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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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By

Raymond D. Aumack

Susan Boyd and Michael Garvey stood on the steps of the parish rectory, waiting for the doorbell to be answered. Susan pointed out the house across the street where Maria and Desmond now lived with Desmond's daughter. The door opened and Father Fred, red-faced and puffing, stood before them welcoming them. "I apologize for the delay. My rooms are on the third floor. I don't have an evening receptionist. If I had an ounce of foresight, on evenings when I am expecting company, I should just park here after dinner with a book or work that I have been avoiding."

"I'm sure that a high school kid would relish a job like that," said Michael.

"That used to be the case," said Fr. Fred. "In this era of child sex abuse, I didn't think it would be appropriate anymore to hire a teenager, especially when I am alone here. Someone like your sister, Maeve, once warned me about the importance of optics. When my last receptionist went off to college, I breathed a sigh of relief. What used to be a terrific job for a teenager, now created optics that I should be careful about."

"That has become the crux of her work. She walks around a company and observes things that used to be commonplace and suggests changes," said Michael.

"She even does that around our office," said Susan. "We have to be role models for our clients. I can't tell you how much I have learned just working with her."

"I used to enjoy complimenting my staff," said Michael. "Now a sincere compliment can be considered harassment."

"Pardon my casual attire," said Fr. Fred. "I hope I can feel comfortable with you without being seductive."

"Susan laughed. You just committed a crime worth hundreds of thousands of dollars."

"Ouch, let's plan this wedding before I get arrested."

He opened the schedule book. "We are planning for Saturday, May 15th. A nuptial Mass will be celebrated at 3:00 PM so that guests will have fulfilled their Sunday Mass obligation. I am the celebrant, but we can expect some Jesuit concelebrants. All the paperwork is in order. Did you bring a letter from the priest who conducted your pre-Cana conference?"

Michael gave Fr. Fred the letter confirming their pre-Cana. "It wasn't conducted, it was experienced over the course of about 200 hours. We started out with a list of things we thought we wanted to share. We wrote letters to each other and when we shared the contents of our letters, we had many more things to talk about and to add to the list. Fr. John was a perfect the referee."

"It was the most remarkable experience that any couple could have," said Susan. "We're going to offer it as one of the menu items of our Human Relations Division. It is a strategy that we can use throughout our lives."

"I don't want to be a bridezilla," said Susan. "We'll do things simply. We would like to decorate around the altar with a couple of bouquets of Spring flowers. For music we will provide singers, Jimmy and Bobby Byrne. We'll provide a pianist to work with them. We will, however, pay your regular organist/soloist. Do you have any restrictions on music?"

"I usually do, but I trust your judgment to make sure whatever you choose fits into the theme of Mass."

“My sister will be the Maid of Honor and John will be the Best Man. We will have six bridesmaids and they are all your friends as well. I couldn’t leave anyone out. Without them we wouldn’t be here. Dave Garvey will accompany me down the aisle. He wants to stop at my mom’s pew so she can be part of the handoff to Michael.”

“Finally, I am going to ask that donations be made to the food pantry in lieu of a gift.”

“Thank you, so much. I can’t tell you how grateful I am. The contribution from Maeve’s wedding was almost \$60 thousand. That takes an awful lot of financial pressure off of the parish.”

“Many of the same guests, my father’s and my own employees and business associates, will be present. He and my mom go to all their family weddings. They attended an awful lot of weddings before Maeve’s.”

“Rehearsal and rehearsal dinner on Friday the 14th, at 7:00, I almost forgot. The rehearsal dinner is at Bookbinders if you can make it.”

“I’d love to come. Manny is terrified that I am going to make him into a Catholic.”

“I know that Saturday receptions are difficult for you, but if you come for cocktails and grace at Glen Gables, we would appreciate your company.”

“I’d like that. I have weekend help that come in on Saturday. Count me in without a plus one.”

Amid laughter and good byes, Susan called Maria to see if they can stop by to say, “hello.”

Across the street, Desmond was standing in the light of the driveway to make certain that a load of gifts that arrived today were safely stored in the garage.

