

LOVE'S SUPRISES – CHAPTER 10

Background: In the previous chapters the University Communications departments makes all the arrangements for Katie and Shane to appear on the Gay Byrne TV show. Dr. McDermott speaks to Katie and asks her permission to date her mother. Katie tells him that permission is not hers to give but she does give her blessing. Later that evening, before Katie could talk about it, her mom tells her of the developing relationship with Dr. McDermott.

Engagements

Tuesday was one of their normal evenings with Fr. O'Malley. Katie drove into Rossville to pick up Shane at his cottage on the grounds of the Glowing Lantern. He asked Katie to come a little early because he wanted to stop in the church before going in to see Fr. O'Malley. It was a glorious spring evening, cool after a day of warm sunshine. A gentle breeze blew in off the bay and it was a grand night altogether. It had been a cold and wet spring and a day like this day was rare enough on the cusp of summer.

Shane greeted her with a bear hug that lifted her off the ground and a kiss that transported her to the stars. "Wow," exclaimed Katie, "where did that come from?"

"I haven't seen you since Sunday and we hardly had a chance to talk at all. I missed you."

"I missed you too" said Katie. "Yesterday was such a busy day, I feel as though I've lived a lifetime in just one day. As I told you on the phone last night, I had a great meeting with Sean Hurley. He'll take care of everything and he'll have some of his assistants role play the obvious questions with us before the interview. I know they have been negotiating all day, but I expect that this will happen before the end of the week. Maybe it will be next Monday. They will have to advertise and for the likes of us they will have to lie a lot to get anyone to watch. Dr. McDermott asked my permission to date my mom. Permission is not mine to give but I did give him my blessing. Then I talked with my mom at dinner last night. She was so cute. She did not want to give up the secret that was as obvious as the sparkle in her eyes. I asked her about her feelings and she finally told me that she is falling in love with him. I told her about my conversation with him, that I gave him my blessing, and then told her that I was rooting for them."

"She is Angela, but you are the angel," said Shane.

"Well aren't you the nice one to say such sweet things," gushed Katie.

They walked up the steps to the entrance of the Rosseville Church and fortunately, the door was still open. The setting of the day still provided enough light filtering through the stained glass to illuminate the church. Shane walked her up the center aisle and stood before the platform on which the altar was set. He knelt to say a prayer and Katie followed as well. The quiet of the church was overwhelming.

“Katie, I wanted to come here for two reasons. First, I wanted to thank God for keeping us safe in that scuffle last Friday. Then he turned to her and said, “Katie, before God and before this community of family and friends, and the whole world, I pledge to take you for my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer, until death do us part.”

Katie picked up her cue and looking him directly in the eyes, and through her tears repeated these same words, “Shane, before God and this community of our family and friends, and the entire world, I pledge to take you as my husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, until death do us part.”

Shane took the ring from his pocket and slipped it on her finger. He then gave her a toe curling kiss filled with star bursts. Each regained their equilibrium and turned to march out of the church. In the rear of the church was Fr. O’Malley. Katie was embarrassed about being seen kissing in church and apologized to Fr. O’Malley.

“Nonsense,” said O’Malley. “Kissing was invented by God himself and is at least a sacramental, something that belongs in a church as well as everywhere else. The lad told me he was going to do this. I didn’t want to interfere but I didn’t want to miss it either. Even I couldn’t think of a more brilliant idea.”

He locked the church as they left and walked with them to the priest house.

As they walked into the sitting room, the room was filled with the gentle glow of candlelight, soft music was playing on the stereo, finger sandwiches were laid out on the table, and the centerpiece was a bottle of Irish Mist, with some Galway Chrystal glasses.

“This is compliments of your men at the Lantern. I told them that I needed a low key engagement reception. They are overjoyed for you. Both raised their hands to heaven and cried, “finally.”

O’Malley poured out three drinks and offered a toast. “Your love for each other is mighty and not only *can* change the world, I expect it to. May God be your support, forever.”

Now exchange your letters.

“Father, before we leave tonight, I want a word with you. Shane can stay but I have a couple of questions.”

O'Malley nodded in assent, took his drink and a couple of finger sandwiches and retreated to his dark corner in the room.

"You'll have to read your letters by candlelight. Now that I have set this grand mood, I don't want to change it."

The discussion went on for one and a half hours. It was winding down before Fr. O'Malley brought it to a conclusion.

Katie gave Fr. O'Malley a big hug. "I'm so glad we are doing this and doing it in this way. I can't tell you how valuable this has been for us. Why doesn't everyone do this?"

"I would like them to," said O'Malley. "The success of the party depends on the gifts that one brings. Not everyone can bring the same gifts that you have."

"We would not have had a clue about any of that if you hadn't opened the door for us," said Shane.

"I only pointed to the door; you and Katie opened it"

"Oh boy, by the way, Katie, that ring I gave you is a fake. The jeweler gave me that one for a few days. We have to go by his shop later this week to pick out the one that you like best."

"Hmmm," said Katie, "a fine was to start off an engagement."

"Actually, I thought it was a pretty good idea." pouted Shane.

"Don't be an eejit; I was just teasing you. I'd like to keep this one too and savor the memory. This was the most beautiful night of my life."

"Katie, what did you want to ask me before you left tonight," asked O'Malley?

"We may not be able to deal with it tonight. We are going on the Gay Byrne show for an interview, God help us. I have very mixed feelings about what happened at my mother's house. I have no regrets that I saved Shane's life. The knife was about to plunge into his chest. I bopped the guy with a frying pan. I almost killed him. In fact, he may not recover all of his wits."

"Aha," said Fr. O'Malley, "a moral dilemma to be solved. Katie, it would be no problem at all if you weren't such a good person. I empathize with your concern but we'll leave it to the first order of business on Friday when you come."

"Father, we both thank you for the celebration. It was wonderful."

"Not at all," said O'Malley, "thank *you* for the celebration."

Shane and Katie walked hand in hand back toward the Lantern. “Shane, I’ll come in to thank Liam and Chris for their work tonight, but I should go back to Galway. I want nothing more than to be with you tonight, but I don’t want to set a bad example for my mother, especially since she is vulnerable to the insanity of being in love.”

“Are we insane,” laughed Shane?

“I’m sure we are in some eyes, but I hope it lasts forever.”

When they walked in the door of the Lantern, the entire place erupted in applause. It was an unusual crowd for a Tuesday evening but apparently Chris and Liam spread the word, even though Shane did not say a word to either of them about his plans. Fr. O’Malley leaked it to them to prepare the setup at the Parish House and they leaked it to the entire town of Rosseville. Everyone wanted to greet them, hug and kiss them, and engage them in the revelry of the moment. Apparently the party started early without them. The craic was mighty in the house on this night. It took Katie and Shane an hour to greet and thank all the well-wishers. Katie asked Chris to tap the Rescue Bell behind the bar so she could talk with everyone at once.

“Shane and I want to thank you for your good wishes tonight. You know we love you all and that you are a big part of our lives.”

Shane, chimed in, “This has taken a long time but, believe me, it was well worth the wait. We have worked toward this moment with Fr. O’Malley and if anyone wants to get married, I recommend that you work with him. It is only the beginning of the rest of our lives, but it has been a marvelous journey. Thank you for being part of it.”

“And now,” said Katie, “I have to go. I have to work tomorrow as do most of you. Over a hundred young people in my auditorium seminar expect my best. Enjoy the rest of the party.”

Shane walked her to her car. They kissed and held each other until she reluctantly opened the car door. She started the engine, blew him a kiss, and drove off on the road to Galway.

Her mom was still up, slightly worrying because Katie was usually home earlier from her sessions with Fr. O’Malley.

“Well, it has finally happened. I am spoken for. Shane had prepared this elaborate scenario and it was so wonderfully romantic. I will never forget it.”

She told her mom every detail of the evening and Angela listened through her own tears of joy.

Katie had preparation work to do for her seminar and Angela went to bed. Toward midnight, Katie put out the light and just lay in her bed reliving every moment over and over again.

Katie slept a little later than usual and was wakened by a call from Sean Hurley. He wanted to have lunch with Katie, after her seminar, in the faculty dining room. He had finished the negotiations with Gay Byrne and wanted to go over them for her approval.

“By the way, Sean I am an honest woman at last. Shane and I became engaged last night.”

“Katie, you were never less than honest and I offer you my most heartfelt congratulations. I’ll see you about half twelve.”

Katie’s seminar went well, although some of the students noticed an ebullience they had not seen before. She was a very popular lecturer, always well prepared and organized, something which the students appreciated. The semester was ending in a couple of weeks and undergraduates start getting restless when the weather turns warm. She excelled in smaller classes and in her work with graduate students. She was very patient with them and motivated their best work.

She left the lecture hall and walked briskly along an inlaid stone path to the commissary where she would meet Sean.

