man Let me in” grabs the door.

Merriment turns quickly to fear and shock, “Drive on, wind up the window, Oh, Jesus”

The jockey grabs hold of the mirror.

“I’m with ye boys”

“Drive on” they plead with the leader, slowly at first,

“let her rip boys, we can win this one, let her fucking rip”

He’s on the outside rails now, trotting like a trotter,

Whipping the rump of the horse with all his might,

Inside, the deal is undone, ‘we’re in danger’ the leader regrets the last pint.

As quickly as it started it finished

The jockey dismounted and bowed to the applause of  
The galleried spectators in the flats,  
Somewhere in corporate land the leader is making excuses.

Chancery Row, heading to the river, strolling, leisurely,  
My older companion and I discuss whatever, wherever, the world at  
large. We see her, passed out on the footpath, the dark river of urine,  
makes more of an impression than the major flow we are about to  
cross,

do we, like our fellow travellers step around her and her piss?  
Anxious to get beyond the bag of rags, sorrowful sight, and cruel  
thoughts.

“She is somebody’s Daughter or somebody’s Mother”  
Whispers my companion, who left school after Primary.

## **I Just Deleted All The German Names From My Phone. It's now Hans Free. - Darren Walsh**

**Angelina Kelly**

My phone had become bogged down with unnecessary information – dead wood I call it – and in this era of GDPR and cyber security I decided to do a clear out.

First I deleted all the emails going back several years. Then cleared the photos of everybody's moist babies and proud kids with trophies and then moved on to the contact lists.

People I hadn't heard from for years were the first to go, then the organisations I'm no longer a member of and finally all the German names I no longer need. It felt good to get rid of it all.

Now my phone is Hans free and ready for the next lot of useless information.

## **Kentucky Fried**

### **Mark L'estrange**

Billy asked, "How did you know I have got a costume? I recently got one, I think I will put a sign in called Hoover monster on the front of it."

They both said, "That's a great idea." Larry said, "I almost forgot about my costume I got in Florida." "Oh yeah, you got to tell Billy about that story I'm sure he will find it very funny."

when he told him he said, "I'm jealous I wish I was with you guys, I would say Florida is a great place?"

The next day was Friday, and they had a half day from school, they all had their pocket money, so they headed to KFC, Larry couldn't believe what they were selling a KFC lamppost burger, like the one in Florida, it turned out the same man who worked in the park had moved to Dublin with his burger idea.

This was great for the lads because he remembered him and sorted them all out with free food, and he even offered Larry a job advertising the new burger with his unique name.

They all headed home with full belly's and big smiles on their faces, Larry said, "what a perfect." but as usual he didn't get to finish he had a problem with a bumping into a you know what again.

To be continued



## **The Best Happiness Ever**

**Heloisa Prieto and Victor Scatolin**

Valentina's body seemed to oat over her bed, everytime she coughed. Sneezing.

Tears in her eyes, fatigue, hoarseness.

How bad she wished to feel well again. To run down the stairs and walk around the street.

Valentina gazed at the open window. The sun shone over the treetops, the more she looked outside, the more restless she felt.

How much she wished she had traveled to her Grannie's house, to play with her cousin, to eat fresh fruits, to learn new limericks.

She rolled over her bed. She just could not nd a way to relax. Her fatigue was so deep, she could not fall asleep either.

"Dear, how are you feeling?"

Valentina raised her face from the pillow and smiled at her mother. On that speci c afternoon, surrounded by blankets, piles of tissue, over her bed table, not even the mobile caught her attention. Yet, the tea tray, holding her favorite cup, the delicious smell of chamomile tea, the chocolate cookies dish, the cute little fruit salad bowl, made her happy.

Tatiana, her mother, sat by the bed and stared at her child, while trying not to show how worried she actually was. She said:

"Grandma has sent fruits from her garden. I want you to recover soon, but a strong u like yours needs some time to heal."

"I miss Grannie so much... and my cousins as well... I wish the three of us could get together at her cottage as we always do..."

On her second day in bed, Valentina could already manage to sit, so she asked to move to the living room. Her body wanted to run, to play, but she was still coughing and feeling exhausted.

The view from the living room window was di erent. Valentina could see the sky. And just by looking at the clouds, she felt a bit stronger. She loved to sit by the windows, in their homes, in the car, at school,

anywhere at all. Some windows showed an almost motionless world, where trees stood still and only birds could move around. Others, such as car windows, bus windows, and train windows, seemed to be in motion, running through streets, houses, people and animals.

That night, Valentina fell asleep thinking she had to tell her cousin they should play a drawing windows game. It would be their special hobby, and maybe other people would not really understand why window drawing could be so much fun. There is nothing better than having a funny hobby with one's best friend.

Yet, because Guto and Valentina did not live in the same town, their meeting point had always been their grannie's. Guto could peel fruits so quickly. Every time she visited her grandma, they ate fruits in the garden together. Guto could make limericks, in no time, just like granny. On the third day, in her living room, Valentina could already watch movies on her TV. She could also walk around a bit. As she wanted to eat some fruits, she went to the fridge and xed herself a fresh salad. Suddenly, Valentina noticed the sky was clouded. Her mother came in bringing her a comfy coat.

"Your aunt Nicole has texted saying there was a storm in her town. It was a bit scary. But there is a rainbow across the sky now."

Valentina asked her mother to leave the window half open. The rain was fresh and not so strong. She sat in the living room and... suddenly she realized she was not coughing anymore. Nor sneezing. She took a deep breath, feeling so relieved.

Pure air from the rainy afternoon came into her nostrils and found its way into her lungs. Valentina felt strong, alive again. She breathed. The air was there for her to take it. It did not hurt her throat, it did not tickle, it did not make her cough. Air just ew through her body. Valentina not only felt strong, she was happy again.

She closed her eyes.

She saw herself playing around her cousins.

She felt the taste of her grannie's fruits.

She laughed thinking about her grannie's laughter.

Her limericks. Salads. The sunset at the garden.

She took another deep breath.

She felt a sweet avor in her tongue.

Breathing the air.

Being alive.

Is there something better?