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Welcome to the latest edition of the IACI e-news.

Founded in 1962, the IACI is the leading Irish American cultural organization. The IACI is a federally recognized 501(c)(3) not-for-profit national organization devoted to promoting an intelligent appreciation of Ireland and the role and contributions of the Irish in America.

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# Life Is Full of Surprises

By

**Raymond D. Aumack**

Desmond Dowd is a tall, athletic, somewhat stoic gentleman, though he looks like a photo of Clint Eastwood in his better years. He is in the middle of middle age with rust colored hair tinged with streaks of grey. When you speak with him, he listens with an amazing interest in what you are saying. He speaks like the gentleman he is. He has been at Bookbinders Restaurant since he came to the country from Ireland, starting as a busboy. He is a widower. His beloved wife died from cancer approximately ten years ago. Desmond is a devoted Catholic but his daughter, who married five years before, a product of a Catholic high school and college, is a less than devout millennial. Desmond was terribly unhappy about this but chose to accept his daughter's adult decisions.

When carrying out his duties as Maitre d' he gives the appearance of being a "great house" butler. The great houses are long since gone from Ireland, but the memory of fiend elegance that he observed in his childhood made an impression that never left.

After finishing high school, he took independent courses at Villanova in Restaurant Management. The library at Villanova was an incredible resource. He read everything he could find on the subject and through his reading learned how to be a butler as well. Years later he achieved his Villanova degree through correspondence courses.

Emmanuel Bookbinder, the third-generation owner of the famous restaurant, took a great deal of interest in Desmond. Bookbinder was fascinated with Desmond's work ethic and the promotions followed until he became the maître d'. He was also very generous with Desmond's salary. Desmond had become very popular with the clientele. and Bookbinder was afraid that another restaurant would lure him away.

The two became very close. Bookbinder was a clever investor and they would frequently talk about investments. Whenever Bookbinder made an investment, Desmond would take an appropriate portion of his salary and make the same investment. It took almost two decades and following the astute Bookbinder during the ups and downs of the stock market, Desmond had become a millionaire. He never mentioned this to anyone and carefully maintained his reasonably frugal lifestyle. His investments became larger as did his income.

Many people confided in him. He never gave advice on how to solve a problem but was able to direct the questioner to a solution from a professional in the field of the question. Everyone was very satisfied with the service and walked away believing that Desmond solved their problem.

It was on one such evening that Maeve Garvey arrived early for a dinner date with Pat Malone. Pat was detained at a college meeting and would be late for their date. Since they are long time friends, Maeve and Desmond had time to chat with each other, although Desmond took her into his office, so he wouldn't be distracted by events in the dining room.

"I remember several months ago that you were interviewing him for the role of boyfriend," stated Desmond. "How is that going?"

"It is going very well," said Maeve. "In fact, I am looking for ways to escalate our relationship to another level. My problem is that I want to do it the old-fashioned way. I don't want him moving in with me. That's the way

it would have to be. He has a set of rooms and I have a real apartment. I have a sense of moral integrity that I'm proud of and I don't want to deviate from it."

"Have you asked him for his hand in marriage?"

Maeve, laughed. "That might work" she said. "But I am very much a liberal left winger and a feminist, and that would betray every-thing that makes me, me."

"Or, it might be seen as a bold step for feminism."

"You are right about that, Desmond, but I want to live with his healthy psyche for the rest of my life."

He knew Patrick as intelligent and learned, perhaps one of the best in his area of Irish and English Literature. He knew him as generous, willing to spend time with him during his work day. Patrick was conscious of the publish or perish mandate of his profession and had published three articles in the past five months. The fourth article was due out the next month and it reflected the dialogue he had with Desmond about the poetry of Yeats. Patrick has also been assembling ideas and notes for a book. There might be some publicity about this, but Desmond didn't mind. He felt that it was about time that his interests and learning had some exposure. It wouldn't hurt Bookbinders, either. Before consenting, he had consulted with Emannual.

He was pleased to hear about Maeve's plans to marry Patrick, though Patrick wasn't aware of this yet. He had known Maeve since she was a teenager when her parents started bringing her to Bookbinders, along with her brothers, for family celebrations. Maeve would frequently host prospective clients at Bookbinders and would telephone Desmond to ask his advice on impressing the prospect. Desmond was always impressed with Maeve, so he gladly became an accomplice.

Desmond had to get out onto the floor and he kissed Maeve on the cheek and wished her luck with her endeavor. "Just be yourself and stay with your principles," he said, "and only good things can happen. Don't be afraid to discuss it with him. He might need a little help to get out of his fictional world at the university."

Maeve always enjoyed talking with Desmond. She loved listening to his lilting brogue. She knew that he had been meeting with Patrick.

Desmond escorted her to her table, but he was called away before she could ask him about his impression of Patrick's fictional world. Then it dawned on her. Of course! Patrick was deeply ensconced in his work. So was she. That might be the opening she needed.

