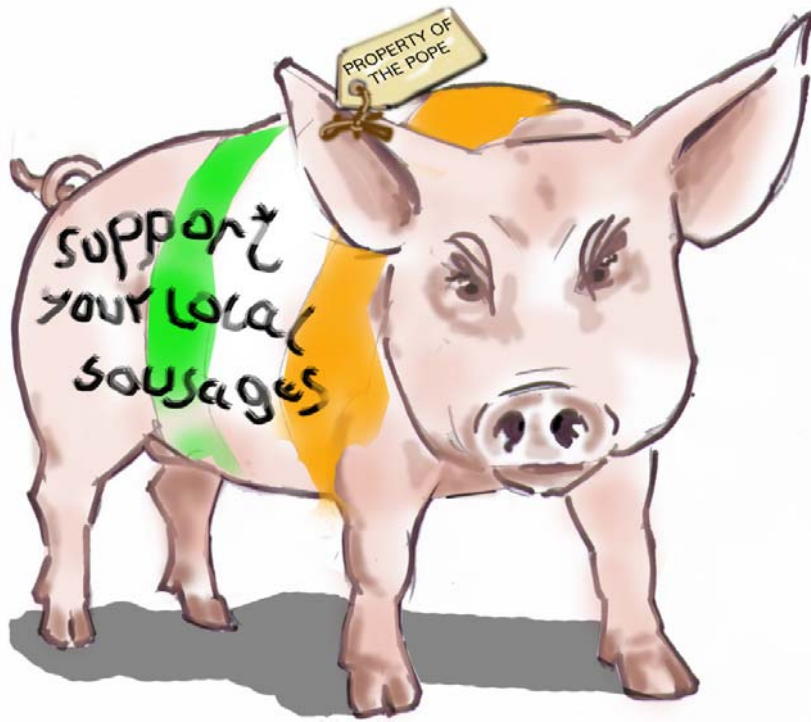


The Immaculate Misconception

A Trilogy



Book One
Dirty Old Town

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Introduction.

A

My mother had kidnapped me from school and brought me to Dr Crow's office. Dr Crow did not look like a psychiatrist to me. She didn't look like a big black bird either and I told her at my first appointment that she should change her name by deed poll to something more appropriate to her vocation. I certainly had no confidence in a scavenging, squawking woman to help me solve my 'problems.'

She agreed - solely for the purpose of getting me to revoke my vow of silence - that I could call her by a different name.

I named her Dr Cuckoo.

She was such a strange woman for a bluenose, she was so peaceful and friendly towards me. That was when she was not trying to find out what was in my head! That I thought she could not possibly believe in God.

I believed an appointment was a voluntary arrangement. As far as I was concerned I was illegally imprisoned here. The reason I was referred to a psychiatrist still remains a source of mystery to me.

Good Morning, Dr Cuckoo! I smiled.

"Good morning, James."

She smiled at me. Perfect white teeth and glossy falling hair, as dark as a raven. Tweed suit and brown leather shoes with buckles. Heavy pair of tits. About thirty years old wearing a silk blouse with a Cameo brooch at the neck - and her glasses were the same colour as her shoes.

I brought you a small present, Dr Cuckoo.

I smiled back at her and laid the small box on her rosewood desk.

"Thank you!"

She opened the box and screamed as the dead mouse fell out onto my desolate file. She recovered quickly. I was glad to see she was capable of anger. She wasn't superwoman.

I was allowed to suck my dummytit quite openly here as she had told me not to be embarrassed. Embarrassed? I was delighted. I just pretended it was the real thing. She came around the desk and snatched the dummytit out from my mouth.

"Pick that up and put it in the bin or I will put you over my knee and leave you with a sore bottom."

It doesn't have the plague!

I remarked as I wrapped Horatio up in a tissue. Cuckoo didn't look like a baby basher - but one can never tell I suppose. I tossed Horatio into the waste paper basket.

"Wash your hands," she ordered and handed me the towel.

"Rats. Rats carry the plague."

I wouldn't have thought that the rat flea could live on a mouse or any other rodent.

Don't you think so, doctor?"

She looked at me and was going to reply and then I saw her devious brain begin to work.

B

“The Plague was called the Black Death. It killed thousands of people. Some people at that time took drastic action to prevent the spread of plague. They did terrible things to try and save their communities.”

Such as what?

She was watching my every move.

“They used to set fire to things to kill off the germs. They used to burn down shops and houses and schools. Sometimes they burnt down their schools!”

This bitch was on to me.

Is cremation a form of sanitation?

“In certain societies. It is also linked to some religions.”

What kind of religions? I thought there were only Catholics and youse protestants.”

“That’s quite enough diversion. We are here to talk about you, James.”

Everybody calls me Jimmy –“

“And everyone calls me Dr Crow except my husband and friends. They call me Maureen.”

Hey – that’s a catholic name!”

“My God! “

He’s a catholic too.”

She knew I was only fooling and we laughed and shook hands and she called me Jimmy and I called her Miss Maureen Cuckoo. I went into a time lapse and tried to contact my home planet, Icer, by thought. Dr Cuckoo placed a carved wooden box on the table in front of me. She opened the lid and a small slender fairy rose up on a circular platform and began to dance for me to the sound of tinkling music. It disturbed my concentration but in a way that did not vex me. The fairy wore a lace dress and her head was cocked to one side listening to the music. It was inquisitive, questioning and very beautiful. Fly, fly away to my room I urged it silently but the fairy went down into its box and I was angry it was imprisoned – even in such a beautiful place.

“Your mother tells me that you are locked into your room at night. Is that true?”

Was she trying to find out if my mother was a liar or was she asking me if I were locked into my room at night? Her brown eyes waited on me for an answer.

I didn’t reply.

“How many times were you in hospital?”

I didn’t answer.

“And you never told anyone who beat you up. Will you tell me?”

I didn’t answer.

C

“And why does your mother lock you into your room at night?”

Ask her.

“Do you love your father?”

Half of him.

“The other half?”

He doesn't have another half.

“You were off school for a long time. Three months. You had a broken arm too. Did you miss school? What did you do all day?”

It was great. I went to the pictures every day.

“Did you miss school?”

Oh yes. Terribly much.

“If you tell lies we will never get to the bottom of things. Will we? Where did you get the money to go to the pictures every day?”

I said nothing. Next time I would get a live plague ridden rat and stick it in her handbag.

“Do you know why anyone would burn down your school? It's been burned out twice.”

I don't have a clue.

The peelers already asked me these questions. I didn't do it. I didn't do it. It was you! It was the bluenoses.”

“I am not a policeman. Anything you say to me will not go out of this room. Your mother asked me to see you for...”

My own good?

“What is your mother doing for your own good? Please tell me. Maybe I can help too.”

My mother locks me into my room at night to stop the bluenoses from breaking in and killing us.

When I am absolute dictator of the Universe I am going to put all the bluenoses on a big funeral pyre at the North Pole and get Daddy Christmas to burn the lot of you.

“Why don't you light the fire yourself?”

I am sure mother told you I am incapable of striking a match. I am terrified by fire.

“Your mother thinks you imagine things.”

Everyone does. Don't they?

She nodded her head.

“Jimmy I want to be your friend. I want you to trust me. I won't tell anyone anything – even if it is from your imagination.”

But you are a bluenose.

“And you are a Fenian. Right?”

That's right.

D

“Don’t you think it’s possible for a bluenose and a Fenian to be friends?”

It’s impossible! I told her.

“Even in your imagination? Even in my imagination?”

O that’s very easy but we have to do a secret Icerain handshake.”

We shook hands in the secret way and she and I became imaginary friends.

Now that she was no longer real she was no longer a threat. The grilling was over and I walked out through the quiet and carpeted office to where my mother waited to escort me back to my room.

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“Ah sure Mickey will do it when your up and on your feet again.”

And she tried to look at the ceiling without appearing to be noticed. From where I lay I saw that the Do’s ceiling was the same as ours – dirty grey and flaking. Mrs. Owens had more hair up her nose than my Uncle Francie – and he was the hairiest man in west Belfast.

Marthy Mary Do began to weep – great racketing sobs shook her body, the bedsprings creaked in sympathy.

“What am I going to do? I have somebody to take care of the cat but who will look after my wee house. Mrs. Owens – go you now and get me a gallon of calamine lotion – for I am sure – that ceiling and walls must be going mad with the itch.”

“Do you want me to get the doctor back?” offered Mrs. Owens – who was now looking suspiciously up at the ceiling and walls.

“There is nothing much can be done with German measles except let it run its course.” Mrs Do began to scratch the wall beside the bed furiously.

“The cat! The cat, Mrs. Owens!”

“The cat?”

“Catch it quick –it’s smoking Mickey’s pipe again – there it is!”

Mrs. Do picked up the handiest object to her – which happened to be a heavy silver crucifix - and flung it at the cat – which was out on the roof sleeping – the crucifix smashed the window and ended up in the middle of the road.

“Excuse me now Martha I have to get the shopping – there’s no one in the house.”

Mars Owens fled and I slithered out after her dodging the gathering curious who stood staring down at the crucifix, blessing themselves. I went into our back yard shed in and hid what I needed up my coat – then I went along the entry and climbed over Mrs. Owens yard wall. She was gone, ok. Standing on her table I first painted big red dots on her ceiling- and then I did her walls and furniture.

It looked like a bad case to me.

I had a bit of paint left so I went upstairs and carefully pulled back her bed clothes and poured the paint over her sheets.

Uuuuuuuugh!! It looked like runny shit!

I carefully remade the bed so as not to ruin her surprise. There were a lot of valuable things to steal but I was a good kid – I only robbed my family and my friends.

After I finished I ran off to play priests and pagans with my shadow.