“Ouch,” said Susan. “I thought you guys requested donations to the Immigration Program at Maria’s parent’s parish.”

“We did,” responded Maria. “We also have envelopes filled with money that we promised to the parish. Desmond will take care of that. I’m going to start writing “thank you” notes and keep track of the gifts and the givers.”

“Come inside, we have a case of wine that we might as well open.”

“I heard about the conflict outside,” said Michael. “One of the guys in the office has a police radio and told me about it.”

“Ah, it was an ugly scene,” said Desmond.

“It was over in about five seconds,” said Maria. “By the way, you never told me about how you learned martial arts.”

“When I came here to Philadelphia, I was only fifteen. I lucked out getting a job as a bus boy at Bookbinders. I registered for high school. I did not have any adult supervision. I lived in a rooming house. Because I spoke with a foreign accent, I started getting bullied by the older kids. I went to the library and got a book on Jiu Jitsu, about the only martial art you could learn at the time. I devoured the books. About a month later a persistent bully was on my case, one of the big men on campus types. He reached to push me, and I flipped him into a somersault, and he landed nose first on the concrete. He was mess with a broken nose, two black eyes, a severe scabs on his forehead and cheekbones. I immediately reported the incident to the principal, and it was fortunate that I did. His father came in screaming that some foreigner beat up his son. The soccer coach who wanted me to play on the school soccer team saw the whole incident and confirmed my story with the principal. My soccer

skills endeared me to my teammates and then to my school mates. Our team was sectional and regional champions two years in a row. Nobody ever pushed me around again. I finished high school in three years by taking summer courses. Manny became my adult supervisor. Within several years, I became a dishwasher, then a waiter, Assistant Maître 'd and finally Maître 'd. When I started making a little money, I discovered that Manny was a very shrewd investor. When he made an investment, I also invested a few dollars. The more money I made the more I invested. By the time I married Rose, I had a pretty good bank account."

"I don't want to tell you Rosellen's story. She has earned my respect and her privacy. I had some contacts with the Detroit police. I was on a soccer club team with a friend from the Philadelphia PD who became a chief out there. When Rosellen told me her story, I simply called my friend and told him about this kid and where he could find all the evidence he needed. He is in jail now and will be extradited to Detroit in a day or two. Rosellen knows about this and I think I have said enough about that."

"How are the wedding plans working out?"

"Fine! Fr. Fred is a joy to work with."

"Yeah, he really was a big help to getting my mom on track. She is now working as a banquet manager for John at Glen Gables."

"Wow, good for her."

"Michael finished his wine and signaled that they both had to work tomorrow, as did Maria and Desmond."

On Tuesday morning, Maeve, Michael, and Brian met the judge and the attorneys from the Beame firm for a chambers meeting. They had alerted the judge that they had corroborating evidence on video. The whole assassination attempt on the Garveys was recorded.

Brian described the camera overlooking the parking lot of Glen Gables Country Club. He explained that his Father, the owner of the club, and John, the Manager, did not know of its existence until last Friday. Brian asked the judge's permission to show the video. We have it in slow motion as well as in real motion. It takes just 70 seconds, a little longer in slow motion. It was a vivid film showing every element of the attack. The attackers were hidden in the bushes with guns in their hands. When they jumped out, Theresa using her karate skills almost instantly disarmed and disabled the lead attacker. John, at almost the same time took on the attacker on their left flank, picking him up and slamming him head first into the doorpost of his father's van. Meanwhile, Dierdre flashed from out of the shadows and crunched a third gunman, disarming him. The fourth gunman pointed his gun at David. Theresa shouted "gun," jumped over Brigid, and dove, pushing the shooter to distract his shot. Simultaneously, Dierdre dove through the air to protect Dave while drawing her gun and shot the attacker in a single acrobatic move. The film clearly shows the assassin's bullet tearing through Dierdre's hair, striking John in his side. The fifth assassin started running out into the darkness of the field. He was shot and wounded by the FBI agent. That was not visible in the film. The FBI agents came into the picture with the wounded assassin they captured.

Brian stated that the video corroborates the depositions.

