

A Rescue at Sea

Katie O'Bierne walked into the wind with a sense of purpose as she moved quickly down the street toward the Rosseville strand. She was on her way to see her off and on again boyfriend, Shane Ryan, at the Glowing Lantern Pub that he co-owned with two other friends. The pub was in an idyllic setting on a small elevated ridge above the strand and faced out over the bay to the sea beyond. On this day the water in the bay was filled with whitecaps from the strength of the cold wind that was blowing in from the North Sea.

"God help those on the water today," thought Katie as she bowed her head into the wind. She thought briefly of her many friends in village who were fisherman and how hazardous their job was on days like today.

Katie stepped inside into the welcome warmth of the Glowing Lantern. She was greeted by Shane's smiling face. He was tending the fire which he stoked a little higher than usual to accommodate the cold and the wind. He leapt up to greet her with a kiss and led her over to the table in the back corner of the room. He called a pint for himself and a large cup of tea laced with the creature for Katie, her only drink of the day and a fitting one for the condition of the weather.

Katie was a professor of English Literature at University College, Galway. She was very careful with her habits for the sake of her status at the university. She also did most of her research and class preparation in the evening. She did not mind working late because her first class was not until eleven O'clock. She had completed her doctoral thesis the previous and was a rising and respected star at the University.

"How is my little girl from Monahan," said the jovial Shane.

"I'm not your little girl at all," said Katie glowering at him. She hated to be minimized and considered any suggestion of personal ownership as insulting. Shane knew that but it was his sense of humor to tease her like that. Though she felt that she really loved him, she couldn't stand that kind of deprecating humor. It was not one of Shane's likeable features.

Shane met Katie when they were students together at the university. Shane took his degree in business and worked his way through college on the fishing boats. He loved the sea but he did not want to spend his life working on the fishing fleet. He was the captain of the local Sea Rescue and, ironically, most of the time he spent on the water was extremely hazardous. He enjoyed the pub business. He enjoyed meeting people, the conversation, the laughter, the singing. He enjoyed being dry, safe, and warm. He was also a sober soul, a basic requirement for sea rescue and one of his endearing virtues to Katie.

"Why aren't we married?" asked Shane, boldly coming to the point of their planned conversation. Katie was expecting the question. It was not disturbing to her because there was nothing Katie wanted more than to be married to Shane. She looked into and through

his deep blue eyes, straight into his soul. Another time she would have quipped that he was an amadon, but tonight Katie wanted to be serious. She wanted their relationship to rise to a new level.

She took a deep breath and answered him. “Shane, I want nothing more than to be married to you. But I have fear. I am not afraid of marriage or of you. I am afraid because I don’t think that you respect me enough. For instance, when I walked in tonight, you said that I was your little girl. Well, for your information, I am my own woman. If we were to marry, it would have to be on an egalitarian basis. I respect you for who you are and I expect that same respect in return. Those are the basic ground rules. When you joke to diminish me, it hurts. We can’t marry until we both understand that you are the man of the house and I am the woman of the house. We have to be equal partners in this venture. I am not an English teacher. I am a well respected university professor and I expect to be for the rest of my life.”

“That is only the beginning, Shane. When you criticize me, put me down, or correct me in front of other people, no matter how much you mean it to be your humor, it really hurts me. It says to me that you do not value me. I really love you Shane, and by respecting me, we will be making great strides forward. If we married we would have to live together, and I can’t live with you if I have face this day in and day out. I have too much respect for myself, the same respect I hope to have for you. I don’t want my life to be minimized, nor do I want to be put on some kind of sanctimonious pedestal. I also realize that there are things about me that must drive you crazy. But these are the things we have to talk about, the things we have to work out before we can talk about marriage.”

Katie did not raise her voice or make impassioned pleas. She spoke softly, earnestly, without once taking her eyes off of his. Shane was stunned by her frankness. He knew she was right with everything she said. He caught himself several times knowing he had hurt her. She didn’t have to say so. It was in her eyes.

“I am sorry,” he said. “I know that you are right. I know that you have reacted to things that I have flippantly said. I don’t know why I do that. I think that maybe it has something to do with covering up my own insecurities. I love you and I know you don’t deserve the treatment I give you. I guess I have been behaving like that for so long it is almost automatic. I am sorry. Please accept my apology.”

“Apology accepted,” she said, “but I also expect a firm purpose of amendment.”

Shane was just about to speak when everyone was startled by the clanging of the Sea Rescue alarm bell. The radio was crackling with static as the bartender wrote down the coordinates. There were souls on the water and they were in grave danger.

“Go, go,” encouraged Kate, “We are on the right track and we can continue this later”

Shane rushed to the dock where the rescue boat was moored. “What do we have,” he shouted to the guys already on board. Quinn answered that the Nina G, a fishing boat

with a crew of nine was foundering about six miles off shore. He had already set a course with the coordinates and the rest of the crew of five cast off from the dock and they were immediately on their way. "Apparently their bilge pump failed and they were taking on too much water in the rough seas," offered Quinn.

The boat cruised with difficulty through the choppy bay. When it reached the ocean it was buffeted by giant waves. "This is about as rough as I have ever experienced it," said Shane. "Thank God this boat is built to accept this kind of punishment." They plowed through the waves for more than an hour before they reached the coordinates given in the first SOS. "Their radio has been quiet for a while now," said Quinn. "That can't good news."

The wind was blowing higher than gale force from the north. Shane steered the rescue ship to the south anticipating a drift. Darkness had already fallen in the late afternoon and the waves were higher than their boat. "Put on the spotlights," shouted Shane. "Maybe they can find us." "There, there," shouted O'Leary. "I just saw a light about a quartet mile away." He was pointing south at 2:00 O'clock.

"God help those men," said Shane and he steered the craft in the direction O'Leary indicated. Anything that was seen had to be by chance that the huge waves had separated enough for the light to be seen. They struggled for another twenty minutes to reach the point where O'Leary thought he saw the light. Sure enough, there it was. The Nina G was sinking and only the stern was visible. The rescue dory was overturned by the violent sea. The nine sailors were tethered together with a rope and they were hanging on to the overturned dory waving their waterproof flashlights. They would not have lasted much longer given the cold and the wild turbulence of the sea. Shane steered the rescue ship to the other side of the dory so he wouldn't injure the men. They threw out rescue ropes and pulled the tethered men toward the boat. The rescue ship was bouncing around like a cork and it was difficult getting the men on board. Once on board, the men who were frightened, cold and wet hugged their rescuers. In the cabin there were dry clothes and blankets. No sooner were they on board when the Nina G slipped down into the water and began her long journey to the bottom of the sea. Shane set a course for home while his crew helped nine grateful sailors.

The captain of the Nina G told Shane that they had burned out a bearing on the bilge pump. The huge waves started to crash over the boat and there was no way to avoid being swamped. They were able to keep afloat for about an hour after their SOS. Their radio had been knocked out and they were at the mercy of the sea. They had launched out in their rescue dory but it was overturned by the sheer size and strength of the waves.

"Glory be to God will you look at that," was the shout Shane heard behind him. Shane turned around and the sight frightened the hell out of him. A huge rogue wave, about six stories high was right behind them. He swung the wheel to turn the ship 180 degrees and began to climb the wave at a 45 degree angle. He had never prayed as sincerely as he did at that moment. His thoughts turned to Katie. Would he ever see her again? He loved her so much and wanted to make everything right for her.