Young Father McCaul came speeding around the corner. He was almost running. I think if he had been he would have floated up in the sky as a kite, he was so thin. He stopped to talk to some people – one of whom cradled the crucifix, and nodded gravely whilst another went – blah blah father, blah blah father, blah blah father, the way sheep do when they are lost.

I went back into the sick room which was quite crowded and got to my knees beside the bed and pretended to pray.

What I said was this;

Hail bags full of chocolates
My mouth be into thee
And please let mother
Have crumpets and Paris buns for tea
Blessed are Inglis baps among bakers
And blessed is the fruit

We only get on Sunday
Maise mother bee
Suckle me to eternity.

And then I dove under the bed. No one in the room had a clean pair of boots or shoes on and I thought a kid could earn a lot of money in sick rooms doing the bootboy.

The spectators were ordered out and father McCaul came in with the crucifix.

“Hello Martha!” says he in his soft Cork brogue, his crab adams apple moved up and own his long neck like a yoyo in slow motion,

”sure there we are now. It’s back.”

He sat the crucifix beside the holy water AND oil beakers, and the burning blessed candle.

”And how are things with you? You are looking well! As strong and fit as a young horse, they says in my parts.”

“I had a strange dream father.”

“Oh?” muttered the priest, looking out through the broken window,

“Tell me about it.”

“It’s the 12th of July and I can hear the triumphant music of the Orange bands as they swagger and strut. It’s a long way away and I am stuck in a manhole in Royal Avenue. They all know I am Mickey Do’s wife, on account of my green bra. I can’t get away. The sky is full of flying peelers. As the bands approach they split either side of me. Not one of them had an arse in their trousers and as each bluenose passed by he bent over and his arse screwed up its cheeks and said-

“Quack, quack, the Pope’s on smack.”

The priest coughed nervously.

“I don’t know what it all means father. Are you Canon McCauls son?”

“No! No – I’m his brother’s son.”

“You’re the spitting image of him. Ah sure, we are all the one big family anyway, in the eyes of God. The house is going mad with the itch!”

24

Everyone knew each other and everyone said;

“Hello!”

and;

“How are your varicose veins?”

And;

“Is he still on the drink?”

“No. he took the pledge!”

“That’s her seventh wee girl!”

“You’d think he would give the woman a break!

“This is Seamus.”

“Oh! He’s the spitting image of his da.”

And;

“Are you going to Martha Do’s wake?”

“OOOOOOOOh! Sure she was a saint!”

And;

“I am sure she is in heaven this day.”

“AAAAAAAHAh, God be good to her for she raised up a big family. And every one of them was a credit to her!”

“OOOOOOOOh, maybe she is better where she is? For she suffered terribly!”

“AAAAAAAHAh, Sacred Heart of Jesus have mercy on us all!”

“OOOOOOOOh, and poor Mr. Do – what will he do?”

And John MacQuillen was saying over by his chopping block,

“I’ll soon be saying mass here. What do you want Mrs. Benigni?”

“A pound of sausages and a block of dripping John, and a big bone for the dog, if you have one?”

The sausages were for us. The dripping was to make chips but we were forbidden to have a dog - and I did not see why mother could not say the bone was for soup. The butcher served mother. He threw in a big animal’s leg bone – sawed in half and stuffed with marrow. There would be great soup tomorrow.

“Can I get you anything?”

Asked the butcher, turning to mother’s comrades in grief – but they just shuffled in the sawdust – and looked back at the man as if he were an idiot.

They are warming up for the wake.

I said quietly.

The butcher and he laughed and tousled my hair.

Are you going to give me a job as a message boy? I asked.

“When you are big enough,” he said. “Can you ride a bike?”

I once took a space ark to Quark when that planet crumbled in the ether.

“Come on. Thank you Mr. MacQuillen.”

Mother dragged me out.

We came into Bond Street, father was standing by the door looking out for mother. He thought the most idiotic thoughts about her and his distrust was so bad, he was jealous of her walking in the pouring rain with five kids, going from shop to shop to find what’s best and the cheapest – always thinking of him first.

What did he think she did?

Did she hang us up on John MacQuillen’s meat hooks while they made spirit in the icebox?

24

Adults did all the talking for my first five days in hospital. I had no desire to talk to anyone, but I can give you the adults talk.

Dr Cuckoo;

“Good morning James. Feeling better? Now you’re in a hospital. Do you like it here? I’m just going to ask you a few questions. Do you know why your father beat you? O there’s a good child. I’ve brought you some chocolate and a space comic. Can you tell me why your father beat you? What is your age? O I remember, you’re seven aren’t you?”

Five minute pause during which time she looks at me tenderly and stares down at her empty note pad.

“Your mother is coming to see you this afternoon and your brothers and sister. Isn’t that nice?” I let out a low piteous involuntary moan and she said, “What? Does your arm hurt?”

She stroked my plaster cast. I suppose if someone bit and broke her arm she could still play the bagpipes standing on her head! She took off her glasses and sat them on my table. She sat on the bed and put her arm around me.

“I’m sorry James. Just tell me how you feel?”

She had warm hands and a hairy tweed suit.

“I’ve left you a Scrabble set with the sister – but you’ll have to ask her for it. Just relax and get better. Your friends miss you back at school. Oh look at the time!”

She showed me her watch. It was exactly eleven o’clock sharp and she left.

Frustrated, for her next appointment.

Mother and offspring;

Blah ,blah, blah, blah, blah, and poor Mrs. Erin, blah, blah, blah, blah, house robbed
blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and the rooster beat off the wall, blah, blah, blah, blah,
blah, we are disgraced, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, answer me, blah, blah,
blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, what did you do with the money? If
we give it back, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah...

Then she sent my brothers and sister out of the room and sat mustering her emotions.

“I want to ask you one thing.”

“Did you paint baby Jesus black?”

Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and I smiled and forgot the pain.

She fled weeping and I felt sorry for her, but I did not ask to be born!

There is no reason why the angel of the Lord is not a black person.

If God had a black *and* a white son this misbegotten planet would be a better place.

As far as I am concerned Jesus is a black man.

It is an immaculate and racist misconception to insist God is white and his son is white.

I ached all over.

The peelers came and asked me nicely to confess to arson, housebreaking and malicious wounding of a blind granny.

Cuckoo laughed at them and they went away scratching their big square heads.

The fifth day came.

They wheeled Byron into the room and I knew he was going to re incarnate.

He had no more use for his earthling shell. His mother pushed him up to the bed where he could touch me.

Mother; "Blah, Byron does not feel a trite well and he shan't be going to school for a little time blah. He wants to talk to you blah. What you have to say to each other does not interest me in the least – blah, blah. I shall leave you to your prattle – blah, blah, blah."

She strode to the door and paused; "Don't tire him out. Blah."

Who does she mean?

I waved to her and good God she returned it with a salute and a smile.

Byron gave me a bracelet of rusty nails and my pliers back. He spoke as softly as a butterfly brushing a baby, but with great effort.

"I'm going."

Where?

"Heaven."

Why?

"No hell for me."

Can I come and visit you sometimes?

"Bad idea."

Why?

"Everybody changes."

Everyone?

He nodded.

Forever?

All of you.

He nodded and his head stayed down.

"See ya."

See ya.

Then we fell asleep holding hands in the secret Icerian way.

On the sixth day he spun away as a comet into bliss.

On the seventh day they gave me a sleeping draught in my breakfast drinking chocolate.

I fell into a bleak sleep and I dreamt for the first time while I slumbered.

The sleeping dreams were meaningless.

“Be a good boy and talk to the doctor. He’s only coming for your own good. Is that settled? There! I knew you were a good boy. And they tell me you didn’t eat one bite of lunch. If you tell me what you like, I’ll do my best to get cook to make it for you - as long as no one else finds out. We can’t turn the place into a five star hotel – much as we would like to. Is this your first time away from home?”

I said nothing.

The door opened and Dr Kane came in. He had been treating my injuries and could not care if I spoke another word as long as my injuries healed.

Behind him was a small man with a head the shape of an egg. He had a big beaked nose and a pair of dark darting eyes magnified behind a thick pair of glasses. His hands were huge. He walked as soft as a cat. They both wore lounge suits. Kane introduced him to me.

“James this is Dr Flint. He would like to talk to you.”

“I would,” said Dr Flint, “but only if the boy wishes to talk with me.”

His voice boomed around the room. He looked at me through his glasses and I had to quickly close my eyes just in case he penetrated the outer defenses of my mind.

I opened my eyes and jackknifed back against the wall. He had moved and was examining my bruise, not an inch from my face. I felt no movement not even his breath on my face. He had no smell. He gripped me by the shoulders and pushed me – as if a feather – back down below the blanket. He was twice as strong as my father.

“James,” said Dr Kane, “Dr Flint may be looking after you for a little while. I don’t think you are well enough to go home – and neither does your mother. Dr Flint has a nice big house and he’ll take care of you. There are lots of other girls and boys there so you won’t be on your own. Dr Flint is a friend of Dr Crow, and knows quite a bit about your case history but I am sure you are too excited about going to your new home to be worrying about history. Enough of that at school? Eh, me boy?”

He looked at me sadly and squeezed my arm.

“Answer Dr Kane!” ordered Dr Flint.

I said nothing.

I blinked my left eye five times quickly and then the right eye twice slowly. On the second slow blink I saw what Dr Flint was. He had a long green hairy pea pod body with two hopper legs on the bottom. His arms were long skinny mind probes. His head was the shape of a rugby ball with two fried egg shaped eyes extended out on tissue tendrils.

The eyes were cobalt blue.

The suction mouth was smeared with brain cells. I noticed he had been neutered.

I closed my eyes and opened them slowly. There he was now in his pin striped lounge suit. The egg head smiled and I caught a flash of gold.

“James you are perfectly able to speak. I regard your refusal to answer Dr Kane as a fundamental issue in your juvenile behaviour. You are just being plain rude and I warn you now. I do not tolerate rude boys in my home. Even sick little boys like you can be polite sick little boys. Now I want you to tell me your name your age and how you feel.”