The commissary was a big impersonal cafeteria type hall. The faculty dining room looked like one found in an ancient manor house. The beamed ceilings were over twenty feet high and the center of the room was a huge granite fireplace. The tables were oak and the chairs were lined with soft red leather. The floor was carpeted and together with hanging drapes, muffled sound to ensure private conversation at the individual tables. Waiters and waitresses served food that would never be seen in the commissary. Meals were subsidized, a faculty perk, to encourage camaraderie through use of the facility.

A maitre d’ greeted Katie and led her to the table where Sean was already seated with an associate, Michael Mahon. Both stood to greet Katie and the events of the previous evening warranted hugs, kisses, and congratulations. Sean teased her about being Wonder Woman and described for Michael the whole series of adventures she and Shane had encountered.

Michael indicated that he was following these adventures in the papers and on TV because Katie, who had always been popular on campus, was now something of a celebrity.

“Believe me, Michael I could do with a lot less adventure. I think I chose teaching and research because it promised a quiet life,” said Katie. “Instead it gives me more time to get into trouble. What scares me is that I am starting to like the adventure of it.”

“Well the Byrne people were very easy to work with. First, they don’t pay interviewees. They volunteered the suggestion of contributions to charities in the name of you and Shane. I suggested a thousand pounds each to the Newman Center, the St. Vincent dePaul Society at the Rosseville Church, and to the Sea Rescue Foundation. They did not even blink which made me think I should have asked for more.”

Katie was impressed. She would have to think better of Mr. Byrne.

“Katie, they want to do the interview for airing next Monday. You and Shane will have to do the taping on Saturday. Is that alright?”

Katie nodded, “yes.”

“Unfortunately, you will be his only guest. He will do his monologue at the beginning of the program. He will do some of his routine from his desk. After the commercial he will introduce you and Shane. The program will conclude with his musical guest which on that evening will be, now get this, U2. Expect to be on for a half hour. The network is pulling out all the stops for you.”

“Wow,” exclaimed Katie, “I love those guys. Maybe I can get Bono for a guest lecture.”

“Well, their presence takes some of the heat off of you. They see you and Shane as great guests, and I would too if I was in their shoes,” explained Michael. They expect you to be an attractive presence, witty, talkative, informative, playful, and fun.

“I think I can do playful and fun,” said Katie.

“Yes,” exclaimed Michael, “that is just the kind of attitude they are looking for.”

“What questions will they ask us during the interview part,” asked Katie.

“We can predict them pretty closely. The whole key to the interview is who has the control. We will work with you and Shane on Friday afternoon to role play questions and see if we can’t get a discussion going that will mimic what you will tape on Saturday. We’ll start that now. We’ll order lunch and just chat. Have a good time with this. You will make a couple of million people very happy on Monday.”

During their lunch, Katie told the story of Shane saving the crew of the Nina G and saving his own ship and its fourteen passengers in the face of a rogue wave. She talked about Leveegee and her life growing up there. She discussed the public details of her mom’s life. Then she gave a vivid description of the attacks on her mother’s home. She discussed her conflicted feeling about her role in the serious injury to the young man who about to stab Shane, but insisted that she preferred Shane alive.

Sean told her that she had more than enough to talk about and the Shane should tell his share of the story. “You can control the conversation in several ways, direct and indirect

questions, and using all the time to tell your story,” said Sean. “The man is a comedian, so play off of him to bring wit into the discussion. I have no doubt that both of you will charm the questioner and his immense audience. Bono’s presence will take a lot of pressure off of you, although he may not appear until the musical part of the program. You will have time to meet him in the Green Room as well as after the show. If Byrne asks you anything too personal you can finesse your answer, meaning to give him your answer without directly answering the question. Keep the conversations flowing and you will do well. You and Shane can rehearse this tomorrow with our role players. You will feel even more confident after that.”

“Sean, I don’t know how to thank you.”

“You will do yourself and the University proud Katie. I have such confidence in you; I might even host a party, to watch it.”

Because of the acclaim they have received throughout Ireland, Gay Byrne invites Katie and Shane to appear on his television show. The musical guests are U2, a Byrne favorite. Shane and Katie's appearance is brokered through the University Communications' Department and its director, Sean Burke.

The Stories Are Told

Gabriel Mary Byrne, commonly known simply as "Gay" and by his friends as "Gaybo," is the most dynamic force in the history of Irish television and the most famous Irish broadcaster in history. He is often credited with having changed Irish culture by introducing topics that were previously taboo. Some of his most critical topics included the Roman Catholic Church, contraception, AIDS, unemployment, homosexuality, abortion, and divorce, topics that were previously considered taboo. Among his interviewees was the mother of the child fathered the Bishop of Galway, Eamon Casey. Casey had been the hero of millions of progressive Irish Catholics in Ireland and among the diaspora, as well as a personal hero of Katie O'Bierne. Other interviewees included the Presidents and Taoiseach's of Ireland, lower ranked politicians, and the Cardinal Archbishops of Armagh.

Gay Byrne was once read out from the altar by the then Bishop of Galway for asking a woman he was interviewing on his call-in radio program about her bedtime attire or lack of it on her wedding night. The Bishop was particularly abusive and finally Byrne demanded an apology in lieu of a defamation suit. The conflict played out in the press for a couple of weeks with the Bishop becoming embarrassed and the laughing stock of Ireland because he seemed to be very far removed from reality. Byrne finally proposed that his people would meet with the Bishop's people and settle the matter at a dinner meeting. The matter was easily settled over a few pints since neither party was interested in pursuing the matter. In the lore and legend of broadcasting worldwide, the episode is known as "The Story of the Bishop's Nightie."

With a lineup history like that it was understandable that Katie and Shane would be anxious about being guests on the show. The lead up advertising was both bombastic and hyperbolic. The interview as presented as the television event of the decade. The band, U2, had been previous guests and was extremely popular throughout the world. The timing was good. Byrne was rumored to be retiring at the end of the year and wanted his last shows to be big hits. Ireland was in desperate need of heroes and Katie and Shane were the personification of the very best of young Ireland.

Sean Hurley had assured Katie that Byrne was the consummate gentleman and would never embarrass a guest. He was also a comedian and consummate showman who could turn around any bad situation to his advantage.

Katie and Shane were well prepared for the show. Sean and his staff at the University role-played the probable questions so they would answer them in a skilled, yet spontaneous manner. They learned the art of the pregnant pause, how to feign excitement, and turn questions around from direct to indirect to gain better control of the interview.

The taping took place on Saturday evening before a large audience. The studio was in a large warehouse type building. The set occupied only a small area with about 500 seats around it.

Byrne graciously welcomed Shane and Katie who arrived without “handlers,” something that most celebrities would never do. He showed them around the set. Shane was at his best asking a number of technical questions related to the broadcast and responding to the levity being generated by their host.

They were introduced to the makeup artists. They were dressed in their Sunday best and that was deemed appropriate. Shane wore a dark blue pinstripe suit with a tie with glaring red and yellow slanted stripes, perfect for color television. Katie was wearing a colorful- print dress with red, white, and blue floral patterns, suitable for a semi-formal party and also perfect for the color television cameras.

Shane was shunted off to the makeup artists and Katie was taken to the hairdressers. The staff joked that Shane needed major makeup work while Katie was truly beautiful and didn't require nearly as much treatment.

Responding to their questions, Katie told them that she did not have much opportunity to fuss with her hair. While she did have to attend formal dinners as part of her responsibilities at the University, she was also with other women academics that did not have much opportunity fuss about their hair either. They gave her several photos of hair styles and asked her to pick out her favorite. She picked out three that she liked and the hairdressers conferred with her about which style would go well with the cut of her face.

A half hour later, she was presented to Shane, who wisely and simply said, “Wow.” Later when Katie remarked that he still had not commented on this new hairstyle, he responded, “There is no way to improve on God's good work, but that the hairdo emphasized her quizzically feminine side.” Katie did not quite understand that but accepted it as a compliment.

A page walked them to the Green Room where they met with the members of the U2 band. Katie tried her best not to gush like a teenager but she was in awe of the band. The band members were used to people trying hard to accept them as they are. They were actually very nice. They were introduced around as Bono, Edge, Adam, and Larry. Bono indicated that he had read about both incidents, was pleased to meet the people involved, that they did not look surly enough to be warriors, and was looking forward to their interview.

Bono was fascinated that Katie was Dr. O'Bierne. “We both use aliases,” he laughed. Actually everyone laughed. It was a great ice-breaker. He indicated that he was reading some of the ancient Irish legends to find material for songs. “That is interesting,” said Katie. “I'll send you some of my bibliography, it may help.”

Bono gave her his personal card for direct communication.

The entire group settled back to watch Byrne's monologue. He was quite funny. Katie felt very comfortable and looked forward to a great night with Shane, completely forgetting that about two million people were going to be looking in on them.

After the monologue, the page came to collect Katie and Shane. The boys wished them luck and indicated that they thought the interview should be great.

“Gay will introduce you and greet you with hugs when you come out. We expect resounding applause so he may just stand there between you for a minute before inviting you to take a seat.”