Concentrate he heard the voice in his ear from the depths of his own consciousness. He had only one attempt at this maneuver. The experience was one of being lifted up by a giant undersea monster. He instructed Quinn to send out an SOS with their coordinates. Shane pushed the throttle and the ship gave him all the power that it had against the giant wave. He could feel the fear of all the men in the cabin. The wave felt like a mountain in formation as the ship climbed the front wall. Up, up the ship climbed until Shane saw what he was looking for. The top of the wave was starting to crest. Shane turned the ship around, risking capsizing, to point the ship into the pipeline formed by the cresting wave. He put the engine into neutral and hung onto the wheel for dear life. The ship barreled through the pipeline like it was shot from a cannon. Shane was praying that they would not hit anything. Hitting something at that speed would cause an explosion of splinters. They hit nothing and rode the pipeline for miles until the huge wave started to diminish. As they came out of the pipeline, the crest of the wave collapsed on the boat, almost filling it with water. But they were safe. Their pumps emptied the boat. Shane swung the boat back on a northern course. They were safe and on their way home. "Cancel the SOS," ordered Shane. "It will take us a while, but we'll be home safe tonight." Captain Smythe from the Nina G marveled at the display of seamanship. "I didn't know a ship could do that." "Nor did I," said Shane. "It just seemed like the reasonable thing to do.....the only reasonable thing to do. Drowning was not an acceptable alternative."

It was hours later before they saw the lights along the shoreline and it was toward two AM when they finally saw the spotlights from the Glowing Lantern. Shane eased the boat to the dock and people from the huge crowd on the dock helped secure it.

The sea was their living and their life and the people of the town followed the drama on their ship to shore radios. Wives, girlfriends, and children hugged the fishermen and the Sea Rescue team. Shane was being hailed as a hero. All he cared about was finding Katie and he saw her running down the dock trying to make her way among the assembled crowd. She hugged him with such strength they almost fell off the dock. They kissed with a passion that they had not known for many months. Katie was sobbing almost hysterically. "Shane," she choked through her sobs, "I can't face living my life without you. And I had to do that tonight."

"Shhh," sighed Shane, while stroking her hair. "I had the same fear, believe me. It was a mind blowing experience. I was never as afraid on the water as I was tonight. My greatest fear was not seeing you again, not holding you again. I value you, I respect you, I love you."

They walked down the dock toward the Glowing Lantern, his arm over her shoulder holding her close to him and feeling her warmth through his still damp clothing. They entered the Glowing Lantern and stood in the welcome heat of the still burning fire. The crowd had dissipated. It was toward five in the morning and the light was already high on the eastern horizon anticipating a brilliant sunrise. "I'll drive you home Katie," said Shane.

“Oh no, you don’t,” said Shane’s partner, Liam Hanlon, who had just walked into the room. “I’ll drive her home. The adrenalin is still draining from your body. We almost lost you to a rogue wave tonight and, having avoided that, I would hate to see you get done in by a tree. Take a hot shower and the day off tomorrow. Come by Friday night and greet all your adoring fans. There will be no living with you or them once the press gets this story.”

“I think you might be surprised,” said Shane. “I went through death and resurrection last night. I don’t think I’ll be quite the same.”

“Believe it or not, I had a brilliant idea while we were hurtling through that pipeline. Katie, I have a proposal. Let’s work together with Fr, O’Malley for the next six months, twice a week. At the end of that, if you will still have me, I would love to have your hand in marriage.”

“Done,” laughed Katie. “But the rules still apply, a firm purpose of amendment.”

Respectfully submitted:

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Love's Surprises

Chapter Two The First Step – A Bold Leap Forward

The evening was lovely, the weather glorious; the end of the first warm day of a long cold spring. The brilliant red sun was sinking into the western horizon well beyond the bay to the limit of the eye's vision of the ocean. Shane and Katie walked hand in hand and strolled briskly toward the priest house to keep their appointment with Father O'Malley. Shane had promised Katie that they would meet with Father O'Malley twice a week for six months to try to iron out the wrinkles in their relationship. They had been an item on and off for the past six years since they graduated from university. While they weren't quite engaged, they were deeply in love and genuinely pledged to each other.

Katie instinctively knew that their relationship could be better. She wanted to be able to commit to a better relationship before committing to marriage. At times she wondered if this could be a fiction, something culled from the romance of the literature she read so intensely on the way to her doctorate. She had no illusions about perfection but, short of that, why not work together to make their relationship as good as it can possibly be? She saw these next months as a blessing, and an incredible teaching and learning opportunity.

Shane also thought this was an incredible opportunity but he approached it like a typical male. He had no idea what to expect but he was very proud that he had thought of it. They started a bit later than they planned. Besides being hailed as a hero for his daring rescue of the Nina G fishermen, Shane had a bout with pneumonia as an outcome of his battle with the North Atlantic. Apparently, only a Shakespeare character could bare his chest to the storm without suffering consequences. Shane had spent most of a full night exposed to the frigid waters and the winds of a raging storm, thanks to the notoriously cruel North Atlantic.

The adulation he received was almost as cruel as his illness. Hailed as a hero, he knew well the fear he experienced in the face of death. His pneumonia was cured in ten days. The celebration of the conquering hero just went on and on. He would never have a wall big enough for the honors, trophies, plaques, and citations he received. He knew it was important, though, because financing Sea Rescue depended on the generosity of the people for free will contributions and the courage of volunteers who would, at times when recruited, be called upon to risk their lives. Being hailed as a hero was a small price to pay for the contributions that would inevitably follow.

It was not a great time to be a priest in Ireland. Ireland had a lot of dirty little secrets and the pedophilia of some priests was just one of them. The Church was rapidly losing credibility and its position of power among the Irish people. Liam O'Malley, however, was liked by everyone and especially so by Shane and Katie. He was a real people person and that was his priestly charism. He was in his mid forties and ordained about eighteen years. He was old enough to have made all the mistakes and experienced enough to have learned something from most of them. He could easily be described as a holy priest. He was prayerful and humble, led a beautiful Mass, and gave short but great homilies.

He walked the streets of the town every day and would drive to the outlying farms in the hills at least once a week. He visited the sick, comforted the troubled, relieved the anxieties of the desperate, counseled the confused, and forgave the sinners. With all of this, he had still had time for daily prayer as well as a ritual stop at the Glowing Lantern for a pint before dinner. He had mastered the *ministry of being* and was there for everyone if only to share sympathy, a bite to eat, and a drink of the dark brown brew. He believed that the people of his town and parish encountered the risen Christ when they encountered him. He saw himself as the vessel for this, even if only a vessel of clay. His visibility was an extension of the Sunday Mass and homily. There were no lost sheep in the parish. He knew everyone personally and treated everyone with dignity whether or not they attended his church. He had lunch with the pastor of the Church of Ireland parish every Tuesday. Rev. Garvey was Liam's guest at the pub more and more frequently as he became comfortable with the respect offered to him. During this past Lent, instead of the customary pint, the two shared cups of tea with Irish soda bread almost every day. Over the door to the dining room was a wooden sign inscribed with Elizabethan script, "*And they recognized him in the breaking of the bread.*"

Shane and Katie practically danced up the few stairs to the porch of the Rosseville Church parish house. "Have you ever been here before?" Katie asked Shane. "I wonder how he lives. Life was pretty grand for the priests at Leveegee."

"Aye, I have been here before, Katie. You won't find anything pretentious in this house," responded Shane.

Fr. O'Malley answered the door himself, warmly greeted the couple, and invited them into his parlor. He was wearing an open collared white shirt and a red cardigan sweater.

