

Inkslingers Blended Session

9th November 2024

The Prompt from The Bag Was



*Grasmere, Lake District, Cumbria,
England*

*I've had amnesia for as long as
I can remember
(Robyn Hitchcock)*

Traffic

Greg Fields

In the late summer, when the pavement radiates heat in waves and the sky glowers in a colourless paste, when the sun rises high like a conquering overlord and burns everything beneath it, when tempers grow short and commuting times grow even longer, Rosie Carter slinked down in the driver's seat of her compact car. She had given up trying to peek around the semi in front of her to see if she might gauge how far this backup went, and whether there was anything moving at all. No point to it. All she could see, had seen for what seemed like an hour, was the rear construction of a truck carrying some sort of meat product.

She rarely was called upon to venture out of the city. Her beat was Washington, and, even as a relatively young reporter, she had come to know its streets far more intimately than she had ever anticipated. But today she saw the need for a trip west, down this clogged and immobile freeway to Prince William County, where, she had learned, Dashawn Roberson had family.

Likely Dashawn hadn't paid any attention to his family tree, such as it was, but when the bullets passed through his chest and his young body hit the tile, he became a story. And in pursuing that story, Rosie learned from a neighbor of Dashawn's mother that the boy had an aunt, that the mother had a sister "Way out west somewhere." Rosie had thought she meant the real west, like Colorado or Arizona, but when her research found a link to a woman with the same last name and a sister who matched Dashawn's mother, she learned that 'way out west' meant Manassas, about twenty-five miles from downtown.

It took forever to get there. No accident to slow things up, just the usual late afternoon drone of too many commuters and too few roads. As the sun finally began to lower itself, Rosie found the address. A townhouse, not in the best of condition, but solid and unmarred. She rang the bell.

The woman who answered had been expecting her. That in itself was a good sign. So many would agree to meet with a reporter, then disappear at the time of the meeting.

“You’re Rosie. Come on in,” and in she went. “You want some water or somethin’?”

“Thanks, That would be great. Sorry to be a little late. There was traffic.”

“There always is, sweetheart.”

When they settled in the modest living room and Rosie had drained nearly half the bottle in a single gulp, they talked. The woman, whose name was Maria, had not seen much of her sister.

“Janelle got lost,” she said. “Grew up too fast and ran too wild.”

“You were younger,” asked Rosie. “Was she a good big sister? Did she give you any guidance, any hints about how to get along?”

“Wouldn’t have took ‘em if she did. Even when I was just a little girl I could see that she’d end up somewhere I’d never want to be. Never had any sense of herself other than what felt good for the moment.”

“When did you last see Dashawn?”

“Couple of years. I drove up there just to check on ‘em, since Janelle never thought to so much as even give me a call. Dashawn was a good kid. Curious. Smart. Wanted to know everything about everything.” She paused, then said, “I felt something for that boy. He could have been special. You could see it in his eyes. Bright and alive, not like most of those other boys who ran that neighbourhood.”

“You think his mother let him down?”

Maria sighed deeply. “How could she not? She let everybody down.”

When they were done, when Rosie had all she might need to fill in the blanks about a young boy gone too soon, when she saw a bit more clearly the pathway that brought him to that ugly night when it all ended, she rose, placed her empty water bottle on the kitchen table, then went to Maria.

“I want to thank you for your time. I know this is hard.”

“Not as hard as you think, sweetheart. I could see this coming. Bound to happen, what with Janelle letting him run the way he did, and that city being what it is. But you know, I wish I had had a boy like Dashawn. He’d have been a wonder, I know that. And he’d still be here.”

Rosie made her way to her car, started it, and let the air conditioning blast her at full force. There, in this lonely driveway, in this very different place, she placed her head back against the seat. There would be little traffic on the drive back, but it didn’t matter. She had what she had come for, more of the story, and that was enough. She put the car into gear, and, as she did so, she wiped an inexplicable tear from an eye now blurred with loss and regret.

Howth Harbour

Ciaran O'Melia

They were staying in Howth Harbour in Emily's apartment

"It is splendid here," Des said to Emily as he looked out on the harbour and sniffed the saltwater he was standing on the balcony of her flat, or apartment, He corrected They were married about three weeks after a whirlwind romance.