I said nothing.

“I have nothing further to ask this boy,” said Flint to Kane, “at the moment.”

They left and when the door closed they began to talk about me. Flint told Kane I was suffering from a basic condition. “Which is?”

“The child Dr Kane is quite obviously spoiled. This is his third time to be hospitalized and – quite obviously – he is a very disturbed child. He needs a lot of care.

And he shall have it, Dr Kane - he shall have it!"

Then they were out the main door and I couldn't listen to them anymore.

I was worried.

Dr Flint was a monster that played with little kids heads to find out what made them tick. Sick little boys were tick little boys. Anything out of the ordinary in a child's head would soon be sifted out by him and written down. Then it didn't belong to the child's head anymore but to a case history. Dr Flint did not pull the wings of flies as a child. He clipped the wings of angels and made music from their screams.

I am not an angel

.They released me when I was twelve years old. I was a grey turnip-head kid. They had scoured my head clean of all imagination and I went to live in the cold inhospitable Fenian reservation. There were no martyrs, no spaceship, no Moroneys. No life beyond the bleakness of the dull, standard Earth day.

"Delusions resulting in hallucinations; and all as a result of imaginative excess.

Miss Christine Boyle is a remedial teacher. She is not the Virgin Mary. Wonderland is an unnecessary luxury. Look upon it boy - as a flight of fantasy. A dream about a wonderful holiday in paradise. You may think about it but you can never go there. Don't board that particular aircraft. Keep your feet where they belong - on the firm ground of reality."

"Are you listening to Dr Flint?"

Yes ma.

"And if we play with fire we will get burnt - as we all well know."

We?

"Answer Dr Flint."

Yes Dr Flint.

"Now Mrs Beningi, Jimmy is to take the blue tablets three times per day and a white tablet half an hour before he goes to sleep. If he gets very excited..."

"Why don't you say throws a fit?"

"Crunch up two of these orange tablets and make him take them in a spoonful of milk, Now if you excuse me I must attend to my rounds."

Poor fucking kids but I smiled, and thanked the good doctor while ma put enough pills in her handbag to tranquilise death row. We never got our new house because da was out of work. My brothers and sister were living with my granny in the countryside by Glenavy. The idle plague of unemployment laid low all before it. Healthy industrious people sat silent and immobile by their cold hearths like the sacks of spuds on McGrattens old Bedford lorry. Only two men in my street were in work. There were no vacancies for trumpet playing gargle merchants so father was safe. He sat in his old leather armchair by the fire. He pointed the trumpet at me,

"Here you!"

He wrote a note on the back of a Parkdrive cigarette box.

"Come here you. Go up to the Bulls head and give this message to Mr Brady himself. Always deal with the boss. Nobody else. Always go to the top. Are you listening to me?"

It read;

'Sean - please afford to Master James six big bottles of UB brown ale, a baby Bushmills and twenty Parkdrive. I will settle my account presently.

Paddy.'

I didn't mind asking for the tick but this was too embarrassing for words. And on the back of a Parkdrive packet!

Yes da.

Still behaving as if he was the big boss with ten unfortunates under him. Outside the shadow of the great gasometer threw a protective shield over our street but it could not cloak the residents from their own misfortunes, nor mask the hostile eyes of the whisperers that peered out at Master James the dummy tit sucking dangerous desperado, galloping up the street on a flame belching Trigger who incinerated Catholic Protestant and Dissenter alike Being an agnostic golden palomino. I knew what the witch Owens and her cronies were saying. I plucked their babbling out of the ether.

“God help him he's a child after all. And like what chance does he have with parents like that?”

“He's changed mind you.”

“Oh I don't know.”

“Well he hasn't set fire to anything since he got out.”

Mrs Owens saw her standing naked on the landing letting him do what he wanted to her.

“My God! The children must be watching. Well they are well away now thanks be to God and his Holy Mother.”

McQuillen the butcher liked me. He knew all my mother family and some of them were in the trade before the war. He had a big shop in Cromac Street and not far away his own small abattoir. The authorities allowed him to slaughter his own pigs and sheep. Business was very roaring, coming up to Christmas. There was a sign in his window.

Message Boy Wanted.

Parked outside was the big black bike with the wicker basket in front. His son had left the family business and was up at Queens studying history. I walked in.

I'm here for the job.

“Are you now?”

He took me out side.

“Ride that bike up to the gasworks and back. I'm watching you.”

I could hardly push the fucking thing. I wobbled off. It was alright when you got it going and the steering was sensitive for it had a wee wobbly wheel on the front. As soon as you stopped it tried to push you into the pavement or the traffic. I came back red faced and out of breath. I parked up the bike. I looked in the basket. A bag of sand!

Are you in the building game Mr McQuillen?

He was laughing at me.

“Do you think I'm gonna put four stone of meat in that for a test drive? Come inside. The trick is to go as fast as you can. The quicker you do the deliveries the lighter the bike becomes. How well do you know the area? The wages is one pound a week. You deliver the parcels and collect the money. Any money missing it's out of your wages and you get the boot - my boot. You work a laying week. You work four till whatever after school and all day Saturday. You do well I'll look after you well. Extra work means extra money. Does your ma know your looking for a job?”

Aye - sure she sent me round.

“In that case she won't mind writing me a wee letter that you can start at four o'clock tomorrow. You must be on time, make sure your hands and nails are spotless and don't be talking mad things to the customers.”

Me. Mr McQuillen?

I am not talking the sausages. Not yet.

I talked mother into it quite easily with a promise of good behaviour and ten bob a week in the family kitty. The big boar was able to boast there were three wage packets coming into his house and his brother Alo was the epitome of an Irishman's dream. The prospect of escaping my house and earning money was an important step in my overall plan,

And does your father take the odd bottle of stout?"

Now and then? He only drinks the wine father. He hasn't a penny in his pocket. He drinks a bottle of wine and behold another one appears.

"That is not a miracle."

Close enough. Well it's not water for he only uses that to shave.

Drawbridge. He drinks the Drawbridge. What do they drink up in the chapel father?

says I pretending to be a wee pious man indeed.

"That's a special wine only for the mass. You couldn't buy that in any shop."

There is but the one grape father.

"How many apostles are there?"

Twelve.

"And can you name them? "

I did, correctly and in alphabetical order.

"Excellent. And what did they all have in common?"

They had no water to shave. No? I have it, thanks be to God, his Holy Mother, all the Saints in Heaven, and the suffering Souls in Purgatory - not one of them paid an electricity bill.

He almost laughed.

He peered intently at the letter,

"Have you been writing things on the walls and pavements of your street?"

No.

"Blasphemous things like; 'God Is a Bacon Sandwich?' In coloured chalk?"

No.

"Moses Bunks Marlies? The Blessed Virgin Makes A Wicked Breakfast?"

He crossed himself,

"The people of your street had to wash this profanity away with bleach and holy water!"

I waggled my head a bit the way the nitwits do.

I didn't do it father.

"God Is Good And So He Should? Pigs Can Pray Too?"

He pushed the bag of mints towards me. I shook my head.

"One of the worst things there is, is telling lies, to the priest!

Shocking sin! Leaves the, ah, ah, soul, as ah, ah, as, ah, ah, as black as, ah, as ah - Nat King Cole's arse on a dark night?"

That was not wise.

I was only trying to give him a dig out.

I convinced him that I had been writing these terrible things, even though I was a certified illiterate.

He frog marched me down to the house.

Skinny Fr McCaul changed from shy bumbler to instrument of inquisition, all because of a few words and a letter from a spy.

Beware!

I shouted as he dragged me up Bond Street.

Beware the writing on the wall!

The street was up.

Owens looked as if she had won the football pools.

At my door McCaul stopped, breathless.

He banged the door.

“You’re father will deal with you!”

Him? He thinks the apostles are a bunch of kippers.

“What’s a kipper?”

The door opened.

My da will tell you won’t you da?

He told me.

He said

“A kipper is a two faced gutless bastard!”

Everyone was down at the Liverpool boat waiting for His Royal Highness Sir Lancelot Ivan Hoe William Tell Kimosabi Alphonse Bening M B E and bar to arrive. I was guarding the house. I liked the Christmas tree and the little Chinese lanterns. Underneath our tree taking pride of place was da's antique crib. Beside the trumpet it was the only thing he owned. There was a stack of butterfly buns on top of the crib. They were everywhere. The invasion of the butterfly buns! Paris buns from Mars! Fig rolls from another dimension. The 'killer Christmas cakes.' There were twenty four crates of stout out in the yard. To wash down the buns after the pub. I looked into the crib. The first miracle. Baby Jesus had a full head of golden curly hair and he looked to me to be about three or four stone weight. The little hand painted figures were exquisite, but there were no pigs in the manger. Why was this? Was this right? I didn't think so, so I put a few little piggies from the butchers window in there. Well we are all Gods' creatures and it is Christmas after all -and a cold white one too. The icing on the cake looked cold enough to skate on. At first I thought it was a speck of soot from the fire but no - there it was - a fly in the middle of winter. I wondered where it had come from. Perhaps this fly was - like I - on a great adventure, a journey of discovery and exploration of the universes, braving searing heat, and bitter cold deprivations - the mind numbing relentless bleak loneliness of the wandering out cast. But sure what the hell, it was alive and flying. Enjoying mothers butter cream in a hostile inclement atmosphere. Perhaps it was an Icerian seed pod which like me was damaged and was forced to put into earth and could only find an old dormant maggot to infest. Flint had doubled my dose of medication but I had managed to avoid taking the poison for the past couple of days. I did not want to be walking around with a wobbly brain when Uncle Alo was here. Besides I wanted to keep the orange tablets in reserve in case I had to sedate the big boar. Or what ever it was they did to him. Granny had bribed my brothers and sister to spend the evening with her on the grounds that father and Uncle Alo together constituted a threat to public morality. I agreed with her. If Granny knew what I knew she would have taken the shotgun and blasted him instead of the Jack Russell. The wireless spewed out Christmas carols regardless. Didn't they appreciate that some people didn't like Christmas and that I was one of them? Does nobody listen to kids? In the meadow we can build a snowman. What fucking meadow? In the middle of the Market? What nonsense is this coming out of the wireless? A talking snowman?