Patrick actually showed up at their pre-arranged time. He was almost breathless as if he was running after his Uber rather than riding in it. He was really enjoying teaching at St. Joseph's University. He was also deeply involved in faculty committees and was dealing with university policies and practices. He was very excited to tell her about his role in developing a new policy about dealing with sexual abuse on the campus. Of course, on the campus almost everyone is an adult and the issues are mainly about consent. That doesn't make the situations any less delicate. Notre Dame thought they had an airtight policy that could not be implemented in the face of the tragedy of a suicide.

"We have to try to cover every contingency," said Patrick, "and the contingencies are infinite."

"I'll give you a hint about infinity that I learned in my practice. Just try to define consent."

"That is what we are stuck on."

"When I am developing a policy for a company, I usually have them brainstorm what they mean by consent. Sometimes it is defined by local culture. I then run it by their lawyers and mine before they sign off on it. Try setting up small focus groups to include students, student officers, as well as faculty groups."

“Wow, when did you become such a genius, Maeve?”

“When you are in the trenches long enough, it comes easy. I do this stuff, every day. Just make sure that everyone buys into the same conclusion. Have the University lawyers approve it. After that, I have a group of lawyers without any vested interest, that will examine the agreement to make sure that everyone with a vested interest knows exactly what it says and means.

“I can’t believe it. We spent all afternoon agonizing over objectives and a strategy to achieve them. You gave me everything I need, and we haven’t even finished our first drink.”

“Great, make sure you take all the credit for that. I’m sure the university can’t afford my fee.”

“Well now that you have solved all of my problems, what is going on at Garvey Associates?”

“Actually, things are too good. I had hoped to step out of service delivery to concentrate on sales. However, we are too busy for that. I’ll find a way to compensate for that, but it might cost us down the road. I like a steady stream of business. These major storms sometimes lead to a drought. I don’t like droughts. I have to hire more help, but I need a guarantee of long-term business to be able to afford hiring more people. We have a healthy bank account but that supports the five we already have. If we add two more, that bank account will evaporate rapidly if a drought emerges.”

“Hmmm, would you be interested in interns.?”

“I have considered that, but I can’t do it now. Dave is my trainer and I can’t possibly put another thing on his plate. I’m also considering making everyone a partner. I want to give everyone a share in ownership. I want to use my dad’s law firm as a model.

The waiter came with their dinners and the conversation turned to the ever-popular friends and their intrigues. Pat was concerned about his sister, Theresa’s, relationship with Fr. Paul. Maeve thought that there is nothing wrong with that. It was a blessing for both of them. Pat protested that their relationship isn’t friendship, it is love. Maeve observed that there is nothing wrong with that either. Pat thought that there is the risk of scandal. Maeve responded that it would be a blessing if a priest actually had a relationship with a woman for a change. She was almost ready to retract that as homophobic. She did point out that both were experiencing spiritual direction. They’re in God’s hands. Everything will be alright.

It suddenly dawned on Maeve that she and Pat were on opposite ends of the cultural spectrum. She realized that Pat was far more conservative than she was. He was small town New Jersey and he lived in the university cocoon. She had a different experience with her parents, her own education, and the culture of the Philadelphia society within which her family circulated. Her attitudes were formed in a different direction.

Red lights flashed before her eyes, danger, danger, danger. Her plans for an escalation of their relationship was totally taken off the burner. They had many other things to discuss that were far more significant than an escalation of their relationship. Her heart almost broke with the disappointment of the moment. Everything was perfect. Why couldn't it stay that way? She immediately answered her own question. In her business dealings, her stock in trade was to accumulate as much data as possible to solve the problems she faced. She felt so good about her developing relationship with Pat, she let those good feelings replace the due diligence that she needed to really develop their relationship. She was comfortable in the relationship. She felt that she loved Pat, or at least the Pat that she thought she knew. Desmond's words re-echoed in her mind, "proceed with caution, but by all means proceed."

Without any change in her demeanor, she hoped, she asked Pat if they could skip dessert. She apologized saying that she suddenly didn't feel well. Pat quickly dialed Uber and arranged for their short trip back to New Jersey. She said that she thought that the overwork had run her down a bit.

When they reached her condo building, she gave him a warm hug and a kiss and quickly made her way into the lobby of her building. Pat called out to her to make sure she called a doctor if she didn't feel well in the morning. As she waited for the elevator, she thought, that she didn't need a doctor, she needed her mother.

She went to her apartment and changed into her night clothes while she fought off the urge to cry. She crawled into her bed and cried her eyes out until she finally fell asleep.

The next morning, as usual, she arrived early at her office, and as soon as she had the lights on, she called her mother before she left for work. "Mom, can we meet for lunch today. I need your advice."