They stood by the doorway and heard Byrne raise his voice and say, “Ladies and gentlemen, you have been waiting for this for weeks. Please welcome Dr. Kathryn Bierne and Mr. Shane Ryan, the face of young Ireland.”

The crowd exploded with cheers, hoots, and whistles which the director allowed to go a little longer than usual. Byrne offered them their chairs, sat down at his own, and rustled his notes until the crowd settled.

“Thank you for coming,” Byrne said. “All of Ireland has been waiting to meet you, and I dare say they will not be disappointed.”

“Well, laughed Shane, “I have a pub in Rosseville that has an occasional empty seat. If all of Ireland is interested, I’m sure we can make room for the rest of the population.”

Everybody laughed. The ice was broken.

“Well both of you have quite a story to tell,” said Byrne. “Katie, may I call you Katie?”

“I’m Katie to everyone,” she said.

“How are you living with the term, Professor Wonder Woman.”

“It made for a great headline,” said Katie. My students and colleagues are having great sport with it. It is all a bit of an exaggeration though. It is Shane that is Superman.”

Again, laughter rocked the room.

“Well, Shane, Mr. Superman, tell us the story of the rescue of the Nina G crew.”

Shane went into the story of the rescue trip out to sea amidst giant waves and told of how fortunate they were to find the Nina G crew. “One of my crewmen saw a light when the waves parted. They were already in the water because their rescue dory had capsized. When we got to them, they were about ready to succumb to the exposure from very cold water. Fortunately we got to them on time. We got them on board, warmed them up and into dry clothes. That is when the fun really began. A huge rogue wave was behind us. I immediately swung the boat around into the wave and started riding to the crest at an angle. I kept watching to see if the wave would crest. I don’t think all of them do and I really never saw one before. The wave did crest and I swung the ship into the pipeline that it created and we rode it out until the wave was diminished.”

“That is an amazing story, said Byrne. “Did you know what to do? Are you trained for these things?”

“No to both questions,” said Shane. “I just operated on instinct. Everything went into slow motion, except my mind. What I did was the logical thing to do. At the height of the crisis, I looked around and the water was running slow. I looked into the eyes of my mates, saw their

fear, yet they did everything that was expected of them and more. They were marvelous and protective of our cargo of sailors. Drowning was not an acceptable option. Fortunately, we made the right choices and decisions and we were able to get home safely.”

Dead silence prevailed for a few seconds and then there was a thunderous burst of applause.

“Let’s see,” said Byrne, “we have a note from the Captain of the Nina G.”

“It was the most marvelous display of seamanship that I have ever seen. It just shows that a boat can do anything on the water if it is in capable hands.”

“I don’t know about that, said Shane. That night worked out by the grace of God. It could have very easily been a disaster. “The good Lord knew that Katie was waiting for me on the dock. He also knew that the wives and children of my crew were waiting there as well. He is the one who brought us home.”

“That sounds very mystical,” said Byrne.

“Yes, it does,” said Shane, “but if you are looking for explanations, there is no other.”

Again, there was more applause.

After the commercial, Byrne turned his attention to Katie.

“Well Katie, I understand that you are handy with a frying pan.”

“Well I can cook with one easily enough. I never used one like I did at my mother’s house. But again it was Shane who took out three of those thugs. I was just lucky enough to be at the right place at the right time with a frying pan in my hand.”

“Well I understand from the police report that the intruder had the advantage and was about to plunge the knife into Shane’s chest.”

“Yes, that was the situation,” said Katie. “I just reacted to the action of the moment. By the way, I am very conflicted by this. I kept the knife from going into Shane’s chest and I am very happy about that but that young man is in serious condition and I understand that he might have serious brain damage. I am not very happy about that. He may or may not have been the one who beat up my mother. They weren’t very kind to her either.”

“I understand that your mother is now living with you.”

“That is correct. Thank God, she is alright but you shouldn’t be frightened out of the home you lived in for almost forty years. My mom is resilient. She will be alright but no one should have to go through this experience.”

“Your mother sounds like she is a very strong woman.”

“Ah yes, she had to be to raise me. That was no easy task and I did turn out well if I do say so myself. A lot that of has to do with her parenting and example. I’m an only child but if I had ten

siblings, I would be known as the wild one. I always marched to a different drummer and believe, me, I had a grand time doing so.”

The audience laughed and clapped.

“In what ways did you express yourself, Katie.”

“Some examples..... I was an athlete before girls were encouraged to participate in sports. I was better at sports than most of the boys in my class. I always challenged my teachers in class. I always wanted to know more and why. I can’t tell you how many times I was sent to the priests for being a heretic and then telling them to reexamine their own positions because I was sure they were wrong. I was never bullied. Yea, though I walk in the valley of hostility, I fear no evil no evil, because I am the meanest and toughest girl in the valley. I like the excitement of being on the edge physically and intellectually. We are going to meet the Edge in a few minutes. Bono joked inside that we all have aliases. Dr. Kathryn isn’t always who she appears to be. My friends will tell you that because underneath it all, I am Katie O’Bierne. Also, it is probably the reason why I don’t have any enemies.”

“But Katie, you seem to be so sweet and I know that you are very close to the Church.”

“I am close to my two parishes and I love my two parish priests. I know that I am blessed by God and *She* doesn’t have to worry about me embarrassing *Her*.”

Laughter and applause again filled the air.

“I understand that that you and Shane are now engaged,” said Byrne.

“Wow...news travels fast. I’m glad I told my mother before she heard it on television.”

“And he proposed in Church?”

“I can’t even decently describe what a beautiful moment that was. We knelt down before the altar to say a prayer. He turned and proposed to me and I proposed back, both of us using the words of the marriage ritual. He slipped the ring on my finger. It was totally spontaneous. I knew we were going to become engaged but the moment was a complete and happy surprise. Many of my friends married relatively young. I waited for Superman with a romantic heart to show up and he is Shane Ryan, a man I couldn’t possibly love more. We have also been working with Fr. O’Malley to prepare for our marriage and I can’t tell you what an incredible experience that has been.”

Byrne said that by the end of the week there will be a thousand proposals in the churches of Ireland and there will be long lines outside the Rosseville Parish House to see Fr. O’Malley.

Ladies and gentlemen, all the people of Ireland..... the hopeful face of young Ireland, Shane Ryan and Katie O’Bierne.

The roar of applause was like the thunder in the Connemara Mountains. Shane and Katie bowed to the crowd and turned to shake hands with beaming Gay Byrne.

The show cut to a commercial.

Byrne was ecstatic. He could never even have dreamed that the show would go this well.

He walked Shane and Katie to the stage at the end of the set where U2 was waiting.

At the commercial's end, Byrne introduced U2. The curtain opened. Bono introduced the song, *Running to Stand Still*, a song about the problems springing from the new drug culture in Ireland, in tribute to the ordeal of Katie's mom.

At the end of their presentation, Bono took Katie's hand while Edge, Clayton, and Mullen continued to play, and they danced to the delight of the audience until the camera phased the scene out.

Gay Byrne couldn't believe what he had wrought that evening. He almost couldn't wait until the show aired on Monday.

To be continued

I appreciate all criticism and depend on it to become a better writer. Feel free to contact me at rdaumack@aol.com. I am grateful that you took the time to read my story.

The Gay Byrne show was taped on Saturday for broadcast on Monday evening. The Communications Department, at the request of Dr. Nolan, President of the University, hosted a dinner preceeding the broadcast. Invited were faculty members, Unmiversity Board Members, and key political and religous leaders.

The Television Show is Aired

It seemed as if the next day and a half went so slowly. Katie had two classes to teach. Usually busy days fly by, but not this one. Shane went back to Rosseville to work on replenishing the stock at the Lantern, his regular Monday assignment. It was a busy weekend and their stock was depleted. They expected a big crowd tonight for their own viewing party of the Gay Byrne show.

Shane apologized profusely that he could not be at the Lantern because he had to commit to the party at the University. After all it was Dr. McDermott's recommendation that they go on the show in the first place and Sean Hurley and his staff had prepared them very well. His partners, Chris and Liam, of course, knew that and accepted it, but they were not going to let the moment pass without ragging him unmercifully. "Big deal television star has to hob nob with academics and royalty and forget the people who got him there." And there was more like that, anything to lay a guilt trip on Shane. It was great sport for his partners and the staff.

When he finished his work and ordered enough food and drink to get them through the rest of the week, they fessed up to say how proud they were of him and what great sport it was to make him so uncomfortable. They all laughed together, "You are so easy to torture," said Liam. "Get along with ya, and have a good time. Give our love to Katie."

The show wasn't going to air until 10:00 PM and there was still a lot of time to fill. Sean and his staff arranged for dinner at the Faculty Dining Room and Shane was expected at six. He went to his cottage to take a nap after which he would shower and dress for dinner. He thought he would dress like a television personality with a blue blazer and a white dress shirt with open collar, with no tie. As things turned out, it was the perfect attire for the evening.