She glanced at him and wondered why he picked me. He was good-looking, with dark jet-black hair, tanned, and it seemed as if he did not know it.

She was in her thirties; she checked herself every morning to see if those telltale spiders crack around the eyes.

It seemed as if when she went shopping, she would look into the faces of those of similar age to her, 'does she know she has lines on her face,' or if she saw a remarkable woman, she would envy her.

Monday to Friday, he would go to work. She did not want to know if it was finance or something else. She was so happy with her lifestyle, but something was missing.

Emily approached over her lack of input to the upkeep of the family, "I saw a sign in the supermarket; they are looking to hire people."

"Let me stop you there. No wife of mine is going into the slave trade."

"But they seemed so happy there," Emily replied meekly.

"No, and that is the end of it."

Was this their first row? She put that aside.

It was later in the week as they lay side by side on the bed.

"You know I understand your reasoning on the supermarket, but I need to help out."

“What have you got in mind, in that funny little brain of yours,” Des replied, he knew how to press her bells. She ignored his slight.

“On the notice board in the supermarket, I saw a notice of training to be an office worker.”

“Now, we talked about this last week; what did I say about that then?” He asked.

She replied, “No wife of mine is going into the slave trade.”

“So why are you asking me about this now.”

She understood, or did she? It was as if they had a second row. That was shelved for a time.

Another night, while she was watching the TV, he approached Emily. He seemed agitated, hurried, out of sorts.

“If anything happens to me, I get off the DART. I nearly had an accident; it put me in mind of you, my precious.”

She loved him more when he said this, only thinking of her. Oh, what a fool she was.

“I get well-paid, and I worry about you all alone here. I will call every hour to hear your sweet voice.”

“That is so nice of you.” She replied.

“There is more; my salary is good enough for both of us.” He paused here as a trickle of a tear ran down his cheek. “If I could open a joint account, at least that would, you could see the ins and outs, and more importantly, you could have a ready source of income if anything would happen to me. Not that is likely to happen.” He reassured her.

So that was that. Emily felt comforted and was amazed when she saw how much money was lodged in the account.

He dropped a hint on the apartment.

So much so that she felt obliged to reciprocate with the only property she had; her father and mother bought the apartment before they were killed on the slopes while skiing in the Alps. But it was worth a lot more than his bank balance.

She felt a bit nervous. Yes, she loved, but somewhere in the back of her mind, there was too much at stake. But she brushed this away after-all he was the first to trust her with the salary.

As she slept in on a Saturday, the phone rang and before she could answer it the party line in the kitchen did, and she heard of the plot in hushed tones.

“We need to move on.”

“We are all lined up,” Des said.

“Are you all set.”

“No problems here.” Replied Des.

“I will bring out the boat, and you will treat me like a serf. Wait till we get out of the harbour, I will handle the rest.”

Des thought, ‘I bet you will.’

On this day, he said, “Honey, why don’t we go out on a boat out on the sea, it will be exciting, maybe do a bit of fishing?”

“All right, if you feel safe.” Emily’s reasoning was, ‘out on the sea she was the master of her wits.’

As the boat pulled away from its moorings, she felt tension for herself and the man she loved. Des looked at her as she prepared the tea on the stove; soon, she would meet her watery grave.

Then, thirty minutes into the trip, the skipper wanted to show her something a knocking against the bow.

She feigned an unsteady appearance and held out her hand; the skipper lunged at her, and she avoided his lunge. Then Des took matters into his own hands. He cracked open his partner’s skull with a pipe wrench, a look of shock as he slid into the icy water.

Emily understood his belief in wanting to get away from his financial packer. As they cradled each other, they expressed unending love for each other.

Now she had her man.

Traffic jam

Miguel A. Rivera, Jr.

A snake. A snarling, dying, immobile snake. That was what traffic resembled this day. John sat in the back of the Uber with Betty's sweaty, red face in his lap. Trapped in the middle of downtown Manhattan, many blocks from the hospital. What lapse of judgment had allowed him to agree to go shopping with Betty when she was full term, he could not fathom. Since their return from the future, they had striven to conceal their part in all the events they had experienced with Darlene. Now, something as mundane as delivering a baby, threatened to undo the covert nature of their lives.