Shane was right. There was nothing pretentious about this house. It was neat and clean. He had a housekeeper come in once a week for cleaning and Hoovering. There were no dishes in the sink. Katie knew that Fr. O'Malley prepared his own breakfast after Mass each morning. One of the parishioners provided dinner each evening and O'Malley cleaned up after himself. The parlor where they would talk was lined with books and the furniture was ordinary leather, durable and easy to keep clean. Katie was impressed with the priest's library. Indeed, he was extremely well-read, perhaps even a scholar. Katie knew nothing of his academic background other than his studies at Maynooth. She was always impressed with his sermons and conversational commentary on national and international events. She only came to Mass at the parish church when she attended with Shane. Otherwise, she preferred the convenience and community of the Newman Center at the University. Shane also was a frequent visitor to the University chapel.

The table in the dining room was hand made and distressed, hewn from driftwood ordinarily found on the strand. There was a mirrored buffet and a couple of extra chairs around the room. The small tea table in the parlor was also built from driftwood. She did not look further for fear of invading Fr. O'Malley's privacy but the house was really neat and definitely furnished by and for male tastes.

"I am so glad that you have chosen to do this," exclaimed O'Malley. "I have long admired your obvious affection for each other. I know we can all do better in our relationships, and you have taken a strong first step to doing that. I want to recommend a

format that will help us. It is the communications tool used by Marriage Encounter, a program devised in Spain to help people improve their marriages. The Marriage Encounter is usually a weekend retreat but since we don't yet have Marriage Encounters in Ireland, we'll make do using the two days a week."

"The tool is to write letters to each other about the topic planned for discussion. You will read each other's letters and then share your thoughts and reactions with each other. My role is to facilitate further communication after you have shared with each other. You will also have the opportunity to reflect on the days between our meetings and continue the discussions as necessary. I will assign topics related to the standard issues of most marriages, but I also want to concentrate first and foremost on the issues that you feel are important to you. Among the subjects you will have an opportunity to discuss with each other are your attitudes toward life, ambitions, goals, attitudes about God, sex, money, children, family, and your role in the church and community. Personal reflection and couple discussion are the main focus. I will stay out of the way and only comment when you require me to do so. Each relationship is unique so don't feel that you have to fall into some kind of pre-determined strata. All you will need is lots of paper and pencils or pens, plus your imagination. The sky is the limit. You can talk about anything and everything. Remember, you are talking to each other and this is something you will have to do for the next fifty or sixty years. This is specifically designed to give you the opportunity to talk honestly and intensely about your future together.... an opportunity to discover a deeper appreciation of your relationship and God's call to unite in a permanent union, the Sacrament of Matrimony."

Katie was both intrigued and relieved. The last thing she wanted was to be lectured at and placed into some kind of ecclesiastical pigeon hole. This strategy opened all kinds of horizons including how they were going to talk to each other for the rest of their lives. Shane was equally intrigued but anxious. He wasn't used to sharing his private and personal thoughts and feelings and was concerned about how he would do this. This was at the root of the conflict he was having with Katie in the first place. But something like this was exactly what he asked of Fr. O'Malley. He also knew what the first paragraph of his letter would be.

"Well, what do you think?" said Fr. O'Malley. Shane was practicing the art of keeping his mouth shut to allow Katie to speak first. "I like it," said Katie. "We have been through so much in our relationship from latent adolescence in college, careers and graduate studies through to the threat of death twice in the same week. We need to learn to talk to each other. I really like loving him but I want that to grow every day."

"It is going to take a lot of work for me to do that," said Shane. "I am not sure I know how to share my intimate thoughts and feelings. Katie, please be patient with me. I'll try my best but I know it won't come easy. My reluctance to speak what I feel is what brought us here tonight. Instead of saying what I mean, I end up saying something stupid and sometimes hurtful trying vainly to be funny."

"It will come," said O'Malley. "I have a lot of confidence in both of you. It's getting late. Try to identify the hot issues that trouble you the most and write about them. Don't share until you come back on Friday. I'll help you work through the first sessions, but I really want to be in the background so you can talk to each other."

“Thanks, Father. We’ll see you on Friday.”

Friday arrived very quickly because of busy lives and the time they spent thinking about and writing their letters to each other. They settled themselves in Fr. O’Malley’s comfortable parlor. He had prepared tea with soda bread for snacks. “A nice touch,” thought Katie, “I wonder when he had time to do that.”

Katie’s letter was predictably longer and was fundamentally a continuation of the conversation they were having on the night the Nina G went down. She laid out all of her concerns about being put down and her need to have her dignity as a person recognized.

Shane’s letter was much shorter. He wrote about his fear of communicating his feelings. “I am the son of a fisherman.” wrote Shane. “My da never communicated much of anything. First of all, he was at sea weeks at a time. He was such a private person when he was home and I think my ma was relieved to see him off to sea again. I think he was relieved to be at sea just to enjoy the aloneness of a seaman. When I talk with my mates, I have something to talk about. Business, politics, sports or just joking around, making noise with no one really caring what I was saying. When I talk with you Katie, I have problems expressing myself. I have deep feelings for you. I just have difficulty putting them into words. ‘I love you’ seems too trite...not nearly enough to articulate the enormity of my respect, my gratitude, my appreciation, and my affection for you.”

Tears started to roll down Katie’s cheeks as she read his letter.

“Oh God, I hope I haven’t offended you,” said Shane.

“Shane, I am not offended. I’ve been waiting six years to hear these words from you. I only hope you know what they mean to me and what you mean to me.”

Shane was deeply relieved and elated. He had no idea how she would accept him writing those things. Katie reached over and gave him a hug while she reached for the tissues that Fr. O’Malley placed on the tea table for them. O’Malley, for his part said nothing. It was almost as if he wasn’t in the room.

“Shane, I learned something writing my letter and now reading yours. I am dictating to you what I want from you, and that is probably a good thing. While it is important to me not to feel put down, it is also important that you do not consider me your superior or boss. I want our relationship to be truly egalitarian and as I reflect on my nagging you, I am assuming a superior role. I don’t want that either.”

“I never thought of that in that way, Katie,” said Shane. “Maybe it is my own way of feeling inferior. Feeling a little helpless in the face of you, I think I just accepted whatever you said as inspired. I sure it would have bothered me in fifty or sixty years.”

“More like five or six months,” interjected Fr. O’Malley.

Shane and Katie were both startled to hear his voice. Up to now, it was almost as if they were in the room by themselves.

“One of the things you will have to work on for the rest of your lives is recognizing and dissolving the resentments that we give to each other. You will have to call each other on it and be ready to explain why you resent it. Apologies will be in order.”

“With a firm purpose of amendment,” laughed Katie.

“Aye,” said Fr. O’Malley. “If that worked better, I would be out of the forgiveness business. God doesn’t expect perfection. He does expect us to do our part to grow. He must be very pleased with the pair of you tonight. That was a remarkable two hours. Thank you for letting me be part of it.”

Katie and Shane left the parish house feeling very good about the evening and their sharing with each other. It was a little after 11:00 PM and Shane offered that she stay overnight and have a snack and a drink at the Glowing Lantern.

“You are not going to get frisky, are you,” asked Katie?

Shane laughed. “No,” he said. “I don’t feel frisky. If our experience of this night can be replicated for fifty years, I’ll just be content to have you close to me.”

“Shane, you are a remarkable man. I want that too.”

To be continued

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Chapter 3 - A Fly in the Ointment

The Glowing Lantern was full of life and good craic. It was hard to talk above the level of the noise without contributing to making more noise. The fire was roaring and indeed was a comfort. It was early spring and the evenings were still quite cool made more so by the stiff breeze blowing in off the bay. Seamus O'Byrne, a singer and pianist of some note, led the singing which often filled the night. He was on break at the moment.