He left the Lantern at about 5:00 and set out for the University at Galway City. On the way, he was passed by a sports car travelling at a high rate of speed. The sports car pulled in front of him but the rear of the car started to fishtail. The driver struggled to regain control but the car plowed into a horse drawn ass rail cart filled with turf. The sports car disappeared under the cart pitching the farmer forward and smashing him to the ground. The horse fell to the ground and with much whinnying tried to get up but all he could do was thrash around.

Shane stopped his car and ran to the scene. A farmer came out of his house and Shane shouted for him to call the emergency ambulance and the guards. The driver of the sports car was pitched through the wind screen and smashed head first into the rear of the wagon. He was obviously dead. Shane could find no pulse.

He went to the farmer who was already soaked with blood. His leg was broken and there was a terrible laceration along his calf. Shane ran back to his car and grabbed some tape. He took the shattered boards from the wagon and made a splint but first he had to deal with the bleeding. He took his own belt and wrapped it around the thigh of the injured farmer as a tourniquet and asked a bystander to make sure it was tight. He then finished his splint. Meanwhile the guards pulled up and the ambulance was right behind.

Shane spoke with the guards and told them what he had observed about the accident. He asked the paramedic to recheck the driver of the sports car. He thought the man was dead, and indeed, he was.

Sean introduced himself to the guards and the paramedics. They all knew who Shane was from his media coverage and one of the guards frequented the Lantern.

The guards took Shane's statement but not before the paramedic came by to congratulate him. He said the farmer would have bled to death by this time without Shane's intervention.

"Thank that young lad over there," said Shane, pointing out a teenager. He is the one who held the tourniquet tightly enough."

"You know where to reach me," he said. "May I leave now? I have to be at the University by 6:00."

The guard sent him on his way and indicated that they would be in touch with him as their investigation progressed.

Thoroughly shaken and with his pants loose, Shane got into his car and resumed his trip to the University.

When he arrived at the campus he was still shaking as the adrenalin left his body and Katie immediately noticed it as he held her, even more tightly than usual.

"Shane what happened?"

Shane gave the short version of the story, leaving out the death, and said he would fill her in on the details when they were alone later.

Shane excused himself and went to the men's room to wash up. He was starting to feel a little better, took some deep breaths and rejoined the festivities under the watchful eye of a worried Katie. He was no longer trembling and held out his hand for Katie's

observation. He leaned over and whispered into Katie's ear. "I used my belt for a tourniquet so just ignore me if my pants fall down."

Katie laughed and gave him a wicked look. "Don't worry! If your pants fall down, I'll know exactly what to do." And she nudged him with her shoulder.

The dinner guests started to collect. Angela was escorted by Dr. McDermott and she was stunning in a purple dress with yellow accessories. Even Katie noticed and thought, "Wow, mom really looks great when she dresses up. For all those years she never had the opportunity, and now, look at her. She is beautiful."

Sean, his wife, and some of his staff members came in. Mairead Hurley also looked lovely.

Fr. Jim McCarthy from the Newman Center was a guest, and much to Katie's surprise he was joined by Fr. Liam O'Malley. Katie knew about the party at the Lantern and presumed that Liam would be there.

And wonder of it all, Dr. Kieran Nolan, President of the University and his wife, Fiona arrived. Katie greeted them and introduced Shane as her fiancé for the very first time.

As they moved away, Katie whispered to Shane that this must really be a big deal to bring the chief of gods down from Olympus.

Waiters took drink orders and other uniformed young ladies, students trying to make a pound or two, started to circulate among the group with hors d'ouvres. Katie and Shane both ordered soft drinks since they were the stars of the show, they didn't want alcohol inhibiting their ability to think on their feet or to communicate clearly.

Katie and Shane were treated like guests of honor and the small crowd gravitated around them. They wanted to know about the kind of person Gay Byrne was. Shane talked about him as the perfect gentleman and Katie talked about his professionalism and his communication abilities. Both talked about how pleasant he made their experience and how, without confrontation of any kind, he was able to get the information he wanted out of them.

Others wanted to know about U2. Katie talked about how normal they were and that the conversation was terrific. You will have to see the show to see how great our interaction was.

"They chose the song they played in honor of Katie's mom," said Shane, which came as a big surprise to Katie's mom.

"It worked out beautifully," said Katie. "You will see that when the program comes on."

“In fact, Bono is researching the literature of the ancient legends for song possibilities and I said I would send him a bibliography.”

The maitre d' called them to dinner to a long baronial table set for them in the center of the room. Katie had never before seen the place settings or the cutlery before and correctly surmised that the staff had put out their best for this event. She was very impressed. When they had a reception for her doctoral award they served finger foods with plastic knives and forks. For this they had candlelight from candles in Galway Chrystal candelabras, Irish linen table cloths and napkins, Galway Chrystal glasses and goblets, and genuine Tiffany cutlery.

“Just like happy hour at the Lantern,” whispered Shane. Katie smiled and whispered back, “we may never see the like of this again.”

Archbishop Manning was asked to say grace. It was a brief, eloquent, and beautiful prayer of blessing.

Fr. O'Malley came by to their seats to thank them for the gifts to the St. Vincent de Paul Society. “A gift like that will help a lot of people for a long time.”

Shane smiled and said, “We don't expect this to continue on, but if it does, maybe we'll start a foundation for you.”

O'Malley squeezed their shoulders in appreciation.

Considering the academic nature of their surroundings, the table talk was very non academic. Shane reflected that when people break bread together, they strip themselves of their pretenses and become real. Shane thought of the sign over the dining room door of the Lantern, “And they knew Him in the breaking of the bread.” He thought about how important that message was to him and how owning the pub was really a ministry. He would have to share that with Liam O'Malley.

Katie looked over at her mom who was genuinely enjoying herself. She was engaged in the conversation around her. When she caught her eye, she winked at her. Peadar was definitely in his element but it was obvious that she fit right into it. Mother and daughter exchanged smiles and all was right with their world.

The dinner was excellent, a choice of prime beef or lobster. Their glasses were filled with wine which Katie carefully sipped. Others at the table were dinking heartily. Katie hoped that the airing would not become raucous. She wouldn't expect that from this crowd but she had never been with such dignitaries before.

Just before coffee was served, Sean Hurley asked everyone for their attention. He wanted to thank the University for making this night possible. Sean introduced Dr. Nolan who said, “This is a great night for the University and thanked Katie for venturing into the lay community as a representative of the University. We hope to do more of that kind of

outreach because we have the resources to be of very significant service to the community at large. We are leaving the ivory tower and, hopefully, we can heal our society with the intellectual and social capital at our disposal. We are not about to start monasteries but we can build social community centers of learning and creativity. Dr. O’Bieme and Shane, we thank you for making the first step possible.”

Everyone clapped and started another toast. “Other guests are in the Faculty Lounge, said Sean. I wish all of you a great evening; one that I am certain will be memorable. I have not seen the tape but Gay Byrne assures me that is beyond sensational. It is half nine; please follow me into the dining room to join our other guests.”

There were about one hundred people in the faculty lounge, representing most of the faculty and the student government. Others included the representative political leaders, and community leaders from the County Galway region.

Sean’s staff had arranged a huge screen and the technical equipment to provide excellent view for all.

At ten minutes before ten, there was a fill in broadcast for local news. All of a sudden, to the surprise of all, the announcer was saluting Shane Ryan, the publican from Rosseville who saved the life of farmer Sean Simons. There were photographs of the wreck. They had already removed the body of the driver of the sports car who was still unidentified but they found a file photo of Shane from the Nina G episode and flashed it on the giant screen.

An embarrassed Shane squeezed Katie’s hand and said, “I told you there was more to tell.”

President Nolan leaned over and asked Shane what he did in his spare time. Shane smiled and said that he was just a normal guy chasing after one of his professors.

Shane whispered to Katie, “The newsreader trumped me. I wanted to tell you those details myself but in private.”

The surprised crowd started to applaud Shane. He very graciously waved to everyone. Katie held on to him for dear life before something else happened.

The group grew quiet for the lead in to the Gay Byrne Late Late Show, currently being watched on just about every television set in Ireland.

The familiar stage set filled up the huge screen. Katie and Shane had not paid much attention to the opening of the show and they were talking with the boys from U2 during the monologue. The page collected them during Byrne’s desk activity so they were seeing part of the show for the first time. They had not seen any of the commercials so there was some newness to reliving this again.

They saw their introduction and the banter before the interview. Shane thought his joke about the rest of the Irish population coming to the Lantern was lame but everyone in the lounge laughed. It was better than he thought. Chris and Liam will love it.

Katie's banter about Wonder Woman, a nice deflection she thought, and emphasizing that Shane was Superman also worked. The crowd laughed but then again, he saved another life only a few hours ago.

Shane told the story of the Nina G crew, a story he thought was a wooden presentation because he had told the story dozens of times before. The story was actually told well and the crowd in the lounge had the same interest as the audience in the studio.

True to being Shane, he minimized his role and attributed the rescue to the Grace of God. Shane really believed that and his belief came across in his statement. You could sense that in the Faculty Lounge as well.