Betty's water had broken. A river of amniotic fluid soaked her pants, those of John, and parts of the Toyota corolla being driven by one Pedro Montarosa, who spoke exactly zero English and had the enthusiasm of a man watching grass grow.

"Why the fuck do they call it 'Rush hour' when nothing moves?!", John bellowed. His frustration was not lost on Betty who's moaning and incessant perspiration continued. John, as a Police Captain, had a nice, unmarked car with strobe lights and a very loud siren, parked near the precinct and in his current predicament, quite useless.

In the middle of all that was happening, he recalled the stern warnings issued by both Darlene and The Council of Twelve about damaging the timeline or engaging in any sort of shenanigans that could potentially alter the future.

He and Betty had returned from that place with paranormal abilities. Gifts that were currently as useless as John's cop car. Flight, mind reading, site of the future and all sorts of other amazing abilities that they had strict orders not to access. John began wondering if he would have to deliver the twins himself. A thought he certainly did not relish. His mind visited the memory of how he almost passed out when they showed him a

training film of child delivery during his days at the police academy.

In his desperation John could not help it, he took a brief peek into Pedro's mind and saw what their driver was preoccupied with. Four children at home plus his grandparents in Guadalajara working three jobs for measly pay while trying to stay upbeat during his grueling seven-day-a-week work schedule. None of it helped. Sympathy, empathy, and all that wonderful, humanitarian, kind shit, was suddenly lost in between the sweating, the wetness of Betty's pants, and her ever more intense labor-howling.

John made-up his mind, exited the vehicle with Betty in his arms, and then ran into a nearby bodega, briefly flashing his badge. He made a beeline for the rear room with the profanity-sharing owner in pursuit. Stepping into the bathroom and locking the door, he exhausted his one remaining option. Instantly, it was over. In a flash he stood in the parking lot of the hospital. He'd used a self-zip transport method to move across space and time. One that was not scheduled to exist for another five hundred years.

John looked around for potential witnesses to his actions and then entered the E.R.. Betty was wheeled into the delivery room and one hour later there were two new babies, fraternal twins who'd come into the world. "I think we'll call them Mars and Seti.", Betty forced out, still groggy and exhausted from the dual delivery.

Holding his beautiful new children in his arms, a brutally intense communication invaded John's brain, interrupting his joy. "You are hereby summoned to Mars central, 2025, to answer charges of possible temporal violations." The message was curt, but the potential consequences and punishment could be dire. John looked down at the tiny faces of their newborns, now snuggled in their mother's bosom. Just then, somehow he knew it had been worth it. Somehow, he just knew that everything would be okay.

Bright and Happy Morning

Fiona Deaton

How to sort out this mad crazy world with a malleable arc?

That is one hell of a question. But the solution, is not a derivative of some long winded algorithm, no we do the IT trick. We plug out the earth for 5 years and then we plug it back in again. Once it is restarted it will be back in the BC era. People will adore the sun, appreciate the rain and all that Mother Nature has to offer as Gods.

Perhaps the world could be ruled by Brehon law, i.e. were the women(emotional intelligence included) would be in charge. She would enshrine a constitution of the difference between wants and needs. The basic needs food, water and shelter must be met, the wants extra comforts of same and other things are not to be sated on her watch.

There would be a mailable arc over the world that people could jump on and bend and stretch it to reach new lands. Why? Because even in BC some parts of the world are not habitable, In winter and summer. So the arc could bend and stretch to allow them to move continents to survive. With the aid of the arc people could migrate based on weather conditions like the birds of today.

This would be a welcome restart for Mother Nature, but then human nature and economics will no doubt come into play. The law of land, labour, capital and enterprise will now doubt in the end win.

The arc may bend and stretch but another climate change would solidify it, but sure it's a nice wish for the world on this bright and happy morning

.Alita

Paula Sweeney

This is the story of a doll not just any doll. This man made her into the most extraordinary person even though she was only a cyborg she lived in a town full of wonder, and she even ate cornflakes for breakfast.

She had piercing big eyes that would light up any day a short cropped bob but underneath she was built of wires and plugs she moved so flexibly her boyfriend whom she met had a motor bike awesome with one high wheel and when she was on the back it was so high she could nearly fly he bought her ice cream cone she thought it was so amazing.