Katie and Shane shared a roast beef sandwich and each had a pint of Guinness. Friends stopped by and chatted. The hour was growing late and they were both really tired from the session with Fr. O'Malley. They drifted out of the Lantern and slowly walked over to Shane's cottage on the edge of the grounds occupied by the Glowing Lantern. It was formerly the gate house for the estate that subsequently became the Glowing Lantern. Shane offered Katie the bedroom saying that he would take the couch. "Not on your life," she said. "I just want to lie close to you and feel you next to me when I wake up."

When Katie woke up, Shane wasn't next to her, but she heard rustling in the kitchen and the overwhelming smell of cooking headlined by the aroma of bacon. She threw on one of Shane's oversized sweatshirts, quietly crept up behind him, wrapped her arms around him and hugged his back. As she released her grip, he turned around and kissed her tenderly.

"Is this what mornings for the next fifty years will be like," she asked.

"I hope so," he answered. "I'll try my best to do my part."

As they ate breakfast, Shane asked if there was anything further they had to discuss about their relationship. "I don't think so," Katie said. "The whole discussion was about my complaints about you. You have done a marvelous about face. The only thing that concerns me is that you have no complaints about me. I know I am not perfect and I don't want you letting me think so. I presume a lot of what we have already discussed will come up again with the other topics. I hope you are not disappointed that we did not make love last night. I don't believe it would have been sinful but in some respects, I think I am an old fashioned type of girl. At this point and time of my life, I want to wait until we are married."

Shane smiled and said, "I'm glad you have those values. They make me love you even more. I loved being close to you and falling asleep in each other's arms. I can wait. Making love with you will be a big part of our wedding celebration."

"Our next project is God, our belief system, commitment to the church and service to the world, prayer, and spirituality, said Shane."

“A formidable task indeed,” responded Katie.

They cleaned up the kitchen together. Shane had to go to work at the Lantern and Katie had to get back to the University.

The ten minute drive into Galway City was uneventful. When she entered her apartment on the campus her attention immediately was drawn to the blinking light on her telephone answering machine. The first call was from her Department Chairman, Dr. McDermott. The other was from a guardai officer at Leveegee. She returned McDermott’s call first. He wanted to meet with her on Monday morning to discuss publishing. It was one of her responsibilities as an assistant professor and something to which she has already been giving some thought. The second call was to her old friend Tom Donnolly, the Captain of the Leveegee Guards and it was disturbing.

“Hello Katie.” said Tom but the usual “I’m glad to talk to you” lightness was not in his voice.

“Tom, is anything wrong? You sound terrible.”

“Katie, some thugs broke into your mother’s home last night, said Tom. “She is alright; they roughed her up a bit but nothing is broken and she’ll be alright. She is frightened out of her mind, though. She was treated by Dr. Madison and he recommended that she stay in the hospital overnight.”

Katie was stunned. “I’m coming right over. Tom. I’ll go to the hospital first but I’ll talk with you later this afternoon. I want to hear the full report and get your advice about what we should do.”

She called Shane to let him know of this development.

A little more than an hour later, Katie pulled into the parking lot at St. Mary’s Hospital. When she asked for her mother at the information desk, she was told that she is alright and that they were awaiting her arrival so they could discharge her.

She went up to her mother’s room and her mother ran into her arms crying. “Why did they do this?” she kept saying over and over. Katie was stunned by the way she looked. Both her eyes were blackened. One of thugs must have punched her in the nose. She had a cut on her forehead and a deep bruise on her arm and hip where they threw her to the floor.

Katie just held her mom and stroked her hair. Her comfort would be to be resting safely in her daughter’s arms. The ordeal was over. The problem is how to live with the fact that it happened at all.

Katie and her mom arrived at their family home just before noon. It was only a few minutes later that Tom Donnelly and three fellow officers also arrived. Tom hugged Katie and Mrs. O'Bierne and introduced his colleagues. Katie's mom wanted to make a pot of tea and everyone followed her into the kitchen. She was still a little shaky on her feet but Katie thought that keeping her busy would be a help to her. Tom explained that the investigation was well under way but that he needed to ask some questions.

"What could they possibly be after?" he asked. The O'Bierne home was on the edge of town and there was a little bit of distance between the residences. Mrs. O'Bierne responded that she had no idea about what they could possibly be after. There was nothing of value in the house. The only money she had was her state pension plus some money that Katie sent her every month. She had no jewelry, no art, no treasures except those things to which she was emotionally attached and had value only to her. The house was a mess from being ransacked.

Katie said that they would have to straighten the place up to determine if anything was stolen. Tom explained that other small rural communities had similar problems with wilding teenagers rampaging vulnerable people and stealing whatever they thought was valuable. If anything was stolen, he wanted a list. He explained that there were suspects from one of the neighboring towns and that the guards were watching to see if they would try to sell anything that they had stolen.

"It is the curse of the new Ireland," said Tom. "We were far better off when we were poor. These young vandals are just looking for money to buy drugs. We never had that kind of problem when we were all poor. You are lucky you weren't hurt more than you were Mrs. O'Bierne. These people have no regard for life or limb."

Katie told Tom that she would bring her mother to her apartment in Galway City. The house would be closed and locked but she wanted the guards to keep an eye on it in case the vandals came back. An empty house might attract them and that would be a way of catching them.

After the guards left, Katie and her mom relaxed over a cup of tea. They chatted until Katie started to see a glimmer of restored confidence in her mom and then, together they set about the task of straightening up the house and inventorying anything that was missing.

Katie then phoned Shane at the Lantern and filled him in on the events of the day and that the immediate plan was to bring her mom back to her apartment at the university.

To be continued

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Dear faithful readers.

To avoid wearing out your patience as you wait for new chapters of Love's Promises to arrive each month each month, I will summarize some chapters but continue to carry the story forward. If anyone feels that they require the whole text of the summarized chapters, I will be glad to send them to you. Just ask via e-mail.

Chapter Four – Angela O'Bierne Starts a New Life - Outline

Katie and Angela arrive at Galway

- Katie reassures her mother that everything will work out
- Katie has enough room in her apartment and rearranges the furniture
- Introduces Shane when he arrives to take her to Mass. She announces their relationship and plans to marry by year's end.

Katie and Shane take Angela to church.

- Introduces her to Fr, Jim McCarthy, the Newman Chaplain, who plays a significant role later in the book.
- Description of the non denominational chapel and the ceremony of Mass
- They go to Fitzgerald's a famous Galway hotel where most go for brunch after Mass.
- Introduce Katie and Shane's friends

At the end of the chapter Katie and Shane reflect on the changes in their lives

Chapter 5 – One Door Closes, Another Opens

Dr. McDermott arranges to meet Katie at her apartment to discuss her publishing assignment.

Katie makes an appointment at the University Medical Center to have her mother thoroughly checked out. Examined by Dr. Couglin, Dean of the Medical School himself. She is OK.

Dr. McDermott has two things on his agenda:

- Katie's publishing assignment, research the roots of revolution in the writings of Padraig Pearse., leader of the Irish Rising in 1916.

-To meet Katie's mom whom he noticed in Church the previous day. He invites her out for a formal tea later in the week

Chapter 6 - Heroes and Heroines

Katie helped her mom get ready for her date with Dr. McDermott. They had received good news from the University Medical Services Department. Dr. Coughlin had examined Angela himself and found her to be in good condition. He was afraid that her nose was broken but that did not prove to be the case. There was no permanent damage to her eyes and the blackened color of deep bruises was already softening, becoming tinged with yellow, a sign of healing. Her hip was alright and the cut on her head did not require stitches. Dr. Coughlin praised her hospital treatment and praised Katie as well for helping her to face her fears. He took blood and urine samples for routine tests but the results would not be ready for a few days.