After the commercial, he turned his attention to Katie. He mentioned that he understood that Katie was good with a frying pan. She tried to make a joke about her cooking skills but Byrne quickly led her into the story. She told the story of the intrusion at Leveegee, again emphasizing that Shane had subdued three of the intruders. She talked about her mixed feelings about so severely injuring the intruder.

Byrne deftly led her to talking about her mother. Angela sat up very straight. However, Katie's emphasis that this was a life altering incident and the regrets associated with it touched her deeply because of the good fortune of connecting with Peadar.

This led to the discussion of Angela's parenting skills and Katie's fantasy that she really was a difficult child. She wasn't at all difficult from Angela's perspective.

The crowd was impressed with Katie's wild child allusion and her revision of Psalm twenty-three drew some laughter. *"Yea, though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, because I am the toughest girl in the valley."*

Most of the group assembled did not know that Shane and Katie were formally engaged and they clapped at the story.

Fr. O'Malley put his head in his hands when Byrne talked about a thousand engagements this week in the churches of Ireland and a long line outside the Rosseville parish house.

Katie's line about her, Bono, and Edge using aliases got a big laugh in the Lounge.

Everyone said, "ahhh" at Bono's dedication of their song and Angela was very touched.

Everybody cheered at Katie dancing with Bono.

When the picture faded away the room burst into applause and cheers.

Sean was beside himself. He rushed up to Katie and Shane and tried to hug them both at the same time. "This is an award winning program," he gushed.

Congratulations filled the room. More drinks were served and the craic became empowered.

Dr. Nolan took the microphone and called for order for just a minute. He talked about how proud he was that a member of the University faculty had presented herself so well. He addressed Katie's concern that she did not get to talk about the University. He pointed out that presenting herself as Dr. Kathryn O'Byrne carried a lot of weight and her praise of the Newman Center as one of her parishes gave the University something of a face. He stated that Katie and Shane's stories were real "grabbers." He congratulated both that they presented themselves so well. He then thanked Dr. Hurley for his preparation and negotiations and Dr. McDermott for having the idea in the first place. "A moment of chance was very effective and God smiled on us," he concluded.

Everyone clapped and the party continued into the night.

Chapter 14 – After the Party, Life Goes On

The party went on until the small hours of the morning. Sean had arranged for a DJ to provide dance music. Peadar and Angela were having a grand time dancing and talking with the other guests. Angela always said that she was a good dancer but Katie never had the opportunity to see her in action. Katie and Shane circulated around the room and spoke with everyone who was there. They were congratulated both for the show and for their engagement. They left around midnight because both had a very busy day on Tuesday culminating with their meeting with Fr. O'Malley. Also, Shane had to be available to the guards for the accident investigation.

Shane was going to stay over at Katie's apartment. They thanked Sean for the marvelous celebration and, in turn, he thanked them for being the cause of the celebration. They promised to filter all interviews or media events through him. That was actually a weight off of their shoulders. Dr. Nolan had already gone after once again congratulating them. He could not have been more pleased with the turn of events and this was obviously the first step in the strategic plan to do more outreach to the community, a plan that Katie applauded.

They walked slowly, hand in hand, across the campus to the faculty residence building where Katie lived.

"Shane, you said that you would evaluate your performance after seeing the tape. I thought you were marvelous."

"Marvelous might be an overstatement," said Shane, "But after seeing it and reliving the interview, I think I did very well. I told the Nina G story so many times I was afraid that I would come off as wooden. That wasn't the case. Both audiences were really interested in the story."

"It is a great story," said Katie. "I'm glad that you lived through it."

"You performed with the ease of an actress," said Shane. "I see you do that all the time and I am still impressed."

"That is the benefit of having a lecturer's platform," responded Katie. "My real work is meeting with students to help them over their difficult blockades."

A long and exciting evening was now ended and they were quite tired. They snuggled on the couch with the television on and promptly fell asleep.

Angela still had not come home, but Shane woke up with a start struggling to breathe and feeling very disoriented. Katie woke from her deep sleep and could not focus on what was happening. She tried to help Shane but did not know what to do. She had him look

directly in her eyes and tried to get him to mimic her breathing. It took a while but Shane started to relax and his breathing returned to normal.

“What in God’s name was that all about,” said Shane.

“I don’t know,” said Katie, “but it certainly was scary.”

“Shane, do you mind if I make an appointment for you with Dr. Coughlin. When something like that happens, I don’t think you should ignore it.”

“I won’t Katie. That was too scary. Make it for whenever you can get it. I’ll just work it out with Chris and Liam.”

After a busy day for both of them, Katie picked up Shane at his cottage and they went together to the Parish House to meet with Fr. O’Malley. He enthusiastically greeted them at the door. Once inside, he thanked them again for the donation to the St. Vincent dePaul Society. He explained that even in the era of the Celtic Tiger there was still a lot of poverty and real need among some of the people of Rosseville and the people are very proud. They don’t like to be on the dole but the help the church provides is often a bridge to self support.

“If you ever need food, Father, just let me know,” said Shane. “The Lantern gets discounts because we buy in bulk, so ordering a little extra is not a big problem. Also, our suppliers are not averse to helping people out if we ask them nicely. They do pretty well by us.”

“Shane, you are a very generous man. I’ll keep that in mind.”

O’Malley led them in a prayer to begin the session and asked them to exchange their letters. Shane wanted to speak with him before he disappeared into a dark corner of the room. He told him about his experience of the previous evening. He was to see Dr. Coughlin the next day. O’Malley indicated that Shane looked to be in good health, but it was important to check out these anomalies. He indicated that the meeting tonight could be shorter and then retreated to other end of the room.

Katie and Shane exchanged their letters, read them and began their conversation. The issue of the evening was children. Neither Shane nor Katie had any siblings and, in Ireland, that was remarkable. Both lost their fathers at an early age and their mothers never remarried.

“How many children would you like to have,” asked Shane.

“Dozens,” laughed Katie. “But I’m afraid we don’t have that kind of time. I was always jealous of the large families of some of my friends. You have built in friends when you have brothers and sisters. Fortunately, because of the success of the Lantern and my salary as a professor we will be able to afford children. Pregnancies and child rearing

obligations will not interfere with my work. I can always write a book during maternity leaves.”

“I want an active role as a father,” said Shane. My da wasn’t the parenting type and my ma had to had to parent for both of them. It took me a little longer than most to become a responsible adult.”

“You are a marvelous adult and you still have that hint of a frivolous urchin.”

Both laughed at that.

“How do we make babies,” asked Shane in jest?

“I think we will have a lot of fun figuring that out,” laughed Katie.

“When should be get married,” asked Shane.

“I have three weeks off after Christmas, said Katie. We could have our wedding the weekend after Christmas and then have plenty of time for a leisurely honeymoon.”

“Where would you like to go on a honeymoon,” asked Shane? “What would you like to see?”

“Lots and lots of ceilings,” laughed Katie.

“You are a wicked imp and I love you for it,” replied Shane.

Fr. O’Malley surprised them, as usual. He came up from his dark corner, completely unnoticed, and was standing before the table refilling his tea mug.

“I guess I should pencil in a wedding for the Saturday after Christmas,” he said.

“That sounds like a good deal,” said Shane.

Early the next morning, Shane drove out to the University to see Dr. Coughlin. It was the first time that the two of them met. Coughlin mentioned that Katie was one of his favorite colleagues.

The room was clean and bright, a genuinely professional examining room. There was a sink against the wall, an examining table, and a couple of chairs. There was a blood pressure cuff in the basket near the sphygmometer anchored into the wall.

Because of the plethora of American and European pharmaceutical companies in Ireland, the University infirmary had all the donated equipment and benefits of an American

Hospital. The University had a medical school and research capabilities that were essential to these companies. Shane could see that he was in good hands.

The examination was long and in-depth. Dr. Coughlin took blood for analysis, wanted a chest x-ray to check to see if Shane's pneumonia resulted in any permanent damage. He spent a lot of time examining Shane's eyes and ears, checked his reflexes, and had a series of exercises to check nerve response. He sat down with Shane and asked him a myriad of questions about his past health and past and current habits. While they were talking, a nurse brought in the results from the blood tests. Coughlin read them carefully. It would take a village doctor more than a week to collect all this information.

First of all, you are in perfect health. Everything in your blood work is normal. Your reflexes are better than that of most people your age. Your eyesight and hearing are perfect. I see some scar tissue from the pneumonia in your lung, but that will go away in time and I expect no trouble from it.

"Then what happened to me," doctor.

"I can only tell you what I discovered from our long conversation and because there are no physical abnormalities, it becomes the only logical explanation. You have had a very exciting couple of weeks. There were many peaks of excitement followed by periods of relaxation. When faced with a peak of activity, like a fireman experiences, when he responds to the bell, the heart goes into action to prepare the body to deal with the exertion and stress. It releases certain chemicals into the bloodstream to prepare the body for the *fight or flight* response. When the body starts to relax, there is no need for those chemicals and they just dissipate back into the system until they are called on again. Sometimes the body reacts and that is what you experienced. With the ordeal at Katie's mom's house, everything associated with Gay Byrne show appearance, and the automobile accident, all within a week or so and two on the same day, you started to experience what we call post traumatic stress syndrome. You had a panic attack."