Outside the Bulls Head, Oliver the tramp came up to me. I stepped to one side so he did not breathe on me.

“Happy fucking Christmas! They are a shower of no good bastards in there. They won’t let me in.

Why?

“I never got paid this week.

From who the Wicked Winos Benevolent Society?

“All bastards! That’s my ma and da in there. Lovely people. Salt of the earth. Nobody like them.”

Your right there.

Oliver smiled. The hole in his mouth looked like a petrified forest by night. It stank of unstickable things.

“I only need one and two.”

He held out his hand.

“But you have the other eight too? One and two for a half a bottle. I’ll pay you back. I’m waiting for a tax rebate.”

The wages of sin are tax free!

I shouted.

I must remember to write that on the wall outside the protestant Sunday school. Might think there is a new prophet flying around on his bike.

Six D will do. I gave him two bob. He put it away safe in his pocket. Nobody was going to pick that.

“You are all bastards. You - your ma and da your wife and kids your granny and granda and your fucking mangy dog.”

We don’t have a dog.

“Well fuck your cat!”

he said and went into the pub.

Lovely man - lives on his own.

The snow was falling heavily now.

The Christmas decorations twinkled in the windows of the wee houses and threw coloured patterns onto the snow. McGrattens spud lorry looked like it was clad in white satin.

Oliver was flung out of the pub onto the snow by three Teddy Boys.

Inside they were playing ‘rock around the clock’.

They gave Oliver a few kicks with their beetle crushers.

“For fucks sake!” he shouted, “Its Christmas boys!”

Not in North Korea Oliver.

“Themens is a shower of ungodly bastards. Fuck them and their bicycles!”

Oliver.

“I’ll do you!” He threw a wild punch and fell down again, “I know who you are. I’ll send the boys round to get you!” He shadow boxed his way into the darkness.

I went after him.

Oliver wait.

“What do you want you red nosed communist bastard?”

There is a party in my house. Come on down.

“Me?”

It’s an open house.

“They will throw me out the bastards.”

What at Christmas? No - just say Mrs Owens invited you.

“That bastard Owens? “

Aye – her, and all her family are bad bastards. Aye. Especially Hughie.”
“Hughie?”

Sure he’s the one got you threw out of the pub.
“That bastard Hughie Owens? I know where to get him.”
He pulled the rope that held his stinking rags about him around himself tighter.
That’s right Oliver - the whole family are bastards especially the wife.
I struggled all this time to stay upwind of him.
Ach well, the wee winter fly was glad to see him.

I looked at Uncle Alo. He was staring at the fire. He didn't know where his child was.
They got the Bushmills out.

“I'm all cut,” says Owens, “did I put my foot it?”

Uncle Alo gave her a look that said - I'd like to cut your tongue out but he was a guest at Christmas and so he said;

“Not a'tall!

And pretended he had left his emotions back in England, in a lead safety deposit box next to the Crown jewels in the vault at Buckingham Palace.

“Give us a tune Paddy!”

Uncle Alo got out his fiddle trying to hide in the music. Father began to play;

“Noel, Noel, Noel, and the angels did sing.”

It was magnificent.

Alo stopped playing the fiddle and a tear was in his eye.

“You know Paddy that old Brother Brendan who taught you the trumpet. The man could play four instruments to orchestral standards!”

“Brother Brendan?”

mrs owen,

“Did they learn you to play in the home Paddy? Where youse in there together?”

Mother started shaking.

Father threw the trumpet at the wall exploding;

“No the fucking orphanage. Our da dumped us there didn't he Alo? Good auld da.

And that chancing bastard there every fucking day standing in the hall by the big door crying - my daddy’s coming to take me home. My daddy’s coming to get us. And crying your fucking eyes out morning noon and night!”

Mother jumped in, “Paddy for Christ’s sake stop! It's Christmas! Stop it.”

Owens settled back in her chair, smug.

Her body disappeared and a long black and yellow serpentine shape took its place.

Her tongue flicked out at incredible speed. Her insane cruel eyes danced in her head.

“Morning noon and night I had to fucking listen to you!” continued Paddy,” Daddy’s coming to take us to the circus. We were in a fucking circus! And you were one of the clowns! If that bastard of our’s came in here now, on his deathbed, I'd blow the fucking head of him and what would you do Alo? Shake his hand and say - I forgive you daddy. I understand why you dumped us with the whippers and the fuckers, for a stinking English whore?! Isn't that right Alo? Wasn't that right Alo?! And how many fucking times did I tell you?! I'm still telling you and you wrote to the old bastard! You contacted him!!”

Alos head sank, dejectedly, as if he knew what was coming next.

“Look at the big man. Who buys your clothes for you Alo? Not fucking daddy. A woman thirty years your senior. You married her to get off the streets.”

Mother ran to stop father but he pushed her aside. He couldn't stop the hatred pouring out, rushing like hot lava from the mouth of an angry god.

“You married an old maid! Your riding a barren granny - eh Alo? What does your daddy think of that?! And your big job, opening and closing the gate in the pet food factory?”

“Stop it! Let it go!” screamed ma.

Owens meanwhile, was off after the fly.

I didn't mean to scatter the comics all over the floor. I was reading them so quickly I had to toss them over my shoulder before she got back. There was a big brass bed upstairs and a nice vanity table. I took the key from above the door and opened the jewellery box. My ma had not yet returned the earrings and necklace. She and father were both laying in a self induced coma at home afraid to wake up and face the full mayhem of their lives.

Owens lipsticks were Max Factor.

Then there they were! Staring at me from the mirror.

Big Hughie, wee Hughie and Mrs Owens.

They were pigs!

“I know what he wants,” said wee Hughie, “He wants to be one of us.”

“Impossible.” said old Hughie and waved his hand at me. “Where's my pipe?”

“Come on in son.” said Mrs Owens.

She pulled her sweater over her head and took off her bra. She waggled her breasts at me.

“I know what *you* want.”

They all began to grunt at me. Her two tits disappeared and were replaced by four each side. They started to grunt at me. I was only intending to take the jewels and the money that I had discovered in the ancient gasmeter back into number 2 with me, but I was so startled by this intrusion that I just flung it at the mirror. It smashed. Broken glass, shilling pieces, earrings, cufflinks, rings all over the place! Luckily I still had old Hughie's gold pocket watch, where it belonged, safe in my pocket.

They disappeared.

I wrote on the wall with her lipstick;

'Mammy pig. Daddy pig. Baby pig'.

Then the breakfast hit me.

I had to do it then and there!

Well, I couldn't do it on the floor with all the broken glass, so up I sprang onto the bed and released it down onto the big bolster I laid in the middle of the bed. That's not right, I knew. On the vanity table were a couple of boxes of pins with coloured heads. I stuck them in, all over the turd. The first Irish sputnik! I had just wiped my arse on a nightdress when Jesus, there's your woman Owens, standing in the doorway.

She was a wee bit shocked.

She opened her mouth flapping, but no sound came out, I pushed past her and was down the stairs and out the front door.

Owens had a powerful pair of lungs. I could hear her roaring curses as I raced around the corner, on the run.

The bogmen hated me. I had my own room and Father Fiddly had got for me a transistor radio. I took the radio down the fields with me at night so the angels and saints could listen to Radio Luxemborg. They could only get the Home Service up there. The bogmen were reeking with old fashioned jealousy, penned up in their dormitories, reeking of farts and smelly feet. Surrounded by the sneaking pitter, patter, of tiny perverts stalking the Holy Hours.

“So where did you get twenty Parkdrive?”

I gave ten to Desperate Dan and we lit up. I was wearing gardening gloves.

Father Fiddly.

“Oh? You watch him. He hasn't been the same since he came back from the missions. The very same people he had been looking after for years handed him over to the Balubacats for a bicycle and two rolls of cello tape. The Balubacats put him in the big pot with a few onions and carrots. They put a load of fire wood underneath and not one of them had a light between them so they went off looking for a lighter or a box of matches. They forgot about him. Terrible thing! He was in the pot for over a week before he was found by a French Foreign Legion patrol, out hunting jungle truffles. It was enough to drive anybody a bit funny. Do you know what I mean by a bit funny? I do. I hope you do.”

He thinks I may have a calling for the priesthood.

“Too long in the fucking pot.”

Tell me about St Theresa of the Roses?

I had just finished mass. I found out I could mumble anything in response to Fiddly. He never listened. I once said to him potus balubacatus or riddiduspiddildus, but this day I was taking off my altar boy things after mass when he was off away again, on about St Theresa of the Roses.

“When she came down from heaven to talk to you.”

I sat by the fire. The radiators were off again.

Well! I said, the sky changed colour to orange and red.

“Oh!” sighed Fiddly.

Then the air became heavy with this wonderful smell of roses, but not any rose you ever smelt before!

“Oh! Oh!” Fiddly was behind the desk jerking the big nipple back and forth.

Then she came floating down!

“Wait!” he croaked.



He went over to the wardrobe. He unlocked the drawer and took out a hat box. He took out a bonnet with ribbons and satin rose's sewn into the band. He put it on my head and hopped back behind the desk with his big bump.

Then she came floating down on a cloud of heavenly rose petals.
"Oh! Oh! and what did she say?"

Oh she said be a good boy for Father Sullivan.
Well he had it out and off it went!