Dr. McDermott arrived promptly at four o'clock and he and Angela went off to The Fitzgerald Hotel for a dress up tea. Angela had all the apprehension of a sixteen year old on a first date. Katie's dad had died when she was a little girl and while she remembered him well enough; the details of his life were starting to slip away from her. Katie thought that her mom's last date may have been with her dad before they were married. Although she had not lived at home for about twelve years, she never remembered her mother going out with anyone while she was home.

Katie put her letter for Shane into her bag and set out for Rosseville to pick up Shane for their meeting with Fr. O'Malley. A half hour later, she and Shane were on the porch being effusively greeted by Fr. O'Malley.

Again, Fr. O'Malley had prepared tea and scones for the meeting. Tissues were next to each chair for eye drying purposes. O'Malley had a fire in the fireplace to keep away the chill of the damp night. He explained again the ground rules. He would sit out of sight in the background and Katie and Shane were to talk only with each other. Katie wondered if they would offend the theologian in O'Malley with their thoughts on God. She relaxed realizing that O'Malley would not be offended by anything.

O'Malley led them in a brief prayer asking God to bless their discussions. They then exchanged their letters.

Shane's letter was pretty straight forward. God and the Church had always been a significant part of his life. His mom was his first religion teacher and he could still remember stories that she told about how God influences our lives. His mother was very devout and Shane, being an only child, was a frequent companion with her at daily Mass.

Shane wrote that he prayed but was somewhat frustrated because he feared that his prayer did not have any depth. He was frequently distracted. He thought that his picture of God

was limited and that he was maturing beyond his vision. He pictured his religious life in the same way that it was for his last religion class in secondary school. He remembered praying when he was trying to save the rescue ship from the rogue wave. That was a different kind of prayer. He felt that he was actually experiencing God. He credits that experience with his ability keep cool and focused during the whole procedure.

He accepted the Church for what it is. The sudden flood of stories about pedophile priests and the treatment of children in the orphanages did not bother him that much. It was one of Ireland's dirty little secrets that was not so secret. Most people were aware of the foibles of the institutional Church but for the first time they were starting to make headlines. Why did he as well as most of the people of Ireland accept a sinful Church? For better or for worse the Church was still the doorway to salvation and the entre for sharing the life of the living Christ in God.

He was committed to the community both out of Christian charity and because of the visibility he had as part owner of the Glowing Lantern. In Ireland, the village pub was the central social institution after the Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland. The town government, the Rotary Club, and different men's and women's groups met at the Glowing Lantern. Shane felt that he was a gifted counselor and served as something of a consultant to all of these groups. No one in the village would be poor or hungry on his watch.

Katie was very impressed with his letter. "Shane, we all have a lot of growing to do in spirituality. I sat in on some theology courses at the University and I was astonished at how naive I am about my religious life. It would be nice if the pursuit of a better understanding of religious life could be part of our marriage."

"Aye, it can be," said Shane. "Maybe we can find some way to help Fr. O'Malley improve the lot of our parish."

Katie's letter described how she had put her picture of God into a little box. As she grew, she grew out of the box and had to build a bigger box for her image of God. At some point she realized that you can't put God into a box. God is Love and in loving Shane she knew she was experiencing something of the God life. God was the all knowing, all powerful creator of the world. He was no longer the courtly elderly gentleman that she pictured carrying a lamb, probably an impressive image from one of her childhood religion books. As an intellectual she was familiar with the doubt and struggle of the world's greatest minds with their own picture of God. She lamented that she did not have an especially personal relationship with God. Her prayer life was rote and automatic.

Katie did not have any feeling of affection for the Church. She was pretty much indifferent and, at the same time, not judgmental. Like everyone else she was aware of the weaknesses and the terrible sinfulness of the Church in Ireland. She often thought of it in terms of absolute power that corrupts absolutely. The parish at Rosseville and Fr. O'Malley was something of a salve for her cynicism. She also had an appreciation of the

Newman Center at the University and a respect for the theologians on the campus. These were some of the things that kept her loyal to the Church.

They worked through their discussion for more than another hour before Fr. O'Malley suddenly appeared. Again, both Shane and Katie had forgotten that he was in the room. "You have done well again," he said. "I just ask you to try to be open to the grace of God. I was once very much in the same position you are. Somehow, I just kept searching through prayer, reading, participating in a solid Christian community, receiving and delivering the sacraments, and loving God's people. Nothing came to me all at once. It came every now and then with blinding glimpses of the obvious. I confess this to you because I know that your personal journeys will lead will lead you to great discoveries. That is how God works with us. We just can't handle Him all at once."

"I'll meet with you on Friday. I want to discuss the Sacraments and particularly the Sacrament of Matrimony."

He blest them both and led them to the door.

As they walked back to the Lantern where Katie's car was parked, they were filled with enthusiasm. Katie said, "I remember the Gospel from Sunday, Shane. Weren't our hearts burning within us as he explained the Scriptures, or something like that."

"Aye Katie, I thought of that as well. We'll have our journey too and recognize Him in the breaking of the bread."

Shane, can you come with me on Saturday? I want to go to Leveegee to pick up some clothes for mom and get some of her favorite things so she won't feel like a stranger. We'll stay over and I'll introduce you around town of my birth."

"I would love to do that Katie. I'll have to work on Sunday, though."

"I don't think that mom will feel too much like a stranger. She had a date today with Dr. McDermott for a dress up tea in Galway City. I told her that she works faster than some of the students. When God closes one door, he opens others. I think her last date might have been with my father before they were married."

The rest of the week was uneventful. Angela and Dr. McDermott, now known as Peadar, had a great date and plan to do it again next week after meeting for Mass and brunch on Sunday.

Katie started to do some research on the 1916 rebellion. She and Shane had another great meeting with Fr. O'Malley and started to develop ideas on the Sacramental nature of marriage...their marriage. They were more conscious of God in their lives.

They were planning to go to Mass at the Rosseville Church on Sunday after a weekend at Leveegee. They set out for her mom's home after their meeting with Fr. O'Malley. It was

somewhat late when they arrived, a little after eleven o'clock. Shane put his car in the garage and closed the door. They decided to go to bed and take care of collecting her mom's things in the morning. In the afternoon, Katie had promised him a tour of her childhood haunts and a share in the good craic of a market town. Once again, they experienced the joy of falling asleep in each other's arms.

In the wee hours of the morning, Katie was awakened by the sound of someone breaking into the house. She quickly woke Shane warning him to be very quiet because no one could possibly know they were there.

The four young men who had attacked Angela came back to further loot the house after deciding that no one was there. They were totally unaware that Shane and Katie were in the house.

Still wearing only his shorts, Shane silently crept down the stairs. Shane, in his early thirties, was still a very fit athlete, tall and muscular. He had great respect for the sea but he didn't fear much else. He braced his back against the wall and when one of the culprits came to go up the stairs he smashed him on the bridge of his nose with his elbow, knocking him unconscious. The other leapt at him. Shane took advantage of his being off balance, grabbed his belt and the top of his shirt and slammed him down head first against the stairs. He too was unconscious. He hit the third but hard enough to only stun him. The fourth had a knife. They circled around each other in the sitting room each looking for the opportunity to strike. The man that Shane stunned quickly recovered, and picked up a walking stick. Katie screamed, "Behind you Shane." Shane shifted quickly to his left as the cane stuck his back. The assailant with the knife quickly sprung on him with the knife raised high to plunge into his chest. "No, No," shouted Katie. She gripped the handle of the cast iron frying pan she picked up in the kitchen and swung it like the two handed forehand of a pro tennis player, striking the knife wielder in back of his head. The gong sounded like a church bell and the knife fell harmlessly to the floor. The remaining assassin ran out the door into the arms of the guards as they were running up the steps of the porch. He was quickly subdued and handcuffed.