"I thought that only soldiers in battle had that."

"They do have that to the point where their panic is crippling and interferes with their lives. Remember, these are highly trained men in the peak of physical condition. You are in good physical condition, not like a soldier or an Olympic athlete, but probably as good as a normal person can be."

"I am going to prescribe a medication to be used as needed, a very light dose of Paxil. I think you should practice meditation and relaxation exercises. There are courses on campus for that and I think you should consider taking one. There is nothing mysterious about meditation. Fr. Jim or Fr. Liam can help you learn Jesuit meditation. There are courses in Transcendental Meditation, but I think they have made that more complicated than it need be. There are loads of books on the subject in the bookstores or the Library. I think you should have a regimen of regular exercise such as walking which I prefer over jogging; swim, but in a guarded pool, not in the bay or the ocean. Keep your calorie

intake down. Do not gain weight and if I were you, I would try to lose about twenty kilos. Finally, I recommend that you give up your role as Captain of Sea Rescue. You can continue to raise funds for them but every time you put out to sea, and the weather is usually very bad, you are like the fireman going to the fire, except you have the responsibility for the crew and the lives you are trying to save.”

Take my advice, Shane, and you will live a long and happy life. Continue on without the recommendations I made, you risk sudden death. It happens all the time to guards and firemen. Your heart is otherwise very healthy. It is just asking for a little kindness.

Coughlin handed Shane two pages from his prescription pad. One was the script for Paxil. The other was the four recommendations that he made.

Shane thanked Dr. Coughlin and asked if he could see him on a regular basis, meaning once or twice a year. Coughlin was pleased and said that he would be glad to be Shane’s physician because his question indicated that he was going to take his recommendations seriously.

He left the infirmary with mixed emotions; pleased that he was well, and disappointed that he had to give up the Sea Rescue. It was time and he knew it. Like an aging athlete, it was time to turn responsibility over to the younger men. In ordinary circumstances he would have postponed it for as long as he could. But he preferred to have a long life with Katie. Some of the lifestyle changes would probably be welcome. His partners will be pleased. Liam was already aware of the adrenalin reaction in the body.

Dear Readers,

Thank you for accepting the characters of Love's Promises into your lives each month. Christian story-telling is about both faith and life, not unlike the story of the Easter event that we are now celebrating. Katie and Shane are learning the physical and emotional cost of their adventures. They start planning their wedding.

Chapter 15 - Life is all about Change

Shane walked across the campus to the academic building that housed Katie's office. It was the oldest building on the campus and the old ivy covered brownstone gave it the stately look of antiquity. Katie's office was on the second floor and Shane literally ran up the stairs two at a time to get there. Part of the gesture was to prove that he was alright and he was hardly winded when he reached the landing. He walked down the corridor and noted that her door was open, a sign that she wasn't meeting with a student.

The large office was lined with book shelves and the wall behind Katie's oak desk was filled with diplomas and academic awards. On her desk she had framed photos of Shane and her mother. There was a leather sofa and a leather chair with a wooden tea table. Katie's desk was piled high with examination papers that required her correction. There was a computer station adjacent to her desk. The university had signed on to the gestating digital world and within a few years their whole administrative function would be digital. The window was open and the lovely day was blowing cool air into the office on the draft created by the open door. There are very few oppressively hot days in Galway. The winters, however, can get to be quite cold since the Gulf Stream runs about one hundred miles offshore at that point.

Katie jumped up when she saw him. Shane closed the door behind him and she ran into his arms with a long and passionate kiss. When she finally released him, she asked, "Well, how did it go?"

"It went well," said Shane. "Usually when people get very sick in Ireland they have to go to America for treatment. I was impressed that our clinic at the University has just about everything that an American hospital has."

"That is the influence of Dr. Coughlin," said Katie. "With the development of our medical school he insists that we have everything we need to be a world class medical research institution. Almost all of the equipment is donated and he really is aggressive going out for those donations and grants. If an institution drops a shilling on the floor, he is there to pick it up. In addition to that, he is a wonderful physician. The future of medicine in Ireland is beginning right here. But enough about that, I'm more interested in you."

“I had a wonderful, very complete examination,” said Shane. I had blood work, x-rays, electrocardiogram, blood pressure, eyes and ears checked, a long interview about health habits and life style, and a thorough body exam. The good news is that I fall within the normal range in everything. He thinks my episode was an anxiety attack triggered by post traumatic stress syndrome. He explained this as the body and heart’s reaction to peak stress experiences. An example he used is that of a firefighter. Those guys have a lot of down time until the fire bell rings. When that happens they are immediately at their peak from a resting position. They have to train like athletes to control it. He found me to be fit, but not fit enough to handle everything that we have been dealing with. He pointed out the accident and the airing of the Byrne show all within a couple of hours. We went back over the past week with getting engaged, subduing intruders, almost getting killed, and going through the ordeal of the Byrne show. He showed me a list of incidents that generate stress points. My point total was very high. He described how adrenalin and other body chemicals pour from the heart and into the body to help it deal with the flight or fight response. When the stress is over, those chemicals leave and the body reacts. On the night of the sinking of the Nina G, I was at peak for six or seven hours. That is when I first experienced the shakes.”

“I remember you shaking,” said Katie. “I thought you were chilled from the storm and the water.”

“Anyway, he gave me a medication to use as needed. He also gave me a list of four instructions. Relaxation exercises, he recommends meditation; physical exercise, he recommends walking; keep my weight down and I should lose twenty kilos. Finally, he feels that I should stop going out on sea rescues. After that he said that if I followed his advice, I should have a long and happy life. Will you still marry me if I have all these imperfections?”

Katie laughed and said, “Shane, I will marry you in any circumstance. I’ve made my commitment. You can’t get rid of me at all. Besides, even the original Superman was allergic to kryptonite. How do you feel about giving up Sea Rescue?”

“Well, I’ll stay with the fundraising but it is about time I gave up being the Rescue Captain. I am like the athlete past his peak who keeps hanging on because he thinks he can still do it. Dr. Coughlin made a point that I never considered. Every time I take the boat out, the lives of the crew are in my hands. I would like to make enough money to get them a helicopter but the small ones are pretty useless in a storm and the big ones are very expensive. I will miss it, but I’ll always be considered a member and I will enjoy hoisting a few brews now and again with the boys.”

Katie walked over and turned the lock on her office door. “I’ve only used the couch for sitting and catching a short nap. I think we should make out for a while and give it a proper introduction to academia.”

”But what will we do about my heart and peak experiences?”

“Your heart will be completely safe in my hands because I have given mine to you for companionship.” She gently pushed him down and snuggled on the couch next to him.

Meanwhile, the news outlets on radio and TV and the afternoon newspapers presented their reviews of Shane and Katie's appearance on the Late Late Show. Almost all the reviews were very positive ranging from lukewarm positive to ecstatically positive with most on the ecstatically positive side. The media world actually went wild with enthusiasm over the show. Byrne was congratulated at every turn. The story of Shane saving the life of the ass rail cart driver was highlighted in the Galway press. Culture editors of many of the newspapers probably did not make the connection under the pressure of deadlines. That will continue the story into tomorrow's newspapers

One tabloid stated in big headlines that Professor Wonder Woman and her Superman were the toast of Ireland. Others praised Byrne for daring to expose the violence of the drug subculture. Shane was singled out as a hero who was constantly risking his life. Many of the stories recalled his exploits with saving the crew of the Nina G. Others focused on the love story and their engagement and, of course, there were no details given. Katie's prominence as a scholar was presented in sharp contrast to the *actual events of day to day living*, according to one tabloid. She was also likened to Indiana Jones, a scholar with a bent for high adventure. Sean Hurley's desk was piled high with publications and printouts from the TV and radio media. He was very pleased and asked several of his staff to work on a project to make a presentation booklet of the reviews for Dr. Nolan, with five copies for himself, Shane and Katie, Gay Byrne, and for the University archives.

There were also the negative reviews. They were too good to be true said one tabloid. Another that couldn't find anything salacious to write about Katie accused her of being a *goody two shoes*. Another accused Katie of being Shane's beard. Nobody that good looking could possibly be straight. *Too cute for words* was another dramatic headline. Another described the show as saccharine for late night tea.

Hurley was anxious to report these reviews to Katie. He called over to her office hoping she would still be there.

The ringing of the telephone shattered the silence she was enjoying with Shane. She untangled herself from him and walked to her desk to answer the phone.

"Hi Katie, this is Sean. I just wanted to tell you that most of the reviews are in. If you want to come over to see them, I'll be glad to show them."

"Sean, I'm sorry, I have a mountain of papers to grade and I had a welcome distraction this afternoon, so I am going to have to work through the next three or four hours. Can I stop by tomorrow? I'll call as soon as my schedule becomes clear.