Bridgid was startled because Maeve never asked for advice or any kind of parental support for that matter. They spoke frequently on the phone, had an occasional lunch together, and Maeve invited herself to dinner at least twice a month. She always called first in case her parents had other guests or were running around in their underwear she always joked. There was no distance between Maeve and her parents. The Garvey children were extremely self-sufficient. They never asked for money. Maeve did subtly suggest that her father invest in an assisted living cottage in Galway for her mother's sister. It was her mother who made the pitch, and the cottage was purchased the following week. Aunt Nora would never know the source of financing nor did it occur to her to even ask. Dave would eventually get his money back. There would be no interest, but the investment was very safe. It also pleased Dave to do something for Bridgid because she never asked for anything. It also pleased him to know that Nora, frequently referred to as the old battle axe, would have comfort and care in the last years of her life.

Maeve moved efficiently through her morning work. It was noticed by everyone that she was not her ebullient and effervescent self. The observation was best left to later in the day to address.

Maeve met her mother at a breakfast and lunch place they both enjoyed, and it was at the distance midpoint between their two offices. Bridgid arrived first and claimed a table. Maeve arrived just a few minutes later. They enthusiastically hugged. "Mom, I saw you from a block away as you walked into this room. You still have the charisma that makes you noticeable."

"Ha! I must have inherited that from my children."

They ordered lunch from an especially gracious waitress. Her mother, the atmosphere, and the promise of the best roast beef sandwich in Philadelphia lightened Maeve's heavy mood. She was not depressed but she was disturbed.

Bridgid jumped right into the fray. "Tell me what is going on."

Relieved at not having to make an awkward introduction, Maeve started to tell her story. She was already in love with Patrick but just discovered how conservative his attitudes were. “I hate to be a bigot, but he is really small town. And he studied and taught at a Jesuit university for over a decade, in Chicago no less. Nothing rubbed off on him.”

Bridgid looked at her very seriously. “Is your relationship a sexual relationship?”

“Mom! How could you ask such a question?”

“Indulge me. We are not mother and daughter for the next few minutes. We are friends discussing life’s important issues.”

“Wow,” said Maeve, “I never expected that.”

“Which is not the answer to my question,” as she fixed her eyes directly onto Maeve’s eyes.

“No mom. We haven’t had sex. We have steamed up a few car windows, but we haven’t even come close to having sex.”

“And this is the way you want it?”

“Yes, it is, mom. While we haven’t talked about it, he seems to respect what he thinks are my wishes.”

“The good lawyers with whom I work have taught me to never ask a question unless I know the answer. I meant to put you on the spot. For all your progressive and feminist views, which I applaud, by the way, you have chosen a pretty conservative position for this day and age. If you told me you were having sex, I wouldn’t have blinked an eye. My instincts told me that you had a fascinating traditional streak about you. I am back to being your mother now. My advice is that while I am pleased you talked with me about it, the beloved should be speaking to the lover. Progressives and conservatives in marriage, and in any walk of life for that matter, at least have something to talk about. They don’t have to agree. They should be open to learning something from each other.”

The silence was deafening as Maeve took the first bite of her sandwich. Her eyes were starting to flood with tears as she looked at her mother across the table. “Mom, how did you get to be such an oracle of wisdom?”

“I married a wonderful man who was just as insecure as I was. We never talked about our political or religious beliefs until we knew what we were talking about. Your father was trained for debate.

I had a great education in college. A whole new world opened up to me, so different from the farm and the village in Donegal. The nuns were truly conservative and traditional and while I was introduced to a new world, it was my own mind that discerned that world and it was an enlightening experience. They taught me to be a critical thinker and I am so grateful for that. I also learned about life from my five children. Your father and I taught you to be decent, spiritual, productive, and loving human beings. You taught me how to be a mother.”

“Mom, I could jump over the table and hug and kiss you right now.”

“I’m not that liberal. The Donegal experience draws a line at PDA; you never know who might be watching.”

“Patrick has never been to my apartment. I think I’ll invite him to dinner and conversation.”

“Already, it sounds like a great plan.”

The next morning, a Thursday, Maeve attended the 7:30 Mass. She wanted to talk with Fr. Paul. After Mass, Paul invited her to the rectory for a homemade breakfast of scrambled eggs.

“Paul, I need to talk with you under the secrecy of the seal.”

“I can do that if you are not a threat to yourself or society.”

“I’m neither. You know Pat better than anyone except Theresa. Is he a very conservative guy?”

“He is conservative, but I wouldn’t call him *very* conservative. From a religious perspective, he accepts the Vatican Council and he likes Pope Francis. He is not particularly fond of our archbishop. Politically, I think he is more of an independent than anything else. I know that he is not terribly happy about my friendship with his sister.”

“How are you handling that?”

“With respect for the fact that he loves us, it is none of his business.”

“What I am hearing is that he is to the right of center, but he is not a right-wing nut.”

“Yes, I think that describes him.”