"Your honor, may I submit this video as evidence. I have a copy for the defense and one for the court."

"Ed Beame, for the defense, requested a day to have the film evaluated for authenticity."

"Granted," said the judge. "Take two days, you will need them. Court will resume on Thursday at 10:00 AM. If you excuse me, I will alert the Jury and the press."

The prosecutorial team with Dave and Brigid. Theresa, John and Dierdre, retired to the Glen Gables Club for lunch and a debriefing.

“What do you think, John.”

“They have two options, a guilty plea and Nolo Contendere. My guess is that the court will not allow that because there was a death and a wounded victim. The court will want the felons to acknowledge their guilt. Either one is subject to approval from us. There will be significant jail time.”

“We can do a little plea-bargaining which may be difficult if Sean has the same legal team for himself.”

“Next up is Sean Michael, the mastermind of the plot. They don’t know that we have sourced the emails yet.”

“How are we going to keep John out of it?”

Dave spoke up. “After we identified Sean Michael’s computer, I asked one of our investigators to source it as well. We’ll try to protect his identity. The FBI has also sourced it on their own.”

“They are going to make a deflectionary effort to distract the jury by highlighting Dad’s contacts with the SEC and the FBI. There was nothing wrong with that and, in fact, it was the right thing to do. They will try to make it look shady to soften the jury. We have at least a month before there is a trial. We’ll depose everyone and win the day with hard facts. Oops! Sorry Brian. This is your show.”

“Dad, it is a wonder for us to hear the ‘Lion of the Law’ roar.”

“We’ll have to solidify Sean Michael’s contact with the cartel. There is to be no doubt of the connection.”

“Now,” said Michael, “let me introduce to you to John’s new Banquet Manager.”

Peggy Boyd came out to greet them.

June Gilliam came home to Brians’s lavish apartment at the edge of the center of the city. She was exhausted from her work at the Jesuit Mission, but elated by it as well. She thought that while she loved teaching, she never realized that work could be so satisfying. Ever, the perfectionist, she was over-doing it and she knew that. She had asked Fr. Jim for a week off which he granted. As Jim looked around and observed everything that June had accomplished in less than a year, he was perpetually amazed, The Loyola Urgent Care Center was humming along and had become self-sustaining. It had a mortgage for a new X-Ray machine, but they were able to pay for it with revenues earned by the Center. Dr. Tom Bejgrowicz was the clinic’s medical director and was a marvelous physician and an astute businessman. She also had a very competent Accountant/Business Manager, Hugh Quinn’s son, Sean, who worked extremely well with Dr. Tom. The clinic had a staff of three physicians, a physician’s assistant, and three nurses. They averaged treating forty to sixty patients a day. The clinic was a much needed and welcome health center in the neighborhood.

They also sold insurance at the Mission Center that provided affordable health care and was extremely profitable. The agent was still relatively young, in his fifties, and semi-retired. Although he earned well, he always had the dream of giving back to the community and was recommended by one of his Jesuit friends.

The Mission maintained a high level of spirituality with the daily noon Mass filling the lobby with attendees staying for a subsidized lunch that helped build community, and supported the cafeteria from nourishing, low-priced lunches.

The Jesuits and the volunteers were doing an excellent job doing outreach in the community and spiritual programming, that June insisted on providing for them, stimulated them spiritually, theologically, and

continually developing social consciousness. It was a great example of St. Ignatius' concept and practice of "Mysticism in the Marketplace."

Of course, this was all started with the infusion of \$4 million from the Gala, organized by Maeve and Theresa. Soon, they would start on developing a golf tournament fundraiser. Grace O'Malley, one of June's college friends, and a friend from their Sunday group had already volunteered to chair the event. She is a Sotheby's executive.

June had an assistant who could keep everything together with help from Fr. Jim and she asked for about ten days off. The place was humming along according to her strategic plan so she could relax a bit.

Munching on Theresa's coffee and scones, Maeve and Susan engaged with their usual morning banter. Maeve looked a little out of sorts and Susan asked if she felt well.