"Typical Katie, thought Sean. Anyone else would be sitting on pins and needles waiting for these reviews."

A smiling Shane was straightening out his clothes while laughing at the conversation with Sean.

“So, I am relegated to a distraction,” said Shane.

“Shane you have no idea,” responded Katie.

“I often wondered what professors did with their free time.”

“I’m sure that every professor in the building was working as hard as I was,” said the smiling and blushing Katie. “Now off with you. I have work to do now. I love you. I’ll call you tonight when I get home.”

After a series of lengthy kisses goodbye, she reluctantly wandered back to her desk and the mountain of exam papers.

Katie was so hyped she was certain that every student would receive a top grade.

It was nine o’clock and already dark when Katie finally finished grading her papers. Before leaving, she went into her file cabinet and pulled out a copy of the bibliography for her dissertation. The bibliography was very complete and a very valuable part of her study. She slipped the file into her carry all and put out the light. As she left, she locked the door behind her, left the building, and walked across the campus to the faculty residence building.

When Katie arrived home, Angela gave a sigh of relief. In the last several months she had not known Katie to work this late into the night. She mentioned that to Katie who responded that she had an extraordinary amount of extra work since she had to grade examination papers for both her undergraduate and graduate classes.

Katie was also quite hungry and started rooting through the refrigerator looking for something to eat. She found some leftover casserole and put it on the stove to heat along with a kettle filled with water for tea. She invited Angela to join her. She had already had dinner but she said she would sit with her for a cup of tea.

They made the usual small talk. Angela said that she saw clips of the Late Late Show on TV during the news. They liked the show very much. She also saw the news report about the farmer whose life Shane saved. She couldn’t remember the name of the man who was killed but apparently there was a considerable amount of drink taken and that is what caused the accident. The farmer was in the local hospital with his leg in a cast and was looking forward to meeting Shane under more favorable circumstances to thank him. Unfortunately, the horse was so badly injured they had to inject him with a drug to put him down.

Katie told her mom that she and Shane had settled in on a wedding date and booked the Rossville Church for the wedding. Fr. O’Malley and Fr. Mc Carthy will concelebrate the nuptial Mass.

“What date,” asked Angela?

“December 28th, the Saturday after Christmas, because I will have three weeks left on our winter break from the University. Is that alright with you?”

“That is fine. Oh, I am so happy for you,” said Angela. She hugged her daughter with her eyes filled with tears of joy.

“How did you meet Shane?”

“I feel like I have always known him,” said Katie. “We were students together in undergraduate school. I liked him and we dated a few times but we were too immature for anything to happen then. He went to graduate school for his Master’s in Business while I was in the English Literature Department. When his mother died he was left a small amount of money which he used to buy the Glowing Lantern with his partners. The three together turned it into a thriving business. I used to go there with some of my friends on occasion and we reconnected. We went dancing at some of the local ceilis from time to time, went to movies and concerts together, had dinner at the Lantern and just walked on the strand. The Fitzgerald crowd has always loved him. We went to Mass together both here and at Rosseville and got to know each other’s friends. I really liked the people I was meeting, mostly the families of fisherman struggling to make a living by wrestling with the sea, I found that I really liked him but it wasn’t the right time for anything to develop. We both had some maturing to do and I was facing my dissertation which I thought might take at least two years. I got the job teaching as a lecturer, the lowest rank, but it was enough to support me and made me eligible for this apartment. I was generating an income doing what I always wanted to do, practically living at the library to get the dissertation done, and come home here to fall asleep in the pullout bed in the den that the previous occupant left behind, the only piece of furniture in the apartment. When we started to see more of each other, I did not like what I was experiencing. I was probably in love with him by then, but somehow I did not feel validated. Sometimes he would say things that I took as an insult though he didn’t mean them that way. Sometimes he was a real amodon. I was almost ready to break it off on the night the Nina G went down. Shane was the captain and took out a crew to try to find the Nina G. The sea was wild that night and the wind was blowing something fierce. We followed the search on the ship to shore radio in the bar. Everyone cheered when the ship was found and the crew safely on board, in a nick of time too. They were already in the water and it was on the verge of freezing. They wouldn’t have lasted more than ten minutes. They just got them on board when the rogue wave appeared behind the boat. It would have swamped the rescue boat. Shane figured out a way to ride the wave. The thought of him not returning really upset me and I resolved that if he got home safely I would give it another try. Three hours later we got a call on the ship to shore that all on board were safe and that they would be home in about three hours. When they finally arrived, I just threw myself in his arms. Of course, I didn’t know anything about his being a hero. It was the crew and the rescued fisherman that finally leaked that story. It was Shane who asked me if I would work with Fr. O’Malley to improve our relationship. That has been a marvelous experience. We understand each other much better, communicate really well and have the tools to do it for another fifty years at least. I love him and I believe he is the man that God wants me to be with for the rest of my life. Since that day the man has gone through at least four near death experiences for me. I wonder if I might not be a threat to his otherwise good health.”

“Katie, that is an incredible story. I hope you write it up someday so your children will know the quality of the people that bred them.”

“So mom, how would you like to be my matron of honor?”

“I’ve never heard of a mother standing up for her daughter, but I will go with it with pleasure.”

As always, I welcome your comments and criticism. I am very grateful to Ducas for their willingness to share this story. I am still looking for a publisher but I have started on the second volume of this trilogy. I am also writing a memoir, strictly for my children and grandchildren. I continue to produce poetry, short stories, and articles on sports related issues for CBS Sports and church related commentary for various religious periodicals such as America and U.S., Catholic.

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We have all been where Peadar and Angela are in this chapter, too shy, fearful of rejection, filled with love but terrified of misreading the affections of the beloved. They spend restless hours before sleep until they talk themselves into the courage to say, "I love you." Enjoy their reflections and match them with your own.

Chapter 16 - More about Angela and Peadar, Reflections on Romance

Katie went into her room and called Shane as she promised. She told Shane about the reviews that her mother had seen and that they were mostly positive. She didn't think that Sean would be so excited if he didn't have something positive to talk about. She would call him first thing in the morning.

"I've seen a few of them on television," said Shane. "They are impressive, but you know, now that it is over, I have no interest in it anymore. Everything about it is anticlimactic."

"I feel the same way," replied Katie. "I know that Sean was very excited when he called yesterday and I hope he wasn't offended when I put him off. All I want to think about is a lovely winter wedding and the rest of our lives."

"Oh Shane, do you mind if my mother is my Maiden of Honor?"

"Not at all, I was thinking about having two best men. The Lantern will just have to take care of herself that weekend."

"Where would you like to live?"

"Well for the last five years I've had the opportunity to be able to walk to work."

"And I have as well. But for quality living, I can't think of anyplace better than Rosseville. We have so many friends here and that makes it very comfortable. We have the sea nearby. One of the reasons my friends and I started coming over here from the University was that it was a nice comfortable place, with a cute guy that I knew from college who owned a pub."

"Ah, you can find the likes of that anyplace."

"Sure enough, Shane, sure enough; I like Clifden over in Connemara. It has mountains, the sea, a lake, and woods. It is also a close enough ride to both the University and to Rosseville."

“That is a good choice. I like Rosseville as my first option. Why don’t I start asking around to see what is available? I would love to build a house but that would take at least a year, and even more. Did you ever observe Irish builders working on a house?”

“If you wanted to do that, we could temporarily live either at my apartment at the University or at your cottage. We won’t need a lot of space until our ten children arrive.”

“Well that sounds like a plan. I’ll ask around Rosseville and see what is available.”

“Shane, all this excitement about choosing where to live has made me very sleepy. I have to ring off. I love you. We’ll talk tomorrow.

Before going to bed, Katie pulled a 9 x 12 manila envelope from her desk drawer and a piece of her personal stationary. She addressed it to Paul Hewson, Bono’s given name, at the private contact address he had given to her. She handwrote a brief note:

Dear Bono,

The reviews are in for the Gay Byrne Late Late Show and they indicate that we all did a good job. It is something I am glad is behind us.

I wanted to thank you for dedicating your song to my mother. Your thoughtfulness deeply touched her and the rest of us.

I continue to be impressed that that your music is something of a ministry. U2 is an icon for culture and spirituality and your music will leave a lasting impression in our world.

Enclosed is the bibliography that I promised you of the mythology and ancient literature in Ireland. This is possibly the most complete bibliography of this kind in Ireland and the culmination of almost two years work. Having visited this world in some depth, I can assure you of the ancient music that is there and I will look forward to your discoveries and the celebration of our ancient heritage. If I can help in any way, feel free to call on me. I can translate ancient Gaelic.

On a personal note, Shane and I have set a wedding date for December 28th. It is cause for great celebration and we look forward to enjoying your music together for many years to come.

Best regards to the other guys.

Katie O’Bierne

She sealed and stamped the envelope and put it in her carry all for mailing in the morning.