"Will you always be good for me Jimmy?"

I will father.
And him sitting back in the chair, exhausted.

“Tell me about the Ascension into to heaven.”

Fiddly was sitting behind his desk after mass. I had lit the fire and we were having tea. I was trying to get Fiddly to get me a passport so that I could get over to America, where I could contact the beings in the UPOs. It was time! It was time for me to get off the planet! Things were hotting up and it looked, according to the Irish Times, which Fiddly had everyday, as if the two biggest tribes of humans were going to annihilate each other along with the rest of the planet as well! There would be nothing left but a barren ball of rock. Maybe the Martians suffered a similar fate. I tried to contact Dan Dare and Flash Gordon but they must have been busy saving some other planets. Maybe they had given up on us. Fiddly said if I wanted a passport we would have to travel as father and son and he would have to adopt me. We could have a family passport and we could get married in Reno. He said he could do the ceremony himself to save us a few pounds.

“Tell me about the Ascension of the Blessed Virgin.”

It was beautiful.

“Yes lassie yes!”

The angels were in glorious multitude in the skies forming a heavenly guard of honour. All the saints had free ringside seats for the greatest show on Earth. The Blessed Virgin floated across all the peoples who looked up at the spectacle in the sky. When the Blessed Virgin began to float up towards heaven Brian the Boar and Eddie Calvert blew Reveille on their trumpets. The angels began to sing, such sweet thundering music. The saints began to cheer and here, down below, there wasn't a dry eye on the planet.

“Yes!” cheered Fiddly.

God appeared seated on a blazing chariot of beaten gold!

“Oh God! Oh God!” gasped Fiddly.

He had his big nipple out. He was looking out the window at the sky, massaging it and it there, looking up with it's one blind open eye at the dark sky.

“Jimmy! Jimmy! Me darling girl.”

He got down on his hands and knees and crawled across the floor. He had my socks of kissing my feet.

“O my little saviour!”

He turned into a boar. He had my dress up and was trying to pull down the French knickers he had me wearing for a box of Dairy Milk chocolates.

What he was at suddenly hit me as a thunderous revelation.

He had his garments up and I saw the bristles all around his ball bag. It looked like a sea mine. He might want to blow up the Bismarck! If he could point his torpedo some other way! I was holding onto the knickers and he was trying to pull them down.

He was blowing like a whale.

“Roll over now! Roll over!”

He ripped the knickers - they were very flimsy - then I hit him, I hit him as hard as I could. I picked up the tea tray and I whacked him across the head with it. He was surprising strong and was still intent on having his wicked way. I dodged around the desk making for the door but he blocked me.

“You sinful woman!” he screamed and came at me again.

I had a vision. Me standing on the Albert bridge with a big belly and all the good men of the Markets with their big nipples out chanting as I jumped;
“It’s not mine! It’s not mine!”

I don't remember hitting him with the statue of Thomas Aquinas, to whom he had a particular devotion and which used to have a pride of place on his desk that was before he placed my photograph there. But I must have done.

When they broke the door down Fiddly was lying unconscious on the floor with Thomas Aquinas, broken in half, over his head. There was only me and Fiddly in the room. It took four of them to hold me down then.

Bugger!

Aspro the nurse stuck a needle in my arm. I woke up in the boiler house in Desperate Dans cot bed. There were scratches all down my face. I had a black eye a busted lip and my left shoulder was out of action. The pain in my head was terrible.

“Drink this.”

Desperate Dan gave me bottle of Coke with a straw.

“Don't talk. I know what happened. I warned you he was a wee bit funny.”

I thought that was hilarious and I began to laugh and laugh.

“Shuush!” whispered Dan, “They are on guard outside the door!”

Mr. Storey are you there? Mr Storey are you there? There is no hot water in heaven. It's as cold as the morgue,

“Shut up for fucks sake!”

But I was fast asleep seeking sanctuary in slumber.

They moved me out of the boiler house and put me to bed in my room. The voices had gone. Desperate Dan came to see me.

“They are moving Sullivan.”

I got out of bed and sat in a chair by the window. There was a taxi parked over by the small chapel. Fiddly came out. His head was bandaged. He looked up at my window and smiled.

“Steady!” says Desperate Dan. “There's still ten rounds to go and you are ahead on points.”

Fiddly got into the taxi. Sadistic Simon and a few other Buggers, waved him goodbye. Fawning, bowing and scraping the ground with their brogues. “

The church controls their funding.” explained Dan.

He's a dirty old bastard!

“Who do you think your telling? I was there. I broke the door down. He still had a hard-on! Laying there, out to the world. Did you have to hit him with Thomas Aquinas? Would an old fashioned left hook not have been as good? Did I learn you nothing?”

The Buggers were on their way up to me.

“I carried you to the boiler house in the wheelbarrow with a blanket over you. Tell them to let you go home or do you want to talk to the peelers? Not that you would; not to them black bastards! But, they wouldn't know that would they? They live in a totally different world to us.”

“Do you want to watch the show or not?”

Ok.

“You may as well get six bottles of stout.”

What are we going to eat?

“You can have half of mine.”

The hamburger was burnt.

“I’ll get two fish suppers.”

As well?

“As well. You’re the best child we had Jimmy and I don’t give a fuck what the Market says. You’ll look after me - won’t you son?”

Yes da.

“I knew you wouldn’t let me down.”

And that’s how the ‘DEAD MOTHER & WIFE, APPRECIATION SHOW’ started every day when I got home from work. I loved the hot whiskey.

I even got to know and like Brian the Boar a bit. Well he was all I had.

He wouldn’t eat. He lost stones. He would not sleep in the big double bed so I moved my small bed down and put it in the scullery for him. I loved the big bed. I used to curl up sucking my thumb hugging the big-pillow. I could still smell her. I adored that, but it threw him into a depression so deep and black it was impossible for him to do anything but quietly rot away. I could not get him to eat even with the best steak in the shop. I was doing well at work.

Yes missus, will I trim that wee bit of fat off for you?

Yes missus I’ll have your parcel there at four o’clock sharp.

Would you like a marrow bone for the dog?

Mrs. Cosgrove and her with seven kids, and the auld lad on the bureau. If the dog ate that soup bone I wouldn’t give much for it’s chances. And I was king of the swill. No one dared collect swill on my patches. McOuillen’s pigs grew fat and sleek and dying for the day when they would be shot, slashed, slit, chopped, minced, sausaged and black puddinged. I worked hard to keep Brian the Boar reclusive, but my mind was not on my work. I longed to get back to the show, which went on to all hours. Brian the Boar sitting in the dark with the tape recorder playing and the colour slides, a magic lantern on the wall. I couldn’t tell after a few hot whiskeys if he was talking or if it was the tape recorder. And I still had hundreds of Flint’s pills.

“Where is your father?”

It was skinny McCaul.

In England father; working.

“Are you sure?”

Very sure father. Ten men under him.

“Inquiries have been made.”

Steel erecting on the hydro dam.

That should have threw him but what does he say?

“Good. And where is it?”

What’?

“The hydrodam.”

By the way he said it you would think the Vatican invented it.

Sure, how would I know that father, it hasn’t been built yet.

Doctor McSorely and I are very concerned about your father.

The next time he writes I’ll let him know.

“Ah! - you ah, ah, have an address then? Drop it down to Dr McSourley or myself.”

What was he, a priest or a policeman?

And there's me a' squirming with half a bottle of Bush in the waistband of me trousers.

One day, just before the aliens invaded and turned all our vegetables into homicidal maniacs, I was in the front room sitting in father's old sex seat.

I was waiting for the lights to come up and the show start. Brian the Boar had promised me 'The Time Me And Your Ma Went To Donegal.' It was the only spool I had not heard.

"But Jimmy I want you to promise me one thing."

Anything da.

"Whatever happens don't let them get my trumpet. Promise me."

I promise you da.

"Bury me with my trumpet .Don't let that bastard Eddie Calvert get it."

Right da.

His hot whiskey was sitting on the table. Stone cold. I was cold.

The flies were a black swarm on the mirror. Owens had got our electric and gas cut off. Who else would have done such a thing'? She did it to stop the show.

The next thing you know Sgt Batwings is in the house with McSourley and a few men in white coats.

"Good Jesus Christ!!" croaks Sgt Batwings and gawks up. They were all at it then. Someone shines a torch on me.

"He's alive!"

Of course I'm fucking alive. I made two hundred black puddings today or was it yesterday?

"Get the coroner!" shouts McSorely with a handkerchief over his mouth.

"Advanced decomposition."

"He's riddled through with maggots."

Just before McSorley gave me the jab I tried to tell them...

"From the inside out!

And who gave him the maggot poison? Well let me tell you something - there is only one person around here who eats flies and we all know who that is."

But adults never listen to kids and they wrapped me up in blankets and took me off to the big garage. I don't know why - me and my bike were running well.

I smelt the big garage before I woke up. Jeyes fluid scented, to hide the stench of people who piss and shit themselves.

The stench of people locked in a room with their own waste for days on end.

The stench of people whose minds have given up the thought.

A lonely unnatural smell that they tried to disguise with antiseptic.

I opened one eye and quickly closed it. Dr Flint was at the end of the bed. This time he had manifested as a big hornet creature with eyes the size of ostrich eggs. Dark cobalt eyes that vibrated and which saw everything behind it and before it. The sting on his tail was a hypodermic syringe filled with brain mush toxins. What kind of ungodly maggots did Flint lay in the heads of his hosts?

Is that you Uncle Alo?

"It is Jimmy."

I have a big job for you. Bring over ten men from Camden town and a ton of DDT.

"What's he saying?"

Take four eggs, the monster Flint, a quarter pound of sugar and a ton of DDT.

Chop the whole lot up fine and put it through a sieve. Mix well.

Tell them to put their backs into it Alo.