"I feel fine," said Maeve. "I took another pregnancy test this morning and it turned up negative again. We've been married for three months and nothing is happening yet."

"You are putting an awful lot of pressure on the muse to create that song," said Theresa.

"What do you mean," asked Maeve.

"Well, in stress management 101, we learned that stress is a leading block to fertility."

"I'm not stressed about anything."

"Then you'll have to speak with the muse about the anxiety she is encountering."

"What do you recommend, Ms. Freud?"

"Just relax and have a good time."

"Hmmm! You might have something there."

"On that note, girl's day and dinner at Glen Gables for the wedding party. Saturday, two weeks from now." said Susan, just before they drifted off to their respective offices.

Maria and Desmond spent their Saturday sorting through wedding gifts. Desmond recommended that they go through the money gifts first. Acknowledge the gift, deposit the money, and send it off to the parish. Maria, ever organized, had a separate book to list the giver and the gift, and document the acknowledgement. They spent the entire day doing just that. Desmond wrote acknowledgements in his unique, Irish-style hand. It looked almost like a Gaelic script. He announced that they would send the parish \$24,050. Surely, some guests followed instructions. I will check with Fr. Camillo and find out who gave gifts in our name to the parish immigration fund. We'll start opening the gift packages on Monday.

What will we do with gifts that we can't use?

We'll give them to the Jesuit Mission or to St. Paul's. We'll acknowledge the giver's generosity. Also, there will be gifts that we can use. We can spread out the work throughout the week and a big task will be out of the way. Our queen-sized bed and mattress should be arriving next week along with the bedroom set that we picked out.

I'll have to arrange to bring my books over here. Our office furniture should arrive next week.

“Gosh, we settled in here very easily. A lot has happened in the last three weeks.” said Maria.

“That is because of your gift for organization,” smiled Desmond as he kissed her cheek.

This was Desmond’s weekend off and he joined Maria and Rosellen for Mass and the afternoon brunch. As always, they gathered outside the church before Mass. Grace continued to amaze because she has a different escort each week. It is usually difficult to bring a date to Mass each week. Not every guy will bite at that kind of date. They all seem to be Catholic and they all seem to enjoy themselves. The Garvey brothers seemed to be winding up for a raucous lunch. Maeve observed them with a smile. Working together in the courtroom was a wonderful experience for the four Garveys. As they were going up the stairs to the church, Dave and Brigid arrived and that would add a little faux dignity to the group. Happily Patrick also seemed to be winding up for some fun.

Fr. Fred greeted everyone as they entered the church. He was fully vested and ready for the entrance procession. As soon as he was ready, the organist pealed out, *Lift High the Cross* as the cross bearer led the choir and the celebrant to the main altar. The congregational singing made it a jubilant sound setting the scene for a beautiful worship and prayer experience.

The Gospel reading was about Jesus encounter with the Samaritan woman. Fr. Fred used the scriptures to deliver a powerful but beautiful homily on the role of women in the ever-emerging Kingdom of God. He finished dramatically with a roll call of some the great women leaders of the Church from Mary of Magdela to Dorothy day, finishing his litany including all the women of the parish and the women present in the congregation, pray for us.

As he walked back to his chair in the stunned silence of the church, John Garvey started to clap. The entire congregation stood up and clapped. Fr. Fred stood quietly and when the applause started to finish, he introduced the Creed.

After Mass, the procession of cars made their way over to nearby Cherry Hill, New Jersey, to their Sunday afternoon Italian hideaway. The conversation focused on the beauty of the Mass they just celebrated. Grace and Rosellen were in tears as the group reflected on the joy of their morning. They discussed the Sermon, especially about the role of women in the church and the community. June asked Brigid, as a ‘spokesperson’ for the previous generation about her thoughts.