“He said some things during dinner the other night that both surprised and scared me. It makes me realize that if our relationship is to grow, we have to communicate more. I really love him but in the euphoria of these new feelings we haven’t really talked about things that are important to either of us. I think we make a nice couple, but I really want to know the man I think I love, and I want him to know me.”

” That is a wise goal to achieve, Maeve. If I can help you with it, I am always available.”

Meanwhile, Pat had called about ten times to inquire about her health. Maeve told him that she turns her phone off for meetings. She was feeling better after a good night’s sleep. She went into work to keep the well-oiled machine running. If she took the day off, it would have placed a heavy burden on her already overworked staff. She had a meeting at noon that ran until almost to 2:00 PM. She didn’t tell him that it was with her mother.

She asked if he could come to her apartment for a home cooked meal on Friday evening. He accepted the invitation immediately. He said that he would bring wine. Maeve suggested Pinot Grigio because she was considering a lobster dish. Just show up at 7:30. I’ll take care of the rest.

Maeve immediately called Desmond. She was hoping that Desmond could text her the recipe for a lobster dish she really liked that was no longer on their menu. Desmond knew exactly what she wanted and said he would text it this evening. The surprise was that Desmond was free on Sunday and asked if he could join with her friends after Mass. Maeve enthusiastically welcomed him without questions. Desmond did inquire if the dinner was about escalation. Maeve confided that this was the opening salvo for an ongoing communications effort. She realized that after their talk earlier in the week.

“Excellent” said Desmond, “escalation will take care of itself.”

Later that evening, Maeve made certain that the apartment was impeccably clean and neat. She called the Super to bring up enough firewood for a long evening. She set the table with the finest Irish Linen tablecloth and napkins, laid out the set of English bone china that she never remembered using, found the Waterford Crystal candlesticks stuck away in a drawer, placed the silver cutlery, properly measured next to each plate. She stood back and observed the room. She adjusted the dimmer to lower the lights and then stood back to admire her dining room. The only time she remembered the room looking like this was when she invited her parents to dinner after she purchased the condo. She adjusted the drapes, so they could look out on the river lights. She would make a list of things that she needed from the supermarket and have it delivered in the afternoon.

The next day was the usual busy day at her office. She arrived by 7:00 AM and plunged into her day routine. She had done a half days work by the time her staff arrived.

When Susan arrived, she noticed right away that the top of Maeve's desk was perfectly clean, the planning board was up to date, a pile of mail was on her desk to be answered following the instructions that Maeve left with them.

"Did you stay here all night," inquired Susan.

Maeve laughed, "Can't we be caught up on our work every once in a while. The truth be told is that I have to leave at 2:30 PM today, so I came in early, so I wouldn't leave any additional burdens on our staff by taking a half day off."

"It wouldn't have anything to do with the Irish god, would it?"

"Well in the interests of needless transparency, I am having dinner with him tonight."

She didn't think it was necessary to mention that it was a romantic, candle-light dinner, with the fireplace roaring, a delicate Irish Linen tablecloth and napkins, English bone china dishes, and real silver silverware, within her apartment. It might sound seductive which, in part it was, but not the kind of seduction Susan would have in mind. Maeve left her to her fantasies.

She also passed the word onto Dave, so he could watch over the place. Dave scolded her for not just taking the day off.

"Gee, I was just trying to relieve some of the stress on you guys. The good you try to do usually comes back to bite you in the backside. You're welcome, by the way."

"Sorry Maeve! I just didn't want you to be overstressed either."

She kissed him on the cheek with her thanks.

Maeve had everything prepared for the oven. She would put the lobster thermidor in to bake when she served their first drink. She mixed the salad and refrigerated it. She bought ice cream cake because she wanted the leftovers from it for the rest of the week. Maeve thought she would start the meat of their conversation during dessert and continue it in the living room in front of the fireplace. She had time to call Theresa and even take a short nap.

The day was winding down for Theresa and she had time to talk with Maeve. Maeve and Theresa hadn't talked much except for occasional short phone calls and on Sunday afternoons with their group.

"I hear that Desmond will be joining us on Sunday."

"Yes, Pat told me that Desmond heard about our gathering and thought he might enjoy it. He doesn't get many Sunday's off."

"Interesting, Desmond told me that that Pat was constantly talking about our Sunday afternoons."

"That makes more sense," said Theresa.

"Theresa, Pat started talking about some things he was dealing with at the college. It struck me that we have been seeing each other for months and I know so little about him. He scared me with some of his conservative opinions. Just how conservative is he?"

"Maeve, don't be frightened. Half the time Pat doesn't know what he is talking about. He might be being influenced by some of his colleagues on campus."

“Gee, he came out of Notre Dame and the spent all those years in Chicago. How could he have missed everything that was going on around him?”