Alita I love you everything in the town was like a fun place to be. People were as tall as houses, and wired up heads they went about life in the most ordinary way sometimes there were fights in the streets especially where the skate boarding went on. Elita loved to skate she wanted to be a hockey star, but some of the natives didn't want her to be cramping their style she wanted to be what she wanted to be.

Eric her boyfriend was with her all the time but didn't want her to fly so high take your time with training every morning she would get up and do press ups and somersaults she was so courageous for her stamina was one hundred percent she would be so curious she watched the man go out with a case in his hand, so she followed him to see what was going on in the town, that is when she really wanted to be a hockey star but the man said it may not be good for her as she could break as she wasn't really human, that didn't affect Alita so when the people found out about who she was they became jealous her boyfriend would protect her be careful as this may not be too good for you take it easy I will guide you in the right way but the man wasn't too pleased because he said she was working too hard and she could break she got into a fight with another cyborg, but Alita always came out tops strong and stamina,

When the competition night was about to start Elita was preparing helmet, boots, hockey stick she was the Bizz. Great to see her move around she could be a winner baby that's no lie. Eric was so proud of her.

Amnesia

Angelina Kelly

Amnesia is an interesting condition, described as loss of memories including facts, information and experiences. Sometimes it can be caused by trauma – either physical or emotional. The medics don't over concern themselves with amnesia because it usually resolves itself over time responding to triggers.

It can also be a conscious decision to block out a memory that is too painful and an unwillingness to revisit the incident that caused it.

I've never had amnesia – not that I'm aware of – but when it comes to how my children have embarrassed me over the years with "their doings" I've had amnesia for as long as I can remember.

Red Knickers

Paula Sweeney

Now this is another story it always happened around this time of year. Mike Myres, they're coming home from school clutching their books, they had no idea what time of year it was certainly not Xmas presents under the tree, but if the ghost of Myers was around there would be skin and hair Flyin', even the tumbler dryer in the kitchen would move,

She was looking for her red knickers which got stuck in the washer, are these yours, Lola was a big burly woman she was a bit like a monster.

Then there was Tracy I paid big money for this panty hose, designer I will Sue you if you don't find them you can pull the machine apart until you find them a story they were 30 euro a pair if you want it badly, wash it yourself.

I heard of a story she loved the freshness of her star trek jacket, Why did she call it that? because it would stand up like there was somebody inside cool silver on the back it was like silk pink all over and a touch of dark blue she loved the feel of it against her skin now if she wore silver Jeans and high boots she was definitely, really a star trek.

She would imagine what it would be like for her to be in the SKY, go where no man has gone before and do a parachute jump from a flying saucer, walking on the moon like Mat Damon when he got lost in space when she would be thinking of a challenge anywhere what would it be like, when she'd get there, who would be there making her a little anxious she missed chilling out with him and smoking a joint she had to back off Scribbling something on a bit of paper was not an answer or high beautiful, you give a person chances to reveal themselves and when not a solution . so you see stories can be learning process be yourself everyone else is gone.

The elderly couple walked down the lane way to the lake, hand in hand. It was Autumn, yet it was evening but darkness has yet to set over the land. As they passed the sheep, they noticed the grass had been nibbled down, and was strong.

They remarked on this, as would a couple out for a stroll.

Yet one of them had darkness in their heart for the other one.

They were about a hour out from the lodging, when---

Stop for a minute as I get into me stride, did I say they were as one in their comments, well, the one would start and the other would finish it for them.

--- Back to the story. Mr Peacock said "Why don't we go down to the--Lake, I would like that." She finished it for him.

As they walked, they remarked at the flora and fauna and the lake off in the distance. In case you have amnesia one of them has darkness in their hearts for the other one.

Then she said, "I am hot with all this walking, I should strip off and take---"---" A swim, I will join you."

When they got to the lake, they stripped off, he was more conscious of his surroundings, he hid behind a bush, while she on the other hand stripped and ran down to the water edge giggling.

By the time he was ready to take dive, it was dark, he could not see the wife as she splashed around, she was a better swimming than the husband.

"Come on out." She said.

"It's freezing and the rocks are sharp and slippery." He said.

"Oh, come on, you were like this when we got married."

"I've had amnesia for as long as I can remember."

"Never mind that now." As she swam up to him, and pushed him under the water.