Anti clockwise.
“Whats he saying?”
Psycho buns from Pluto.

Ever since God wished me Happy Birthday, and took me in, I didn't need to sleep.
I didn't need to eat and I could drink without getting drunk.

“Do you know what I think?” asked Brian the Boar.

His voice was coming out the spout of the teapot. Maybe he was off the drink.

What?

“I think God has adopted you because years ago you got him a short back and sides.
I mean to say, can you imagine any barber getting into heaven, the prices they charge?! A shower of robbing bastards!”

Your right da.

“Am I ever wrong?”

No da.

My swill cart was parked in our entry. I was doing my own street today.

I stopped outside Owens' back door. Her big enamel bucket was sat by the door.
Empty. Empty.

I couldn't take my eyes off it. Nothing! Not even a potato skin, and we all know how much she eats. Why did she leave out an empty bucket? If she hadn't done it none of this might have happened. It was an omen. Or a cry for help. Whatever it was it was not good for pigs! I opened the backyard door and carried in the bucket, she was in the scullery. I saw her through the window peeling carrots. A big bunch of carrots. What a cruel cunt. And brazen too. She opened the door and said,

“Thank you Jimmy.”

Oh you're welcome.

I said and pretended to give her the bucket, I hit her so hard she catapulted back against the wall like a wee monkey flying back up the stick.

I sang;

‘And if you mind the piglets and take good care of them I will fetch you a monkey up a stick.’

She tried to call out but she could make no sound. Her mouth was all scrunched up into a puckered Oh! Just like a wee dogs arse. She didn't know, monkey up a stick anyway, but my da is right in a way - you have to give them a good kicking. I used her head to play the cymbals with the bucket. She wouldn't be putting that out again. I stuck a big half peeled carrot in her mouth to stop her wheezing. I stripped her completely naked. You could have made a bell tent out of her knickers. I had to cut the corsets off her. I wrote on the wall with her blood - PIGS. I dragged her out by the heels and put her in my swill cart. I covered her over and off I went about my business. Refuuuuuse. Refuuuse.

“You're full today Jimmy!”

Aye Mrs Walsh. Thanks.

Off I headed back to the abattoir.

“What about ye Jimmy?”

Everything's dead on.

“Dead on?”

Aye, dead on. Dead on!

That's they way they talk in the Market. Well there was a 'dead on' now.

But she wasn't dead. She started to moan and her leg stuck up out of the swill. I had to sing in case her moaning disturbed the peace.

Brian the Boar was fined two pounds for disturbing the peace once. She had already cost me enough as it was so I sang to cover up her racket.

I sang The Bold Fenian Men. A suitable drowning dirge.

In, whipping through the gates of the abattoir. I pulled her out. Dragged her into the pen. I locked her into the neck clamp. The pigs hated her. Anyone could see that.

I went and got changed into my priest's garments. I then zapped her a few times, just to get her to wake up. She vomited out the carrot. I threw it over to St Patrick but he would not eat it. She had really upset them!

Dear Father I beseech you to drive out the devil which is hiding inside this woman.

I sprinkled her with Holy water. Blessed my humane killer, cocked it - and placing it against her head I gave her absolution and pulled the trigger.



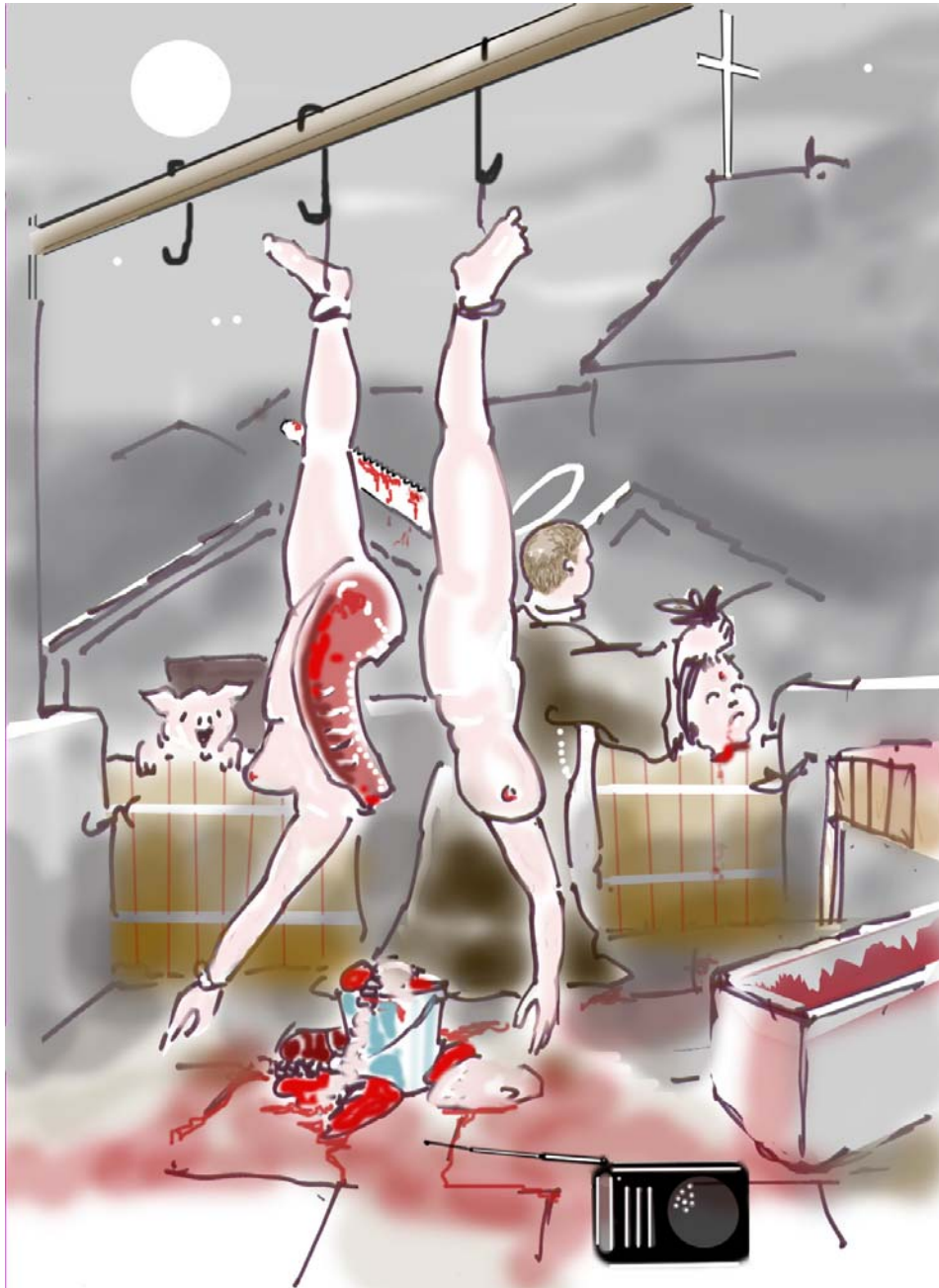
Bang!

She screamed.

I think it might have been the devil saying goodbye. Just then, the pigs all began to squeal and scream. I pulled her up onto the hook and slit her jugulars. I drained her

into the big tub. Devil pudding! Off with the head. Into the pit of guts. Plop! I'm sure it winked at me, Guts out – liver, kidneys, stomach and spleen - all into the pit. Chop her down the middle, legs splayed, starting at the wrinkled arse.

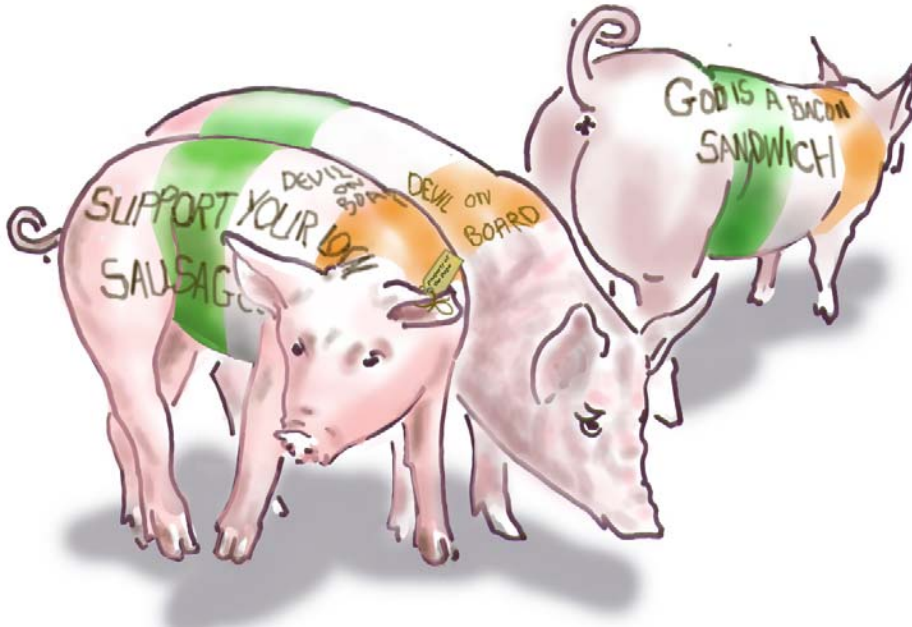
Whose a pig now?
“Oink oink oink.”



I put on a bit of music to shut the pigs up. I hadn't time to explain things to them, in case McQuillen arrived unexpectedly. I'd get the sack for sure. Two sides. Out with the heart and lungs. Plop!plop! It was fairly straight forward then. Shoulder, loin, ham, legs. Satan sausages, from your friendly neighbourhood butcher. I dumped the joints into the pit. You couldn't sell them. The bones were too different and I don't know if people would take to Christian Crackling.