“The people with whom he was speaking all the time aren’t the people who are out in the streets. They are pretty much lost in their own worlds. Pat’s dissertation was on ancient Irish fantasy literature. That is a far cry from the Christian Social Gospel or 21<sup>st</sup> century global politics.”

“Interesting observation.”

“Add that to the fact that he lives a celibate lifestyle, at least until you came into his life.”

“Believe me, he still lives a celibate lifestyle.”

“Hmm, I’m disappointed to hear that.”

“He is coming here for dinner tonight and he’ll be going back home after dinner. But, I really want to get to know him a lot better.”

“Sounds as if you have plans for him. Maeve, what you see is what you get. If you want to open his soul to reality, that is your mission, if you accept it.”

“That sounds like a challenge.”

“He has an article coming out next month about his discussions about the themes of literature. It is built on his discussions with Desmond. That should be interesting.”

“I don’t mind if he is conservative. I just don’t want to spend my life with a right-wing nut, no matter how cute he is.”

“How is everything going with you and Paul?”

“Just about the way we have planned it, so far. I am very satisfied and very happy, and so is he. We haven’t violated any big laws and we are both satisfied with that.”

“Good for you. We have to find time for long walks to keep each other posted.”

“I’d like that. You plan it. Your life is busier than mine with your travel schedule.”

“Good, we’ll set it up on one of our Sundays.”

Maeve had a nice refreshing nap, and shower. She dressed in a demure, sensible cocktail dress, and sat by the fireplace and meditated until the doorbell rang.

Pat looked very professorial in his grey tweed jacket with leather patches on the elbows. She greeted him with a hug and a long kiss.

“It is good to see you well. I was worried about you.”

“I’m sorry, Pat. We have been so busy at work and I have been travelling all over the country for one day trips and I think I was just running low on gas. I felt much better after a good night’s sleep. I didn’t have any travels this week, so I had the opportunity to spend a couple of good nights at home.

“And a fabulous home it is,” said Pat, as he looked around.

“I love it here,” said Maeve, “let me show you around.”

The first stop was the kitchen where Maeve waxed eloquently about her cooking skills. It was an amazing kitchen with a machine for every cooking requirement. Though Maeve spent part of the day preparing the

dinner, everything was at ready in the refrigerator. Maeve ask Pat if he would move the ice cream cake from the freezer to the fridge, so it would be soft enough at dessert time. Meanwhile, she poured their cocktails according to a recipe that Desmond sent.

The rest of the apartment was standard. She used one of the bedrooms as an office but there was a pullout couch if there were guests to sleep over. Otherwise it looked like a corporate office. Pat was impressed with the neatness and elegance of every room. The décor was a great reflection of Maeve's taste. When Pat mentioned that, she thanked him. She said she was very comfortable there and enjoyed being at home. When she was away for four weeks this summer, she missed it very much. Before sitting down, she tuned the TV to the classical music station and set the sound level to low. She put another log on the fire and then sat next to Pat to enjoy her cocktail.

Pat told her about the presentation he made to his committee on dealing with sex abuse on campus. Most of the committee was enthusiastic, seeing his presentation as a breakthrough. Others were opposed to having students define consent. After all, they were only students. What do they know? There was very little debate before one of the female faculty members asked who would be the most likely victims of sex abuse. The contingent of the opposed yielded, though one said that it seemed unseemly to invite students to participate.

Patrick had prepared a two-page statement of what yes, or no, could mean. He didn't use it when everyone decided to agree to the next step.

"That is a great leap forward," said Maeve. "Pick both leaders and random students. You will need a cross-section of responses."

"When did you move here, Maeve."

"About three years ago. I waited until I could afford to buy it. I didn't want to deal with the cost of a mortgage and projected that if it ever came time to sell it, my selling price would easily beat the stock market returns over the same period of time. That is one of the blessings of having a financially astute parent. Except for my parents, you are the first person who has been a guest in this apartment. Maybe I ought to host a Sunday brunch here.

They made incidental small talk for a while and Maeve picked up the glasses to refresh their drinks. When she was in the kitchen she put the lobster into the pre-heated oven.

The atmosphere couldn't be better. The river lights were a scene through the floor to ceiling windows. The lilting sounds of the quiet classical music, the gentle warmth of the fireplace, the elegant ambience of the room was seductive all by itself.

When she put the glasses down on the coffee table, and took her seat next to Pat, he put his arm around her shoulder and kissed her. Maeve had her drink in her hand and almost spilled it over them. She caught herself in time to be able to return his kiss, a little more passionately than usual.

"I love this, but the lobster is far too expensive to burn. Finish your drink and we'll go into the dining room."

Pat took his seat away from the kitchen while she brought in two salads on a silver serving tray.

"Can I help with anything," asked Pat?

"Right now, you can just be a grateful guest."

Maeve proposed a prayer and a toast. "May all nights for us be like this one, but don't expect the elegance of this evening all the time."

Pat laughed and agreed.