Meanwhile, Angela was lying in her bed, wide awake, her mind going in different directions all at once. She was not startled by Katie announcing her wedding day. She knew it was coming. She was genuinely happy for Katie. But she was faced with making decisions about her own future.

One major issue was her relationship with Peadar McDermott. Yes, she had to admit that she was hopelessly in love with him. Neither one had yet declared love for the other. She felt certain that he loved her but she was very concerned about their respective status. He was a distinguished scholar and professor, known in his circles the world over. She was a single widow who had not even gone to college. She was very intelligent and well read and she wished she could duplicate Katie's accomplishments. She was impressed with Peadar's accomplishments and his status in the university world. He was well travelled and had lived in London and Boston. She felt very unsophisticated coming from a midlands town near the border that only came to life two days a week, mostly for the benefit of young people and farmers. What could she contribute to Peadar's life? What did he want from her?

She loved the romance in their relationship. She had long since put aside any thoughts of being a sexual person but Peadar certainly awakened those long dormant feelings. Her marriage to Colum O'Bierne had been arranged by her own parents, something relatively common because of the poverty of the era. Her parent's meant well, she knew. They wanted her to be secure. Colum was considerably older when they married and, thank God, he was a good man. Her pregnancy and the birth of Katie was something of a surprise that filled them with joy. Being a bachelor all of his life Colum was better at breeding sheep than children. He was an indifferent father not knowing what to do with and around a child, especially a female toddler. Katie was just three when her father had a heart attack in the fields and died instantly. Angela remembered selling the fields and the sheep. Some of those fields are now part of the town of Leveegee. As the town expanded with the peace efforts with the North and became a marketplace, the O'Bierne cottage was eventually absorbed into the town. Angela was now financially secure with her husband's legacy, the sale of the fields, and her widow's pension. There was no hint of romance in her life after Colum's death. She had no property any longer and no dowry. She settled into the life of the town, made a lot of good friends, was very active in her parish, and had a very independent, free spirited, brilliant, and athletic daughter, who was also blessed with common sense. When Katie left for college, even though it was only an hour's drive away, she was alone again but had a rich and fulfilling life in her community, until her house was invaded by drug driven vandals.

The romance with Peadar was a startling surprise. She never had much of a romance with Katie's dad. In fact, Peadar was the only love of her life. She was more like Colum's housekeeper. Peadar was attentive, loving, intent on pleasing her, anxious to share the emotional feelings he had been hoarding since the death of his wife. She often thought that they were like a pair of lovesick teenagers and enjoyed the feelings that she never had before. Could it be that all he wanted was a dinner companion? "Now that I have a taste of the romance," she thought, "I want more." Another factor is that Peadar is terribly shy and seems insecure in their relationship.

That is the answer, as plain as the nose on my face. I have to help him get past these insecurities. I hate confrontations but I have to face this head on. If I wait for Peadar, it may never happen. They are both at an age when a long postponement of anything is not in order.

With the beginning of a plan forming in her mind, Angela rolled over, hugged her pillow and slipped into a deep and dreamless sleep.

In Salt Hill, in an older but well kept Tudor manor house, much too big for only one person, Peadar McDermott was also trying to fall asleep but the demons of doubt were keeping him awake.

I love Angela; I really do. I want to spend the rest of my life with her. She is the object of my passion, the stimulation of my intellect, the peace of my restless soul. How can I tell her all of this without scaring her half to death? I want her to marry me and I am so afraid to ask her. For over twenty years I have had a gaping hole in my life. I haven't met anyone who can fill it like she does.

I understand that she might feel awkward because of my academic status. It didn't bother me or Theresa when she was living. She was not an academic. At Sean's party Angela was a brilliant conversationalist with people that she just met. She fits into any circumstance in which she finds herself.

Katie's is getting married. I am sure that Angela is very happy for her. If I ask her to marry me will Katie's pending nuptials get in the way of her decision?

I haven't told Angela that I love her. Why haven't I? What am I afraid of? Why does courtship have to be so hard? Young people don't seem to have a problem with it. They seem to get married, live together, or just have sex without even thinking about it. If it doesn't work out, they just move on.

Why am I even thinking like this? It is not about Angela. My doubt is about me. I am afraid of losing. I am terrified of rejection. You old fuddy duddy, you are supposed to be a leader. You are the University's champion. Whatever you wanted or needed you went out and got it. Don't you trust the quality of the relationship you have built with Angela? I am certain that Angela loves me. Of course she loves me. She opens herself to me. She leads me. She is the flame that ignites the passions of my being. Get yourself together, man. She is going to be my partner for the rest of my life. Yes, that is what I want. Now how do I get it? Tomorrow I will ask her to dinner at Ashford Castle. They have a beautiful lighted garden and the place is all dressed up for the summer tourist trade. I will get a loaner ring like Shane did. During our walk, I will simply say, "Angela, I have something to tell you. I love you very much. I love you so much that I really don't want to face the rest of my life without you. Then I'll get down on one knee and ask her to marry me. Yes, that is the plan. I will call her tomorrow and make the arrangements.

Peadar lay back on his pillow with his hands on behind head. He felt very good about his plan and said a prayer of thanks for the gift of self-talk. He breathed deeply and fell into the deep sleep of the truly contented.

The first thing next morning Katie called Sean Hurley from home. “Sean, I am going to my office in a few minutes. Can I stop by yours on the way?”

“Of course you can, Katie. I have a nice package of material to show you.”

“Great, I look forward to seeing it.”

Katie walked to the post and mailed the package to Bono and within ten minutes was at Sean’s office.

Sean greeted her with a hug. Katie demurely apologized for not coming over the day before. “Sean, I was up to my eyeballs grading papers and exams. I didn’t finish up until after nine o’clock last night. I know how important this is to you and I am ashamed of myself for being so selfish.”

“Not at all, Katie; nobody knows better than me that immediately after a major communications event, life continues to go on. As great a triumph this was for Gay Byrne, he was taping one of this week’s shows on Monday when we were partying.”

Sean showed Katie the reviews.

“I’m going to have copies bound for each of us and for Gay and Dr. Nolan.”

Katie went through them carefully but quickly and then burst out laughing. “Shane is too handsome to be straight; I’m a *goodie two shoes*? My mother and secondary teachers will have fun with that one.”

“We always have fun with the negatives, Katie. We usually keep them for humility. As you can see, the reviews are not only good, they are outstanding. I wouldn’t be surprised if this show is nominated for an Irish Film and Television Award and almost certainly for a People’s Choice Award. You and Shane may have another chance to wear a gown and tuxedo.”

“Oh Sean, we have one of those chances coming up on December 28th. That will be our wedding day. Circle your calendar.”

“Katie, I can’t tell you how happy I am for both of you. I will consider it an honor to see you get married.”

“Thank you, Sean. I can’t tell you enough how grateful we are that you guided us through this event. You took a lot pressure off of both of us.”

“Well, if my judgment is right, Katie, we will have a lot of opportunity to work together. I expect that we will have to screen interviews for various magazines.

“You can be sure that I won’t pose for Playboy,” laughed Katie.

“You can be sure they will ask. You looked great on TV, and you always look great anyway.”

“We’ll screen the magazines and newspapers. You will have a chance to confirm or reject our suggestions. It would be nice if one of the academic journals that you wrote for contacted us for as profile.”

“Well thank you kind sir. I am in my 30s and I have very little concern for my body image.”

Katie gave Sean another hug and then made her way to her own office.

She arrived at the same time as the postman. “Good morning, Dr. O’Bierne,” said Bill McBride. “I’m used to bringing you a few letters, notices, and an occasional bill. I think these bags represent fan mail. I saw the show and you were wonderful. Can I have your autograph to give to my mother?”

Katie laughed and directed Bill to put the bags in the corner closest to her desk. She took one of her announcement cards out of her desk drawer and signed it over the face for Bill’s mom.”

“Thank you,” said Bill. “She is a great fan.”

“Please thank her for me,” said Katie.

Katie immediately called Sean and asked him about what she should be doing.

Sean asked her to get a couple of student interns from the administrative office to go through them. Make a list of addresses and we’ll send them a form letter of thanks.

Meanwhile, Shane made his first appearance in the Lantern since the previous Friday. He expected and received a lot of ragging from his partners. They told him that there were people lined up from the door up to the street above on Monday night. Fortunately it was a mild evening and we were able to set up a TV outside. The wait staff was crazy but, God bless them, they kept up with the demand and each one finished the night with over two hundred pounds in tips. “It was the busiest night in our five year history,” said Chris. “It continued on Tuesday and Wednesday, as well. Every tourist in Ireland wanted to see where you hang out.”

Shane laughed and told him that he wanted to speak with them. It was an ominous tone of voice. Liam thought that he was going off to be a TV star.

When he had them over by the bar, he leaned into them speaking softly. “Katie and I are getting married on December 28th and I want both of you to be my groomsmen.”

They stared at him in silence for a few seconds and then jumped on him with hugs and handshakes.

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As always, I appreciate your comments and criticism. They help me to be a better story teller.