I done my work on the pigs, blessed them and zapped them out of the abattoir. They ran like crazy people up the street into the Market. I was very proud of them. The devil was fucked now!

I washed down the abattoir, changed, and went of to Fucoes for a banana split. It was all the rage. On the way to Fuscoes at least ten thousand people stopped me.



“There's pigs loose in the Market!

So?

“They all have ‘DEVIL ON BOARD’ painted on their hides, Better watch you don’t get run over!”

There were people peeping in the window at me as I was eating my banana split. I had just saved them all and I couldn’t get peace to eat a banana split. No wonder my brother went up to heaven and never came back. I don't blame him. Oh no - not one wee bit. On my way to the gasometer twenty or thirty thousand idiots came up to me –

“Jimmy! Jimmy! There are pigs loose in the Market!”

So? What’s it to do with me?

“Well, you’re the Butcher Boy!”

I am now - Butcher Boy, by appointment to the Holy Family.

“Jimmy! McQuillen is looking for you.”

And that’s who I thought was at the door of the hut on the top of the gasometer.

I was up there about a day and a half drinking Bushmills waiting to ascend.

I had done my job - now I was waiting on lift-off.

I'd love to see skinny Father McCauls face when he sees me floating up and away with the angels and the saints. But it wasn't McQuillen. It was Sgt Batwings and Inspector Keystone with two gigantic sumobogmen. They kicked the door in - even though it was open - grabbed me and handcuffed me. Their faces were all distorted with something.

“Where is she?” shouts Keystone.

Who?

“Mrs Owens!” screamed Sgt Batwings.

Is my face red wee lad?
I shouts back.
“No!” says the eegit Batwings.
Well shes not up my arse.
Keystone nodded to the sumobogmen and they beat the shit out of me.
That's enough!
Keystone came very close to me.
“Thats nothing to what you are going to get. Where is Mrs Owens? Is she still alive?”
Well, that Batwings, he asked the daftest questions. I started laughing and I could not stop. I was in hysterics.
Did you ever work in Duffy's circus Sergeant?
So they continued slapping me around again and then they bounced me down the steel steps and off to the police station.
At the police station they took me into the interview room. Thats what it said on the door. Interview me for what? A job? Inspector Keystone sat me in a chair and put a sumobogman sitting behind me to my left.
“This is real simple son. Mrs Owens is missing. She was attacked in her house and we believe abducted. We believe, we know that you are the person responsible. Our only concern at this moment is to find Mrs Owens alive and get her medical help. She is still alive son isn't she?”
Sgt Batwings looked at me hopefully and nodded encouragingly then for extra effect, he raised a bushy inquisitive eyebrow and winked.
“Do you understand what I am saying son? Where is she? Is she badly injured?”
The sumobogman behind, gave me a wallop on the back of the head.
“Answer de Inspector!”
Oink, oink, oink!
He whacked me again.
“Where is she?”
She is in a box.
“Where is this box?”
I'll take you there.
“What kind of a box?”
Its a gutsaw puzzle.
Another whack on the side of the head.
“Jimmy,” said old Batwings, “if you know where she is tell us - take us there!”
He looked so sincere, and so sad, that I agreed.
She is in the house.
“Your house?”
I nodded. I don't know why. Who knows why people nod in police stations?
“Right!” says Inspector Keystone, “You are going to take us there, and no tricks!”
I am not a magician.
“Does she need a doctor?”
I nodded again.
Tell him to bring plenty of cat gut.
“She needs stitches?”
Aye, a few.
“Has she lost a lot of blood.”
A bit.
“Order an ambulance constable.”
“Yes sir.”

We left the police station sirens blaring, and drove at high speed to save Mrs. Owens after I had already saved her from a fate worse than death.

I had saved the entire planet from a fate worse than death.

It was pointless to try and explain anything to the sumobogmen. The convoy arrived at my door. As usual the Market was out gawking. I was hustled inside. I moved so fast they didn't realise I had disappeared down the secret trapdoor. I pulled it closed behind me.

“Where the fuck has he gone?!” roared Keystone.

“He was standing just there.” pointed a sumobogman.

A simple trick Watson. I crawled quickly along underneath the houses and came up out in Mr 2. Out the back window over the wall running, running, running, up over the gasworks wall and then I was free, running in the rain along the railway tracks. Off to Dublin in the green. I felt bad about letting old Batwing's down but it is every prisoner of peace sacred duty to escape. I would have been ok if I didn't have the shakes. I evicted the devil from Owens ok, but his mates tormented me all that long cold night. Laughing, cackling, howling, spitting, all night. That cold, cold night and the sumobogmen with their flashlights everywhere looking for me.

Devils eyes in the dark.

I would have made it over the border only for the terrible shakes. I doubled back and made to St Malachys just as dawn was breaking. I knew my way in well. I entered the confession box and fell exhausted, into a deep sleep. The demons could not touch me here. I could wait here until my father in heaven sent a taxi down to collect me.

“Sanctuary!” I screamed silently.

I was Jimmy, Jimmy the avenging angel, swinging down on a rope.

I rescued my mother from the English hangman who had set his scaffold up in the forecourt of St Malachys.

“How did you get that hump on your back?” asked ma.

I was a camel in another life ma.

“I always told you to sit up straight, didn't I? I always told you to be good, didn't I? I always told you not to let me down didn't I?”

Yes ma.

“And now look at you! Your new school uniform is ruined, and you have a big hump on your back!”

I'm claiming sanctuary ma, for us both.

“There's no sanctuary for us Jimmy.”

She starts singing that rotten song again, the one about the falling in love with a butcher boy but I knew she didn't love this butcher boy. Not anymore. Not after what he'd done. So I started to cry and cry and cry. I had never done that before!

Not even when they told me she'd jumped off the Albert Bridge!

I couldn't stop crying! Not ever!

Skinny McCaul found me in the confession box.

He took me into the sacristy. McSourley was sent for and he came with the sumobogmen. Ma was right, there was no sanctuary. There had never been any sanctuary. There never would be. McSourley made me drink something strange and wonderful. It melted my hump. The sumobogmen stood and glared down at me.

A tumour buster!

Everyone laughed at that. We were all in great humour.

McCaul's housekeeper gave me a bowl of tomato soup and then we all went off to get Mrs Owens. McQuillen was at the abattoir with a stark ashen grey face on him. He was trembling with rage horror and anguish.

“What have you done?!” he wailed. “What have you done?! In the name of God!!”

You said it.

He made a rush at me but a sumobogman sprang between us.

“Constrain yourself Mr McQuillen.” soothed Keystone, in a deep weary voice.

The first thing of interest they fished out of the pit of guts was a foot with shin with blue ankle sock attached. Next, they got a half breast with tit attached, all the while the flashing lights from the forensic cameras. They fished her head out, one eye open Dead as a doornail and still spying on people!

Why don't you mind your own business? I shouted at her. Leave people alone.

You're a fuckin peeping Tom!

Next, they fished out an arm with the watch still on the wrist and rings still on the fingers.

The sumobogman I was handcuffed to went all weak at the knees.

Robbery as a motive can be ruled out Watson

I pointed out to Sgt batwings helpfully. He noted that in his black notebook.

His fingers were dancing the paper jig.

St Brendan was not in his pen but they had managed to arrest all the other pigs. I hoped he had made it in his little sail boat and was off looking for strange lands full of blue-snouted Protestant pigs to convert. I made a mental note to speak on his behalf when I next got a bloody chance to talk to me father in heaven. The other pigs were exhibits now, I was told. They were all individually photographed.

The painted messages on their hides were recorded.

Maybe one day they will all end up in the butcher's bible.

DEVIL ON BOARD. SINLESS SAUSAGES. DEVIL ON BAORD.

DEVIL ON BOARD. GOD LOVES A RASHER. DEVIL ON BOARD.

DEVIL ON BOARD. SUET SAVES LIVES. DEVIL ON BOARD.

DEVIL ON BOARD. LOVE YOUR LIVER AS YOUR SELF.

DEVIL ON BOARD.

DEVIL ON BOARD. REMEMBER THE ALAMO. DEVIL ON BOARD.

I must have written that one for my good old friend Davy Crocket, who had been drinking Bush with me the previous night or was it year? Anyway, the writing was all very vivid and beautiful, in green, white, and orange paint. The pigs had luggage labels tied to their ears and written on them was;

THIS PIG IS THE PROPERTY OF THE POPE.

I wondered if they had porcine papal diplomatic immunity.

The smell was very troubling for the sumobogmen. They all wore surgical masks.

Scalpel, Baton, Handcuffs, Revolver.

We are losing her heart beat.

They soon had all the joints up on the chopping block.

And all the queens peelers,

and all her Holy men,

couldn't put Mrs Owens,

back together again!

All this time, the cold inhospitable eyes kept staring down at me. Eyes full of pure loathing and immeasurable disgust. Now they found my priest's garments in the hut. Along with my wee stash of pills, powder and whiskey. Now my tape recorder with the spools.

“So!” said the sumobogman back on familiar ground, “you’re de one whose been bracking hand hentering hin de chemist’s shops and hoff licences be night. Ha, ha!” He reached over and tightened my handcuffs a bit whispering “I’ll fix you ya, ya murderinhin bastard!” They wouldn’t let me say goodbye to my pigs! When I stepped outside the papers were all there, flashbulbs a’ popping. The ‘Premiere of Pigs!’ A good crowd of my neighbours hurled abuse at me as I was getting into the squad car.

Are they going to hang me?

I asked old Batwings.

“No Jimmy, there is no more hanging.”

That’s a pity. says I.

“Isn’t it just!” said my own cuff sumobogman.

“I’d love to swing on your legs you dirty little bastard! Ha, ha.”

At the police station they photographed and fingerprinted me.

Then they started in with the questions. Relentless questions!

The police doctor would give me nothing but aspirin.

Everything turned black and cold. It seemed very obvious that God had let me down again.