The salad was a clear success. It was Maeve's first taste of this salad recipe, but she didn't admit to it.

As they finished, the oven bell signaled that dinner was ready. Maeve took the salad dishes to the kitchen and rinsed them while the Lobster settled. She arranged them on a serving plate and surrounded them with pasta shells dripped with Lobster sauce, and ringed with string beans.

Pat marveled that the dish as presented was too beautiful to disturb.

"The whole purpose of the dinner is to disturb them. Those Lobsters would be very unhappy if you didn't disturb them."

Pat thought it was the best dinner he had ever eaten. "I guess you eat like this every night."

"No, you are the first person I have cooked for, except for my parents. I usually make salads and sandwiches. I buy Trader Joe's frozen meals that are excellent. I should do this more often to keep my cooking skills up to standard. I really enjoyed doing this and doing it for you makes it even more pleasurable."

"Thank you, I feel honored"

"Before you get carried away with yourself, I do need your help now. Take the ice cream cake out of the fridge and cut sizeable pieces to be placed on these delicate dessert plates. Don't drop them. I'll rinse these dishes for the dishwasher while you are doing that."

Pat carefully followed her instructions and they both arrived at the dining room table together.

"We'll have coffee and after-dinner drinks in the living room. I hope you are not driving."

"No, I am riding an Uber again."

After dessert they settled on the couch with coffee and Rob Roys.

"Pat, when is your birthday?"

"March 17<sup>th</sup>. That is why I was named Patrick."

"What is your birthday?"

"July 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene. She was a glorious person and wrote a Gospel that should have been accepted into the Canon of Sacred Scripture, except for the fact of her gender."

"I didn't know that."

"You have got a lot to learn. We have got to learn a lot more about each other."

"For instance, why did you go to Loyola for your graduate work?"

"They accepted me. They were interested in my ideas about ancient Irish literature."

"Why did you go to Immaculata?"

"Some of my friends were also accepted and I wanted to join them. Also, it provided a cross-disciplinary curriculum because I wanted to learn almost everything. I competed five years-worth of courses in four years."

"Did you keep your friends after all these years?"

"Yes, I am still close with almost all of them. Many of them are married and parents, while juggling careers, but I still keep in touch."

"Was it a hardship going to an all-girls school?"

“If you are talking about the social life, there were boys all over the place and sometimes in the wrong place. Wasn’t that the experience at St. Mary’s when you were at Notre Dame?”

“Yes, I guess it was. Paul was the serial dater. I dated but never had a steady girlfriend. I guess I was the student nerd. I had enough problems juggling lacrosse and studies.”

“I would have thought that Paul was the serious student.”

“Paul was a brilliant student. He just never let it show. It was a shock that he was 4.0 at graduation. He had his pick of graduate schools and he chose the seminary to everyone’s surprise including about a dozen hopeful women. He was doing very well until he fell for my sister.”

“The last time I checked, and I am pretty much up to date, they are chastely experiencing the glories of friendship.”

“It doesn’t seem right for a priest to be actively dating, especially with my sister who is a candidate for canonization.”

“Are you suggesting that Theresa is not a sensible girl.”

“I don’t know anymore.”

“Have you discussed it with her.”

“No, I don’t know how to broach the subject.”

“Okay, so we are lined up on opposite sides of the ball. I think their relationship is fine. They are both working with spiritual directors. They are both highly educated, spiritual people, dedicated to the mission of the Church. Think about the relationship of St. Francis and St. Clare. Think about your namesake, St. Patrick, and his friend, St. Brigid, my mother’s namesake.”

“It is hard for me to process that.”

“Think of Jesus and his friend, Mary of Magdela.”

Maeve asked if it makes a difference to him that they are on the opposite side of the ball.

“I never thought about it except for being on the same side all the time. That is the way that it seemed to me.”

“As long as I was on your side of the ball.

Let me tell you about myself. My attitudes about life are mostly liberal. I am a Democrat and not a socialist. The two should not be confused. I am feminist; women are equal, period. I support gun control. I am opposed to abortion and support the concept of the seamless fabric of life. That means that I am anti-war, opposed to the separation of children from their parents, support women’s and children’s development programs. I support the food stamp program or whatever it is called now. I am willing to fight for improvements in education. We are the only country in the western world that does not provide a college education for our people. I am a globalist. I am environmentally conscious and support the Paris Accord. I support a single payer medical system for all Americans. I support immigration. We can make the process better.

On top of that, I am an entrepreneur. I know what it means to take some very big risks. Thank God I have been successful, and we are almost through a banner year. That is something of a picture of me, though it is not exhaustive. I am a committed Catholic. I support Vatican II and recognize that if we are going to get through this sex abuse crisis, we are going to have to make significant changes. I am discouraged by our hierarchy because they are afraid of losing power. Theresa is the one who can teach them about the meaning of service. I do not mind if you don’t agree with me, but that is what makes me Maeve Garvey. Will that make a difference in our relationship?”

