

Chapter 24 – The Interviews Continue

Sarah Leis and Tom Cahill, her photographer, from *Ireland on Sunday* were waiting in the outer room. Edna invited them to come right in. The second interview went very much like the first. Shane told the story of the sinking of the *Nina G* with the same drama as he did in the first interview. In this interview he put more emphasis on his fear and the intensity of his prayer, giving God the credit for bringing them safely home.

Sarah wanted to know about the Leveegee incident but went quickly to the accident incident. Shane told that story and that he had visited the farmer in the hospital. He is home now and doing well. In a couple of months he will be as good as new.

“What about the fellow who was killed?”

“I understand that he was the son of an international investment banker. I don’t know anything about him. He was killed immediately. I took his pulse within a minute after the accident and he was already gone.”

“I understand that there was considerable drink taken,”

“I was told that as well.”

Katie told pretty much the same story she told the Times. She was pleased that she had the opportunity to talk about the university

Sarah asked her about growing up in Leveegee. She was trying to contrast a girl from a back hills rural town with a woman who now held a prominent position in the halls of academe.

“People are people all over the world. We all have values, moral judgment, hopes, dreams, and skills. I earned the opportunity to attend college, but I’m still the girl who grew up in a rural community, the daughter of a farmer and sheep herder. I received a lot of encouragement from my mom after my dad died and as the opportunities appeared, I took advantage of them. “

“I would like to say a word about farmers. Farming was once an exalted position in Ireland. If you had any land at all, you were considered rich. The Celtic Tiger has diminished the status of the farmer. My appreciation of the farmers that I knew is that they are the most creative and skilled people in Ireland. They have a life of backbreaking hardship and they love it. Their reward is a meager income by today’s standards. That doesn’t change their native genius. We still need them and they know that. Several worldwide cultural shifts have occurred in our history and yet the farmer still survives and will continue to survive as long as the rest of us continue to survive. There is nothing broken that a farmer can’t fix. There is almost no waste that a farmer can’t recycle into a useful tool. The proud profession of farming may or may not regain prominence. I do know though that the rest of us cannot survive without farming.”

Leveegee is a model of a community that works. Loyalists and republicans worked through an eight hundred year civil war putting hatred aside and learned cooperative farming, cooperative animal husbandry, the value of friendship, personal loyalty, and that a handshake is as good as any contract. Go there any weekend and just observe the weekly market and auctions.”

“How do you keep your Catholic faith alive? The parish at Leveegee isn’t exactly like a beacon.”

“It is not my place to judge anyone,” said Katie. The people at Leveegee are good people. The friends I grew up with are good people. We kept the faith alive with the support of each other. I have been blessed with a great mother and two great priests in my life, Fr. O’Malley who will be our pastor at the Rosseville parish and Fr. Mc Carthy at the Newman Center on campus. Both are models of what a priest can be and their communities show it. The Church is hardly innocent of the charges leveled against her but a good priest or bishop can make a big difference in the lives of our people.”

“When will you be married?”

“We would rather not say, said Shane. Hopefully our wedding will not be a media event.”

“What will the future hold for you?”

“We are planning to live in Rosseville, replied Katie. Shane will be the community Publican and I will continue to work at the University. We will grow more deeply in love each day, raise a family, and make whatever contribution we can to improving society.”

“That sounds like a good plan. If you don’t mind, we would like to use a photo of the two of you together on the cover. We will use some of the other photos within the body of the article.”

Edna escorted them out and Rory encouraged them to take a break and at least drink a bottle of water before the next interview.

“You are spectacular, said Rory. That last one was a little more difficult. Apparently she did some homework before she arrived here. You are both doing a great job.”

The third interview with *The Sunday Tribune* covered all the information previously mined by the other interviewers. Rory had warned them that there were other interviews and they would probably have to look for a fresh approach. *The Sunday Tribune* did not include the *Ireland on Sunday* magazine insert so there would be no competition or conflict of interest. *The Irish Times*, though more widely circulated, is known as a partisan newspaper and would probably not conflict with the stories of the others. Sean had taken this into consideration when he chose the five.

Katie and Shane were tired after all the interviews and elected to go back to her apartment for a nap before their dinner at Fitzgerald's. Rory again congratulated them on a job well done. He was impressed on how Katie weaved the University aspect of their story into the interviews. He thought the three interviews each emphasized a different facet of their story and would paint an interesting picture for their readers. From his studies, Rory knew that these interviews were not the traditional public relations interview. The five periodicals were selected from among several newspapers who had requested interviews. That won't stop the other tabloid type of newspapers from writing their own stories. Getting the true story out first was the best way to avoid misunderstandings.

They walked slowly back to her apartment. Angela was out and they had the place to themselves. They collapsed on the couch to relieve the mental and physical fatigue they felt. They kissed and held each other and both fell asleep in seconds.

They slept for at least two hours when Angela returned to the apartment. The nap was refreshing. They shared a cup of tea and talked about their day. Angela was fascinated by the interviews.

"They can print anything they want. Doesn't that frighten you?"

"Not from the papers who interviewed us," said Katie. "Their stock in trade is their journalistic integrity. The people with whom we interviewed would not jeopardize that integrity. It would mean that they would be out of the business. Sean uses that room for student practice interviews and everything we said in that room is taped. So there is an accurate record of everything."

"Angela, we are going to Fitzgerald's for dinner to test it out for the possibility of a wedding reception. If you would like to come with us, we could draw on your considerable wisdom," said Shane.

"You really know how to flatter a girl. Give me a minute or two to freshen up. I'll be happy to join you."

Shane had made a reservation and since they were so well known at Fitzgerald's, they were greeted by the manager, Brian Smythe, when they arrived. He led them to a table he had personally selected for them and took their drink order, white wine for the three of them. Shane had a small notebook with him and wrote something without anyone's notice.