The other guards ran into the house and were stunned at the three unconscious bodies scattered throughout the first floor. "Are there any others?" asked the guard. Shane assured him that all were accounted for.

"Captain Donnolly asked us to keep an eye on your house Miss O'Bierne. The officer on the beat saw the activity and called for backup. It looks like we arrived just in time."

"Actually about ten seconds too late," said a shaken Katie. "The guy she hit was bleeding from his ears and she was afraid that she had killed him."

"He is alive," said the guard but I'm afraid he will hear that clang for the rest of his life. We heard it out in the street."

An official car pulled up and out stepped Katie's friend, Tom Donnolly. The four officers all saluted. "It looks like my men have everything under control," remarked Tom. "Everything was under control before we arrived," said the officer in charge. "We would be dealing with a murder but for quick thinking of this young lady and her trusty frying pan."

"Hah, I had everything under control," said Shane. "I was just about to break his arm when the pan hit him."

Meanwhile, Katie was shaking like a leaf and sobbing. An officer wrapped a blanket around her and Shane held her in his arms. "It often happens," said Tom. "There is such a build up of adrenalin to meet the crisis that people often go into shock. Katie will be alright now that the crisis has passed. She has had quite a night."

"Now it is Katie's turn to be a heroine," said Tom, recalling that the legend of Shane on the sea was rapidly spreading throughout Ireland.

"I could do with a lot less heroism," said Katie though she was still trembling.

"Katie, you saved my life. I don't think I could have stopped that knife. You didn't save just my life; you saved both of our lives." All the bravado had left the chastened Shane as the adrenalin started to leave his body and he also began to experience the trembles.

"Shane, if you keep this near death stuff up, I am going to apply for the widow's pension before we are even married."

Everyone smiled at Katie's quip knowing now that she was going to be alright. Meanwhile, Tom went into the kitchen to put on some tea. Sleep would not come easily after this ordeal.

One assailant went off to jail in handcuffs and the other three went to the hospital by ambulance. One would require facial surgery because of a shattered cheekbone and a broken nose compliments of Shane's karate blow with his elbow. The other two had fractured skulls, each one at the hands of Shane or Katie. It would be a long time before they healed. The police took the knife as evidence of attempted murder.

"If they are ever able to have a thought again, they will have to reflect on the bad decision to revisit the O'Bierne house," reflected Tom as he sipped his tea.

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Chapter 7 – Dating at a Certain Age

Peadar McDermott nervously dialed the number to Katie's apartment knowing that Angela would answer the phone. Even though they had a great time together on Tuesday, Peter was feeling very tentative about calling Angela. Like millions of insecure males in the world he was fearful of rejection by this woman he found so attractive.

Like Angela, Peadar was not an expert at this dating thing. His wife had passed ten years earlier. They had a great life together. They lived at Oxford when he was there for his post doctoral fellowship. They also lived at the Sorbonne in Paris when he was invited there as a visiting professor for a year. They lived in the United States as well, when he was invited to help Boston College set up an Irish Studies program.

They never had children though they desperately wanted a family. While they were living in Massachusetts, Siobhan, Peadar's wife, was diagnosed with cervical cancer. Subsequent surgeries eradicated any opportunity to have children, and though they had the best care in the world available to them, they returned to Ireland so she could die peacefully in her own home.

He was a scholar, loved his life, and appreciated his reputation. He was also aware of how lonely he was. For the longest time he could not conceive of being with anyone but his wife. He loved Siobhan dearly and cherished every moment with her until she succumbed to cancer. She was a great companion to him and loved him to the point where she could see him beyond his scholar and professor status. He was simply Peadar, the love of her life. He reveled in this. He maintained his professionalism after her death but just couldn't bring himself to socialize again...at least until he saw Angela in church.

As a scholar and professor, he felt he was above the fray. He was very much a part of the faculty community and a good companion to his colleagues. However, it all felt pretty superficial to him. Acquaintances, however many, were not necessarily friends. He yearned for the intimacy he once enjoyed.

When he was at Mass last Sunday, he saw Angela with Katie, and figured out that she was Katie's mother. He was instantly smitten even though her eyes were blackened and she walked with a slight limp. He didn't know what that was all about but was determined to find out. He had an appointment with Katie the next morning to discuss her publishing assignment and he plotted to meet at Katie's apartment so he could meet her mom. As things turned out his meeting with Katie went well, as he expected it would. His meeting with Katie's mom was spectacular and they spent almost two hours sipping tea and just talking. Then they had a great date for tea on Tuesday and spent most of their time in conversation and getting comfortable with each other.

"Hello," said Angela, thinking that she was going to pick up a call for Katie.

"Hello Angela, this is Peadar. I'm sorry to be calling at a last minute but I just received word that a meeting I was supposed to attend has been postponed. I would be honored if

you would join me for dinner over at Lahinch this evening. I belong to the club and I think you will enjoy seeing it. It is a facility with a lot of character. The food is also excellent.”

Angela knew that Lahinch was a prominent golf club and said that she would love to go. She did have a problem though. She had some decent clothes with her but Katie had gone to Leveegee to pick up clothes and other items from the house and wasn't expected back until Sunday.

“The clothes you wore on Sunday would be perfect, Angela. If you could outfit yourself with those clothes or something similar, you will be fine. We are going to dinner and not a fancy dress ball.”

Angela laughed. “Yes, I'll put something together and try to look my best.”

“Ah, you would even look good in a burlap bag.”

“Go away with ya,” said Angela. “You really know how to flatter a girl.”

“Thank you,” said Peadar, impressed with himself. He was very encouraged that his attempt to flirt was not rejected. “I'll pick you up at five o'clock. That way we will be able to see the loveliness of the course while it is still daylight.”

“I'll be ready and I look forward to a delightful evening,” said Angela. Peadar rang off and danced around the room.

Angela did indeed assemble herself very nicely and without panic. The bruises around her eyes were almost gone. With the help of a little of Katie's makeup there was no sign of bruises at all. Her hip was fine and she no longer required the pain pills. She found a soft blue suit among her clothes that would be appropriate for doing business, which she had never done, but which made her look very presentable for a dinner out.

Peadar arrived a little before five. He was dressed in grey slacks, a blue blazer, and a blue and white striped power tie, rather than his professorial bow tie. He wore a white handkerchief in the front pocket of the blazer and gave the impression of casual elegance. They would indeed be considered a handsome couple.

As they drove away in his Mercedes, he told Angela how beautiful she looked. She blushed at the flattery and told Peadar that he had changed from being a professor to being a movie star.

“Lahinch is over in County Clare,” he said. “We'll have to drive around Galway Bay but we'll be there in about forty minutes.”

It was an enjoyable ride. While Angela had been to Galway City before, she had never gone into Clare. The setting sun highlighted the Burren and the dazzling white of the lime

stone mountains created a sharp contrast with the multi colored spring flowers scattered along the base of the mountain. Across the road from the mountain was the always restless Atlantic Ocean into which the setting sun was soon to fall. It was a breathtaking sight. Peadar talked about the mysticism associated with the mountain and told Angela about the burial grounds for the families of ancient chieftains. From the road, they could see the majestic Cliffs of Moher, one of the wonders of the world and a must visit stop for tourists visiting Ireland.

They had already passed through to little village of Doolan, and Peadar described it as the Irish Traditional Music capital. He told stories, culled from his own research, of the Celtic migration from the Middle East to lands end, Ireland. There were two migration tracks, one through northern Europe and the other through the southern part of the continent. The two tracks of migration are still identified by the presence of shepherds who are also pipers. The tunes they played were heard in the sounds the wind made as it blew through the trees, the chirping of birds, and the sounds of a running stream. Shepherds turned the sounds they heard into music.