Oh, you should have seen what they wrote in the papers about me.

RITUAL KILLING. BUTCHER BOY HELD. FOUL MURDER IN MARKETS.
BUTCHER BOY ARRESTED. BUTCHER BOY IN CUSTODY. WIDOW FOUND
HACKED TO PIECES.

Along with a photograph of the outside of McQuillen’s place together with two big sumobogmen, standing guard at the gates.

CONSTABLES GUARD THE SCENE OF GRISLY MURDER AT RILEYS
COURT.

I brought the newspapers into my cell. I rolled them up and stuck them in all over my body under my clothes, down my shirt and pants and shoes. Into my neck.

The rest I put under the mattress together with an old cardboard box.

I had no petrol but it would do.

With my last match I set fire to the bed, the paper and myself.

The pain meant nothing to me. My hair was blazing and that’s the last I remember.

I don’t remember. I don’t remember and then they stopped asking me stupid questions like; did I plan to kill her, and why?

When I came too many, many, years later I was completely covered in bandages, except for the one good eye.

I was Jimmy the Mummy!

At least that’s what looked back at me from the mirror.

“Good morning Jimmy.”

It was Flint’s voice. He was his big old cheerless alien self. The big cobalt blue ostrich egg eyes looked at me like I was his long lost little boy, miraculously regurgitated from a giant cannibal. The hypodermic syringe twitching at the bottom of his black with the yellow tapering tail dripping nerve venom. His mind probing claws were clotted with brain cells.

The stick purple mouth opened up in the huge head and a human voice box translated.

“You killed our queen!”

So they lived in hives like monster bees or wasps. The Earth was their hive. I now understood everything, but it was too late! They had poisoned me with their anti-

imagination venom. It's rapidly beating wings cooled the room to an alien temperature. Room? It was a cell with thick glass and steel bars on the window. My view out was of the high perimeter fence and of those poor, unfortunately afflicted, criminally insane, eking out their existences, in its shadow.

Unspeakable drudgery and druggery.

Someone was at the cell door.

Flint transformed in front of my eyes, back to the good doctor. Two sumobogmen entered the cell.

"This is Mr Gallagher and this is Mr Hacket. They are going to be looking after you. Until after the proceedings. You need a lot of rest before we can begin. I'm prescribing something to help you rest."

The Gallagher/Hacket duo watched me day and night. The first thing they did was to put this shirt on me! One with canvas straps on the back and sides. This to constrain me if and when necessary.' A mummy in a straight jacket! What next for fucks sake?! It was made of canvas and was uncomfortable. I didn't want to put it on but I noted the way they were clenching their fists.

I was only coddling youse! I lied.

"You are not dealing with old women now Beningi. Remember that."

They tied me tightly into the straight-jacket, then to the unbreakable, immovable, non-flammable bed. This, just a lesson for a few hours to teach the loony, who is sane and who is mad.

I think I remember thinking just before Flints mighty hammer knocked me into unconsciousness, that no one was going to break into this garage in a hurry and steal, or damage, or vandalise the cars. It was tighter than Fort Knox here. Maybe I was made of pure gold! Like Tootsiecamoons death mask! I wished I could cross my arms across my chest and quietly die in the Blessed Blackness. There was no trail. It was a simple procedure. The public prosecutor produced a battery of eminent psychiatrists who swore under oath that I was insane. What the hell were they like? Full of brandy and fine port, wearing their funny horsehair wigs and silks? Madness is not relative, it is indicative of the vindictive. My lawyers all agreed with their buddies. My doctors all agreed with their medical brothers. The press soaked it all up in a savage Sunday Special edition.

I was a notorious fish and chip wrapper.

I was deemed unfit to plead and sentenced to be detained at 'Her Majesties Pleasure.'

"Ah well – Uncle Alo told me that that lot had very funny tastes.

GUILTY BUT INSANE!

Roared the Telegraph.

The three psycho stooges were shocked and surprised that I wasn't hung immediately up on a lamp post there in Rileys Court. They offered to do the job themselves and so do society a favour. The Stooges and their friends said there was nothing wrong with me and that if I had been brought up proper, none of this would have happened.

Raised up without due care and attention! What did they think I was, a car accident?

Is that why they put people in the big garage?

Is that why the humans were always breaking down at critical times?

My lawyer kept clucking at me; there,

"There, there, now!"

While patting me on the head. It must have been a legal technique used to pacify mad dogs about to go into the dock. The whole thing took less time than I had taken to butcher Ms Owens! I was handed over to the Gallagher/Hacket duo. Sgt Batwings

came along with us in the Black Maria. His big craggy face was troubled and sadness oozed out of him like a sentimental scent. They opened the outer gates. We were inspected by a sumobogman and identified just in case we were trying to break into the Criminal Lunatic Asylum. The inner gate opened and we drove into the dark void of purgatory. Old Batwings slipped twenty Parkdrive into my pocket.

"I'm retiring Jimmy. I don't want to be part of any society that produces children like you. I have a sister in New Zealand. Raises sheep."

No pigs?

"No. Only sheep for wool."

I wouldn't mind a nice warm hand knitted straight jacket.

The one I had with my name on it was old fashioned and made of ships canvas.

Another house of a thousand windows.

"look after him." says old Batwings and gets back into the Black Maria.

"Ach, aye." says the Cullybecky sumobogman Hacket, "Thon thair is no problem."

As soon as the van was gone he took my cigarettes and half bar of Bourneville chocolate. They led me up to my room; strip searched me, and dressed me in a loony night gown. They then strapped me to the bed and put a big nappy on me. I could hear them outside all night playing cards, smoking my fags and drinking porter.

If only I could suck my thumb.

After a long time during which I missed the sixties flower power, the Beatles, the mods, the rockers, the war, the protests, I even missed 1969!

Then one day I was called out of my cell by Flint.

"I'm leaving; going to take up private practise in America."

Are there fucked up kids in Hollywood? I never saw any on the movies.

"We are moving you downstairs. I don't think you are going to take the humane killer to any of us, eh Jimmy? And I don't think Mrs Owens, or the pigs think its that humane?"

I had many, many years ago stopped speaking to Flint and his sumobogmen.

"Is there anything you need?"

A trumpet and some Beano comics.

The next morning they moved me down to a cell in the main block. There on the bed was a beautiful brass trumpet, a Beano and a Dandy annual.

There was also a set of clothes for me.

Da!

Even though they were clean I could still smell the old bastard. I looked just like him now, sitting in his Al Capone coat playing for the crazy people. What had changed?

They let me eat my food at a table with other people with a plastic knife and fork.

Gone forever was my big wooden spoon and bowl. It was great crack! I was allowed to walk in the garden and smoke cigarettes. Two a day! They gave me them free of charge!

For fucks sake what was the planet coming to?!

Free cigarettes and a trumpet! Had Christ returned while I was in solitary and I had missed him? It was winter and I was standing in the grounds by the old Victorian fountain. I was there talking to a man by the name of Maxie McCann who had ended up here for trying to conduct the orchestra in the Ulster Hall from his seat and in the nude.

"I was only trying to express myself! They had been playing Beethoven, after all!"

I hacked away at the ice with me pointed stick.

He did likewise with his conductor's baton.

"What I'd like to know is where the fuck is she?"

Who Maxie?

“This Queen Victoria? I mean what’s the use of building a fountain if you are not around to maintain it? There’s no water in it this in the summer. Not a drop!”

We poked the ice furiously angry at this uncaring and indifferent absentee landlord.

“When I first saw you,”

says Maxie,

“I thought you were The Invisible Man. With all those bandages.”

Oh!

“You see the TV was broken by a disturbed person. We thought they were bringing the show here.”

Oh!

“It’s been known to happen!”

It’s well known.

I nodded sagely

He was so delighted he gave me a puff of his butt.

I looked up. From here you could see above the wall to the little road now mostly hidden by snow, that gently wound it’s way up the hill.

When we win the pools, twenty or thirty billion, we will go walking Maxie, walking through the mountains, through the snow, counting our footprints.

“Where?”

There. Up there.

“I’m going to buy the Ulster orchestra and sack everyone of them!” says Maxi, “The conductor first!”

Who will you conduct then?

“You. Get out the trumpet.”

I did and Maxi sat his bony arse freezing and clicking on the fountain. As I played he waved his magic baton around at the greatest assembly of musicians the Earth had ever witnessed.

“I see,” says the doctor,” you are enjoying yourselves. Good. Good.”

It’s not all therapy and medication and the sumobogmen shuffling in the snow to keep warm.

Then one day I was busy making baskets while the other loony across was making a soft toy. He said it was an elephant. Well I bet Tarzan never saw an elephant like that. He was making it from green satin, for the wee niece.

I was called out.

“You’re getting out on Friday.”

It was a big shock!

“We are sending you to some family friends in England. You cannot go back to the Market. Don’t be worrying Jimmy there are people over there to look after you.”

I asked them if I could walk up the hill. There I was outside the gates of the Criminal Lunatic Asylum. Dressed as Al Capone. The only thing I didn’t have was spats and a Thompson submachine gun. I walked along in the cool morning air. The hedgerows were laden with spring scent. I walked slowly. At the top of’ the hill was a small Grotto. Dedicated to; Our Lady. I touched her cool face. Tears rolled down, streaming down my face.

I am, I said, from the bottom of my black heart, so terribly, terribly sorry for what I have done, for those I have hurt.

I got down on my knees.

If you give me just one more chance, I swear to you, I will never ever, ever, ever do anything bad again as long as I live.

The sky turned orange and there she was!
Radiant, shining down from the heavens!
All that was graceful, kind and good.

I promise. I promise!

She smiled down at me.

“Fuck off out of that will you Jimmy!”

She laughed, waved, and disappeared.

The minibus pulled up and collected me.

I was away off out into the unknown.