The room could easily hold 200 people with plenty of space for a band and dancing. They toasted each other for a good job on the interviews.

A waitress came and took their dinner orders. Shane, conscious of the mandate to lose a little weight, ordered baked Salmon, Angela ordered a baked, stuffed chicken breast, and Katie ordered chicken cordon bleu. They talked about the room, how tables could be

arranged; the noise level for conversation and what a typically loud dance band would do to conversation.

Again, Shane jotted notes.

Dinner was delicious and it was complimented by more white wine and they enjoyed the leisurely pace of fine dining. When the waiter came to take their dessert order Brian accompanied him and joined them at the table. Shane had arranged for this.

Brian told them that as a professional courtesy to Shane, drinks were on the house, a courtesy Brian had enjoyed many times at the Lantern. They chatted lightly while they were waiting for coffee. Everyone passed on dessert.

“Oh, Mom,” exclaimed Katie, “I meant to tell you that Bono sends you his best regards.” Katie is not known as a name dropper but she couldn’t resist the temptation. Brian was no end of impressed.

“Now, how did Bono manage to ask for me,” asked Angela?

“Well, I am helping him with a project. He is researching ancient Irish literature to get material for new songs. I sent him a copy of my dissertation bibliography. He is working on several possibilities and I will get a credit when they publish that album. He wrote me a note to thank me for the bibliography”

“Are you going to ask him to play at the wedding,” asked Angela?

“No, I am thinking of Springsteen or Bonjovi”

The joke didn’t work. Everyone was stunned but they didn’t laugh.

Katie blushed and said that she and Shane were working toward a low key wedding celebrated with great joy and dignity that they could share with their friends.

“Is it true that you are working with Bono,” asked Brian?”

“It is absolutely true,” replied Katie.

Shane asked Brian about the possibility of using Fitzgerald’s for a reception.

“We don’t use this room for receptions, said Brian. We have one downstairs that is roughly the same size. When is the wedding?”

Shane told him and Brian browsed through his book. The date was available.

“Tell me about the costs.”

“Costs vary depending on the menu you choose. If you figure around 60 pounds a plate, with an open bar, you have an idea of the costs. Where else are you looking,” asked Brian?

“We are only considering one other option, the Faculty Dining Room at the University”

“Pick that one, said Brian. You have the privilege of using it and you should go for it. We can’t match the costs. The dining room is subsidized for the benefit of the faculty. You will find it much less expensive with excellent food and ambiance. You know you are welcome here, but I recommend that you seriously consider the University. If you want to consider putting up guests here, I can block out rooms at a good discount.”

“You are very frank and very fair,” said Shane. “We are going to the University tomorrow and we will let you know what we decide. Either way, we will do some business.”

Brian shook Shane’s hand and thanked him for considering Fitzgerald’s and invited them to have some Irish Mist for an after dinner drink.

“What do you think, Angela,” asked Shane?

“I would say that you have a respectful and honest man here. He is probably right. He might feel you wouldn’t be pleased with the downstairs room. He gets lots of business from your crowd every Sunday. He also knows that there is a difference in price that you will probably have to accept for similar quality. He will do well with a block of rooms sold in the middle of winter. He is a good man. He did you a favor and kept your friendship.”

“You are right, Angela. Do you know anything about the costs at the Faculty Dining Room?”

I don’t know the costs but I do know that it is the place that Peadar wants for a reception, and as you know, he is a man of impeccable taste. He also likes Fitzgerald’s.

“Will you join us for dinner tomorrow at the Faculty Dining Room and Katie, will you use your considerable charm to make an appointment for the manager to join us for dessert to discuss this matter?”

Angela and Katie nodded to each other and laughed at Shane’s feigned formality.

“Yes sir, Will there be anything else sir?” laughed Katie as she poked his ribs with her elbow?

Shane stayed over but in the morning Katie received a phone call from Sean. He had spoken with Rory and Edna and did a courtesy check with the reporters from the three newspapers. Everyone was very pleased.

“They seemed enthusiastic and pleased with themselves. We certainly were.”

“Do you have any thoughts for today’s interviews,” asked Katie?

“These are the local papers. I think I did well publicizing the University and our projects and I plugged the research for unread papers from the 1916 Rising that might be in attics. There won’t be much of that to be found in Connaught, at least I don’t think so and I could be wrong. Do me a favor, though. Don’t destroy the tapes of our interviews. My mom hit a raw nerve when she talked about risks involved with interviews at dinner last night. I would like to hold onto the tapes for at least a month or two when all of this will have blown away. I don’t think we said anything controversial but you never know how something that Shane or I said can be twisted to mean something else. The politicians have a phrase for it, *spinning the truth*. Also, it doesn’t stop the British tabloids from taking the information from the other papers and create some fiction around it. Let’s be prepared to protect ourselves if necessary. Otherwise, I think that Dr. Nolan will be very pleased. The fan mail from the Gay Byrne show has almost stopped so our fifteen minutes of fame is almost up. The interns are doing a wonderful job sorting the mail. They picked out a personal note from Paul Hewitt.”

“Who is that,” asked Sean.

“It is a *nom de plume* for Bono,” laughed Katie. I’m helping him on a project.”

“Well the shy girl that I first met ten years ago is certainly travelling in rarified circles.”

“Go away with you,” said Katie. “I was never a shy girl.”

Sean laughed and said he would see them later in the afternoon and, yes, he would preserve the tapes.

Shane slept late on the comfortable couch.

Katie was in her room reading some of Pearse’s poetry and letters.

Angela fussed around cleaning the kitchen and straightened up her own room.