Doolan is on the Atlantic coast and looks up hill to the Burren. The swirling winds blowing from the sea and playing over the pure limestone mountains make extraordinary sounds if you listen carefully enough. Peadar mentioned the names of several musicians, all of whom were familiar names to Angela, but having spent most of her life in the Midlands, this was all new to her.

She loved the rich deepness of his voice, his lilting Connemara accent, the deep richness of his knowledge, and the fact that he did not speak to her as if she was a student. She loved listening to his stories. Here she was, Angela O'Bierne, dressed to the nines and riding in a Mercedes with one of the leading scholars in Europe, a man who had absorbed her attraction, one who was obviously attracted to her. "Me, Angela O'Bierne, a non descript widow from a non descript county that no one who lives outside of Ireland ever visits. What did I ever do to deserve this?" She was feeling very happy with this unexpected turn in her life.

They pulled up to the main door of the clubhouse. Peadar handed the keys to a valet and a porter held the door for them to enter, "Good evening Doctor," said the porter and smiled at Angela. She was very impressed that everyone seemed to know Peadar. Of course, he was a member of the club, but he must be considered an important member.

The Maitre d' asked if they would like a table overlooking the golf course, or one that overlooks the ocean. "We'll take a walk on the course after dinner. I'm sure the first fairway won't change much" Peadar, told him. "We will dine watching the setting sun and the ever changing sea."

Angela was a little surprised at the clubhouse. It was a fairly contemporary building, not at all what she expected. She was anticipating a nineteenth century manor house with rooms of beamed ceilings and rich looking dark wood paneling. She was looking for shelves filled with books and knick knacks. That was her image of club rooms that she

remembered from watching soap stories on television. She was surprised by the modernity of the building and its antiseptic look compared with her image of the nineteenth century manor house. She thought that it looked interesting, but it was different than her expectation. It was large with different levels to accommodate the differing needs of the members. There were several dining rooms and the one they were in was a main room strictly reserved for members and their guests.

The head waiter led them to a table next to a rather large picture window on the western side of the dining room overlooking the flaming red Atlantic Ocean as it prepared to receive the setting sun. For Angela, it was a spectacular scene.

“Would you like your usual drink, Doctor, asked the head waiter?” Peadar nodded assent. “And what may I bring for you, madame?” Angela asked for a glass of Merlot.

After the waiter left, Angela leaned in toward him and said that this whole scene was spectacular. She couldn’t even dream of anything as beautiful as the ride to the club and the setting for their dinner.

“Do you play golf here Peadar,” she asked?

“It is more that I play at golf here,” said Peadar. “I am not a very good golfer, but I play well enough to join some friends and play five or six times a season. It is a good place to relax. I enjoy dinner here. Most of all, I can be unnoticed here. They protect my privacy. I notice that after a day or an evening here, I am recharged to face whatever I have to deal with the next day. I don’t share this with many people, but I especially wanted to share it with you.”

“Thank you for that, Peadar. I have enjoyed every minute from the time you picked me up and we haven’t even begun dinner yet.”

They ordered their dinner, she, baked Irish salmon marinated in a delicate mustard sauce, and he, roast duck. Each ordered another glass of wine.

The dinner conversation was fascinating with Peadar telling stories of his life abroad and Angela describing her life at Leveegee and some great stories about raising Katie.

Both declined dessert and finished their meal with a cup of tea.

Peter invited Angela to walk with him on the first fairway which was lighted to appeal to the vision of the diners on the east side of the dining room

Angela removed her shoes and carried them. The heels dug into the ground and she did not want to ruin the course for golfers. There was something extremely sensual about walking barefoot in the damp grass.

Peadar took her hand. Her hand was small in his larger hand but the feeling of warmth spread throughout her entire body as they slowly walked hand in hand to the green at the end of the fairway. The artificial light created interesting patterns of shadows especially where the bracken at the edge of the fairway and around the natural contours and swords of the God-made course swayed in the gentle breeze.

He directed her to a bench near the second tee back in the shadows. He put his arm around her shoulders and held her close to him as they looked back at the beauty of the lighted fairway they had just traversed.

Angela was just about to say something when Peadar kissed her. She was surprised, pleasantly so. The kiss was gentle and tender and she didn't hesitate to return it and she definitely felt the reverberations throughout her body. The earth didn't move but it was everything short of an earthquake.

Peadar started to say something and Angela feared it would be an apology. She quickly put her index finger over his lips. She smiled and said, "That was very, very nice Peadar. Let's do it again in case I suddenly wake up from this dream."

They kissed again, this time a little more passionately. She could feel his hand rubbing up and down over her back and it felt soooo good.

They didn't speak. They just held each other close, touched each others cheek and kissed again and again. Two hours flew by as rapidly as two minutes when the club flickered the lights warning walkers that they would be extinguished in ten minutes. Peadar and Angela reluctantly rose from the bench and slowly started to walk back toward the clubhouse.

They were walking silently, hand in hand, when Angela stopped and looked him straight in the eye. "Peadar, I haven't been kissed like that in over 25 years. In fact, I have never been kissed quite like that."

Peadar didn't know how to respond and he blurted out, "I don't know what came over me."

"Well whatever it is," said Angela, "don't get over it." She hugged him and kissed him deeply under the flickering lights. They walked back to the clubhouse in darkness, and then around to the front of the building where the valet had Peadar's car ready.

LOVES SURPRISES Chapter 8

Introduction: It is the morning after the violent episode with the intruders at her mother's house. Katie and Shane are unaware of the attention given to them by the media. Her mom and Dr. McDermott have had their wonderful visit to Lahinch and are also completely unaware of Katie and Shane's adventures of the previous evening. The story picks up at this point.

It is the morning after their life and death struggle. Katie and Shane slept late and wakened relatively refreshed considering the activity of the previous evening. They decided against making a tour of Leveegee. That was something they could do at any time and had plans to do so.

Katie called a contractor to repair the window broken by the invaders and then called her friend, Tom, at the Guards' Barracks. She just wanted to make certain that the house would continue to be watched and that he had all the necessary contact information to reach her if need be.

They loaded the car with Angela's things and started out for Galway.

Shane turned on the car radio to catch the news and the headline was the activity at Leveegee and the Wonder Woman professor who saved the day by subduing some of the culprits. The report went on to mention that Shane reprised his heroic role as the savior of the Nina G crew and that the pair together are a force with which to be reckoned.

"Glory be," said Shane, "I hope that no one decides that they want to knock off the champions."

"I could do with a little peace myself," said Katie. "We never encountered anything like the past two months when we first started seeing each other in college. Fr. O'Malley said that marriage would be a great adventure but he never mentioned anything like we've been through. I should have called my mother. If she turns on the telly, she'll be flabbergasted by the news. And to think, I brought her to Galway for a spell of peace and an opportunity to recover from her fears."

They drove the rest of the way to the university in relative silence. The music on the radio was pleasant and Katie actually fell asleep.

Meanwhile, Angela also slept late. She did not fall asleep easily because of the excitement of the evening. She had not experienced happiness like this in a long time. She had not enjoyed the feeling of loving and being loved in almost forty years. Yes, she had Katie and many close friends, but as important as they are to her, it was nothing like she was discovering with Peadar.

The phone rang. It was one of Katie's friends who did not know that Angela was with her. She talked about Katie being all over the news. There were photos of her and Shane leaving the house at Leveegee. Apparently they had subdued a whole gang of killers. Angela took it all in and told Katie's friend that she was expected to return late in the afternoon. No sooner did she ring off when the phone rang in rapid

succession for five or six calls. When the phone rang again, she was reluctant to pick it up but glad that she did

because it was Peadar. "The Irish Times is running this incredible story of Professor Wonder Woman," said Peadar.