“Wow, where did that come from?”

“Pat, I am in love with you. If we are going to make this relationship work, we have to get to know each other better. I asked you about birthdays because that is the beginning of the realization that we don’t know each other well enough at this point after four months of dating. I want to move forward in our relationship. I’m not asking you to agree with me. I am asking you to accept me and to give me the opportunity to accept you.”

“Maeve, I haven’t even thought of some of the things that you mentioned. I didn’t know you felt that way about so many things.”

“And that is the reason we are talking about them now. I don’t expect conclusions or resolutions, I just wanted to get the cards out on the table. I want a relationship that grows in intimacy because we can talk with each other, challenge each other with new ideas; of new ways of looking at that those things that are important to life. That is what relationships are built on. I can live with it if either one of us can’t accept the position of the other. But we can always talk about it.”

“How did you get through Loyola without the Chicago mystique impacting you. It is where Obama learned The Christian Social Gospel.”

“Maeve, I was buried in classes and a dissertation.”

“Even at Chicago University.”

“I was an adjunct there. I didn’t even get to meet the other professors in my department.”

“It could be fun reeducating you. You do realize that I got involved in all of these issues through college and Law School and starting a business. I am also Doctor Garvey.”

“I almost followed Theresa into her urban ministry program. Now I want her to join my company. All in God’s good time. Before our partnership comes into play I want to establish a foundation for the Jesuit Urban Mission. I want to set it up, so it will continue as a foundation after the partnership is formed. Meanwhile, I have to find two top-notch executives.”

Maeve, I’m a little overwhelmed. I don’t know where to begin. Let me start by saying that I love you. I want what you want. I want to grow old with you, but by the same token, I don’t want to be old before we are ready. I have to admit, because I am new at St. Joe’s, I’m a little reluctant to get involved in too many things. Some of my colleagues are decidedly conservative. Their influence is rubbing off on me. I am uncomfortable because I can feel the rubbing. I haven’t been paying attention to my own convictions because I haven’t developed many of them.”

“You can always discuss them with me. You don’t have to agree with me. Some of my positions are far out but the world will eventually catch up with me. You can also discuss them with Paul; he would love that. Theresa could teach you more than you would even want to know. And, of course, Desmond is one of the best-read people that I know. You are surrounded, Pat. We can put the world in your hands. What you do with it up to you.”

“Where are *we*, Maeve?”

“Far ahead of where we started. I really love you, Pat. If you don’t love me, I’ll make you pay for dinner.”

They laughed and fell into each-other’s arms and hugged and kissed and rolled around on the couch.

“I do have a conservative streak you should know about. I want to be sure we are married before we have sex. That doesn’t mean we can’t be intimate. It means we can’t have sex. No means no. No is not an affront to you or to me either, but it will be better for us in the long run, as we grow to respect each other even more.”

“I will respect you every day of my life. Did you ask me to marry you?”

”No, that is your job whenever you are ready or think that we are ready.”

The fire went out, the candles melted down. Pat helped carry coffee cups and dessert dishes into the into the kitchen.

“Can we do this again,” asked Pat?”

“You can bet we will. It just won’t be as elaborate. I just liked the idea of showing off for you tonight.”

“Thank you for taking the lead in setting our course.”

“Hey, we both set out on this course with our eyes open. Staggering and potholes are to be expected. We are in this together, babe.”

The night door man rang up that Uber was there for Pat.

Pat kissed Maeve with an extraordinarily passionate kiss. Maeve walked him out to the elevator and finished the night with another intense kiss.

The next morning, Desmond called to see how the lobster thermidor recipe worked out.

The meal and the plan was an incredible success. She then called her mom to relay the same message.

# Irish History Trivia

In what year was the Easter Rising?	1916
In what month was it?	April
Who wrote '50 things you didn't know about 1916'?	Mick O'Farrell
Who created the Death of Cuchulainn sculpture?	Oliver Sheppard
Who travelled on 'coffin ships'?	Emigrants
Where did Michael Collins fight during the Rising?	The General Post Office
What was the IRB?	Irish Republican Brotherhood
Was Catholic emancipation seen in the former or latter half of the 19th century?	Former
Who became leader of the Home Rule Party after Isaac Butt in 1879?	Charles Stewart Parnell
Who was the leader of Cumann na mBan (the League of Women)?	Constance Markievicz
In 1691, at the siege of Limerick who led the Irish forces?	Patrick Sarsfield
Which Cumann na Gael Cabinet Minister was assassinated on July 1927?	Kevin O'Higgins
When was Douglas Hyde elected as Ireland's first President?	1938
The freedom of Cork City in November 1998 for his role in the Irish Peace Process was awarded to whom?	George Mitchell
Was Gaelic or English the main language in Ireland in the 19th Century?	English
The English Pale surrounded which city?	Dublin
The Irish Brigade fought for Franco in which war?	Spanish Civil War
In which Italian City did Daniel O'Connell die?	Genoa
Where would you find the historical site of Newgrange?	County Meath
The statues of Fidelity, Mercury and Hibernian top which building in Dublin?	The GPO, O'Connell Street
Michael Collins was killed in an ambush between Bandon and where?	Macroom
Which British PM (initials W.E.) supported Home Rule?	Gladstone
Where is he buried?	Prospect Cemetary
What marks the spot where he died?	A Stone cross

## **ON THIS DAY IN IRISH HISTORY - NOVEMBER**

### **1st**

1883 - Mater Infirmorm Hospital in Belfast takes in its first patients.

1920 - 18-year-old Kevin Barry executed for killing a British soldier.

**3rd** 1841 - Foundation stone is laid for St. Malachy's Church in Belfast.

### **4th**

1957 - Éamon de Valera attends the coronation of Pope John Paul XXIII.

2001 - Police Service of Northern Ireland established.

**5th** 1992 - The Irish government loses a vote of confidence and the Dáil is dissolved.

### **7th**

1924 - Amnesty declared for politically motivated crimes committed during the Civil War.

1940 - Éamon de Valera lets it be known that Irish ports will not be handed over to the British.

1990 - Mary Robinson is elected seventh President of Ireland.

### **8th**

1949 - Street names in any language other than English are banned in Northern Ireland.

1960 - Nine Irish soldiers serving with the United Nations are killed in the Congo.

1987 - The IRA kill eleven people at a Remembrance Service in Enniskillen.

### **9th**

1907 - The Irish International Exhibition ends after six months.

1919 - Labour leader James Larkin arrested in New York for attempting to overthrow a government.

**10th** 1966 - Jack Lynch receives his seal of office as the new Taoiseach.

**11th** 1997 - Mary McAleese inaugurated as the eighth President of Ireland.

**12th** 1957 - Brendan Behan's Borstal Boy is banned by censors.

**13th** 1991 - Defence Secretary Jim McDaid resigns following criticism of his attending an IRA funeral.

### **14th**

1866 - St Peter's Cathedral in Belfast is dedicated.

1923 - William Butler Yeats is awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

**15th** 1985 - Taoiseach Charles Haughey and British PM Margaret Thatcher sign the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

**16th** 1994 - The Fianna Fáil-Labour coalition collapses.

## **17th**

1890 - Captain Willie O'Shea divorces Kitty O'Shea, naming Charles Stewart Parnell as co-respondent.

1926 - Following the killing of two gardaí, President W.T. Cosgrave introduces the Public Safety (Emergency Powers) Bill.

1948 - The Republic of Ireland Act 1948, aimed at repealing the External Relations Act of 1936, is introduced in Dáil Éireann.

## **19th**

1913 - Irish Citizen Army founded by James Connolly to protect workers in the general lockout.

1971 - An Taoiseach Jack Lynch holds talks with British Prime Minister Harold Wilson.

**20th** 1936 - General Eoin O'Duffy leads 600 men to fight for Franco in Spain.

## **21st**

1920 - Bloody Sunday. Following the assassinations of 14 undercover British agents by Michael Collins' men, British forces kill 12 people at a GAA football match at Croke Park.

2001 - GAA abolishes 'Rule 21' so that members of the security forces and British army can play.

**22nd** 1932 - Prince of Wales opens the new parliament building in Belfast.

**23rd** 1867 - William O'Mera Allen, Michael Larkin and William O'Brien are executed at Manchester.

## **24th**

1922 - Erskine Childers is executed for the possession of a gun which Michael Collins had given him as a Christmas present.

1995 - A referendum in the Republic narrowly passes in favour of allowing divorce.

## **25th**

1890 - Charles Stewart Parnell re-elected leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party.

1892 - Douglas Hyde delivers a lecture to the Irish National Literary Society on 'the necessity of de-anglicising the Irish people'.

1913 - Irish Volunteers founded.

1948 - The Republic of Ireland Act is passed in Dáil Éireann.

**26th** 1998 - Tony Blair becomes the first British Prime Minister to address the Oireachtas.

## **28th**

1863 - First edition of The Irish People.

1905 - Sinn Féin founded.

1913 - Andrew Bonar Law addresses a huge Unionist rally in the Theatre Royal in Dublin, encouraging Ulster to resist Home Rule.

1920 - Flying column led by Tom Barry kills 16 Auxiliaries at Kilmichael in County Cork.

### **29th**

1955 - Bord na gCon set up under the Greyhound Racing Bill.

1979 - Taoiseach Jack Lynch greets EEC heads of government in Dublin.

1999 - Ten designated ministers appointed to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

### **30th**

1947 - A sixty day transport strike ends in Dublin.

1956 - Petrol rationing is introduced in response to the Suez Crisis.