"Peadar, tell me what they wrote. Katie hasn't called nor has she come home yet

"Well, first of all they are alright," assured Peadar. "I'm sure they don't know about the excitement they created or they would have called. Apparently, the gang that attacked you came back to loot the house thinking it was empty. Shane subdued three of them. The fourth had a knife and was stalking Shane. One of the attackers recovered enough to hit Shane with a walking stick, distracting him enough for the knife wielder to stab at him. Katie hit him with your frying pan before he could do any damage. The guards came and arrested the lot of them."

"Good Lord, I almost can't believe that...at Leveegeein my house."

"Well thank God you weren't there," said Peadar.

"By the way, it is almost out of context with your news, but I loved our time together last night"

"As did I," said Angela. "I dreamed about it all night and all morning as well. I am loving remembering every minute."

"I'll pick you up for Mass tomorrow," said Peadar.

"Is it alright if Katie comes with us," asked Angela? "I think that Shane is working tomorrow and will attend Mass at Rosseville."

"Of course, it will be fun to be with Katie socially. We seldom get that opportunity. I'll see you in the morning."

The phone rang again and at last it was Katie. "Mom, I am so sorry. I had no idea that we would make the news. You must be a wreck hearing all the things they are saying. I fell asleep in the car while Shane drove us to Rosseville. I am going to leave him off and I'll be back at the apartment within a half hour."

"Are you alright," asked Angela?

"I'm fine, mom. My little nap in the car was just what I needed."

After Angela rang off, she went about straightening up the apartment. The phone rang several times but she let the answering tape take the call. "What a wonderful invention," she thought.

She spent the time refreshing herself and dressed in a pair of dark blue casual slacks and a light blue shirt top.

She saw Katie's car pull up through the window and opened the door for her.

Katie staggered up the stairs carrying a load of clothes. She came right through the doorway and brought them directly into Angela's room. "There is more stuff in the car," she said, "but we can get that tomorrow."

Angela hugged her tightly. She wouldn't let go as her eyes filled with tears. "My little girl was in such danger," she sobbed, "and I didn't even know it."

"We didn't pick the danger, Mom, and we got through it fine. It was just one of those things that was bound to happen. I'm glad we were there. That crowd would have burned your house down just for the pleasure of seeing it burn. Tom Donnelly is having the house watched just to make sure that they don't have any friends who want to get even."

"What is this Professor Wonder Woman stuff all about," asked Angela?

"As one of them was about to stick his knife in Shane's chest, I bopped him with your frying pan. You can't grow up in Leveegee with the crowd that I knew without being somewhat tough," said Katie.

"I never knew about that," said Angela.

"Better you didn't," said Katie. "I wasn't bad, though."

Angela gave her another hug and told her how proud she was of her.

They put Angela's clothes in the closet that Katie had vacated. As the afternoon grew late, they walked to the University commissary for dinner. They were escorted to the faculty lounge which was every bit as nice as any restaurant Angela had visited, except for Lahinch which would be forever special to her.

"Oh, I meant to tell you," said Angela, "that Peadar is picking us up for Mass tomorrow."

"Peadar??? Who is Peadar?"

"Why it is Dr. McDermott," said Angela.

"Peadar is it now," said Angela. "You two have become very cozy very quickly."

Katie knew that there was an attraction between the two. But she never imagined that things would move along so quickly.

Angela then told her about the wonderful dinner that they shared at Lahinch, of course leaving out the details of their intimacy.

Katie could see the sparkle in her mom's eye and she had a lightness about her that she didn't have two days ago.

Overlooking what could possibly be a professional complication for her, Katie was really happy for her mom. She would just deal with Dr. McDermott with the professionalism that she always exercised with him. She couldn't wait to tell Shane.

The next day Peadar arrived a little early, enjoyed a cup of tea, and then escorted them both to the University Chapel.

Katie was shocked to find photographers at Church. She was uncomfortable with the attention and it was a distraction to the other worshippers. All of her friends greeted her with enthusiasm. They missed Shane but Katie explained that it was Shane's Sunday to work at the Lantern.

The liturgy of the day was still within the Easter cycle. The Gospel was a story of the shepherds care of his lambs and his pursuit of the strays. Fr. McCarthy's homily focused on the concept that we are all shepherds and that we all have to watch out for each other. It is easy to do for your family and close friends. We also have to do it for our extended family, however far flung. He talked about hunger and disease in poorer nations and how the care of those people was also our responsibility. He talked about how the Americans and the Quakers, a religious sect that has nothing in common with Roman Catholicism, saved thousands of lives during the Irish Starvation. It is always our responsibility to pay it forward.

As she listened Katie became troubled by her mixed feelings about her mom's attackers. She would have to discuss that with Fr. O'Malley. The last thing she needed now was a moral dilemma. O'Malley probably would not give her an answer but would help her find her own.

She could still conjure the picture of Shane lying on the floor with a knife sticking out of his chest, gasping for his last breaths. The fact is that this nightmare was only one second from reality. Her body quivered involuntarily at the thought, but it was hard to dismiss. She was still astonished about her role in saving Shane. I love him she thought. I saved us. "The media is calling me a heroine. Ha....I had one chance to keep Shane alive and I took it. Was I selfish? Some heroine I am, a selfish bitch trying to protect her future."

"Dear God, wipe away this awful distraction. Thank you for giving me the strength and presence of mind to avoid a terrible tragedy. Thank you...thank you...thank you."

The end of Fr. McCarthy's homily was never heard.

After Mass, the Fitzgeralds group gathered at the hotel dining room. Peadar had to stop for petrol and they arrived after everyone else. The ever present photographers were at the entrance of the hotel, much to the annoyance of Katie. She had once read an interview with someone famous who said that if you cooperate with them, they'll treat you kindly. Katie smiled and waved but kept moving to the security of the hotel lobby. When they entered the dining room, the entire room stood up and applauded. However, reluctant she was, Katie was their heroine. She blushed from head to toe and waved to the crowd. These were her friends and close acquaintances. They were betraying her. No... they were honoring her. "I will endure it," she said to her mom. "It will all go away in a week or so."

During their breakfast, Gay Byrne, the famous late night TV host came to their table and introduced himself. He wanted her to be a guest on his program. Katie was flustered but Peadar leaned over and whispered, "Go with it Katie."

Katie asked Byrne to excuse her for a moment while she talked with her Department Chairman. "You want me to go with it," asked Katie?

"Yes," responded Peadar. "If you don't they may say unkind things about you. It doesn't have to be true but if a TV personality says something, anything, a million people will believe it. Have him make the arrangements through the University Communication's Office. They will protect you and negotiate the parameters of the discussion after they determine that with you."

"Can Shane be part of it," asked Katie?"

"Of course he can. He is a major player in the event."

"Mr. Byrne," she called, "I apologize for asking you to step away but thank you for doing so. I will be glad to appear on your show with my friend Shane Ryan. After all, he did subdue three of the intruders. Please make arrangement through the University Communication's Office. Sean Hurley is the Director."

"I didn't know you had an agent," said Byrne.

"I don't have an agent," said Katie. "I'm very new to being so public and I am grateful to have the resources of our University available to me. I am certain that Sean will help you arrange a memorable interview. He'll be available in his office tomorrow. Thank you for inviting us. Shane is already famous so he is more used to this than I am"

"Hmmm, very smooth," thought Peadar.

Byrne thanked her profusely and went on his way, stopping to visit several tables on his way out of the room.

"We'll call Sean as soon as we get back to your apartment," said Peadar. "This will be a great interview."

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I always appreciate your comments. They help me be a better writer and to tell a better story. I look forward to hearing from you.