Brigid started to speak softly and slowly. “We raised our children to reflect our own attitudes. First of all, there is no room for prejudice in our thinking. We welcome and love ethnic diversity. That is the way the world is supposed to work. We are built to love, and sex is only part of it. Was Patrick sinful to ordain my namesake Brigid? Look at the role she had in the conversion of Ireland. Theresa, you did a marvelous job in the development of the Jesuit Urban Mission. June what you have done in a year there is nothing short of amazing. You had a marvelous team of players that included, Maria, Theresa, and my daughter. You did a marvelous job to raise the money to build the future. Dierdre, Susan and Grace joined you, and here you are, soon to be my daughters’ in law. Each of you are the most exceptional women anyone could imagine. Dierdre, Theresa, and John, we wouldn’t be here today without you in our lives. Rosellen, I knew and loved your mom. She was a saint with a wicked sense of humor and was the very soul of goodness. You couldn’t make a better choice in your life than to hang onto the women with whom we dine today. I am so proud that Maeve is the catalyst for all of this. I observe in wonder what you have accomplished from very humble beginnings of your company. I hope I live long enough to see the fulfillment of the promise of your life going forward. I have to confess that I don’t think there are many in my age group who think the way I do. I learned as we went along from the wonderful man I married. Our business and our family were always team enterprises. We started with nothing but promise and hope. You will notice that my three boys are as different as any three boys could be. The exception being that all three are faith-filled, faithful, and just plain good persons.”

There was stunned silence until Maeve got up from her chair and reached down to kiss her mom on the cheek. As she wiped her own tears away, she simply said, “Thank you, Mom.”

There was a universe of emotion in her gratitude.

Dave spoke up for the men in the room.

Tommy Farrell, you are a hero and I pray that our country never forgets your contribution. We certainly won't. You will note that I have a hundred of the finest lawyers in the region and state working for me. But my “go to person” in a clutch is John. I am very proud that Brian and Michael are considered to be the finest attorneys in attorney-rich Philadelphia but even more proud of your integrity and goodness. Charlie, I just met you this morning. I know nothing about you, but I welcome you to this extraordinary gathering. It is your good fortune to have connected with Grace and this wonderful group.

Maeve, you are not one of the boys, but you are Saint Wonder Woman. May God continue to be with us all.”

Brigid then chimed in to acknowledge the two married men in the group. “Desmond and Patrick, you are the most daring of men to commit yourselves to the extraordinary women you have married. Only super achievers could be bold enough to merge with these wonderful women who happen to be my daughters, though Maria is a surrogate.”

With that Theresa said something that was hysterically funny, and the gathering changed to a noisy joyful event.

The afternoon passed with good humor, good food, and good wine.... lots of wine.

During the course of the afternoon, Susan connected with Rosellen and they made a date for dinner on Thursday. Michael would be in Indianapolis and Susan would pick her up at 5:30 PM at her home shared with Desmond and Maria.

During the course of the week, after a wonderful meal with Patrick prepared by Maeve, she discussed her concerns about not being pregnant yet. Patrick listened to her concerns and supported her. He told her that from what he could observe, it sometimes took much longer than that. She ovulated on time every month. Patrick mentioned that he read someplace that it was a little difficult for women in their thirties to become pregnant right away.

“I guess I am one of those women.”

“Let's give it a few more months. If it doesn't happen in five months, we will go to a doctor and find out what we can do to promote it.”

“I can't wait to knock down the wall into the apartment next door to make extra bedrooms.”

“Relax about it love. We are both healthy. We'll give it a little more time.

Susan pulled into Desmond's and Maria's driveway to pick up Rosellen. They drove to the Glen Gables Country Club, less than a mile away.

Peggy Dowd greeted them at the dining room entrance. “Mom, I didn't know you were playing head waitress.”

“I’m not,” said Peggy. “I want to learn everyone’s job and the best way to do that is to work at the job while I have this learning opportunity. I will present my different experiences at the staff meeting tomorrow.”

The dining room was quiet. Only two tables were occupied, and Peggy reserved the table at the window overlooking the tenth tee. It was still daylight and the blessing of daylight-saving time, the view looking down the fairway was refreshing.

“It has been a long time since I was in a place like this. Other than Bookbinders, I don’t think I was ever in a place like this.”

“Michael’s dad owns the club and John is the Club Manager. The club has an elected Board of Directors, John’s decision, and they provide oversight of John’s activities with the management of the club. John has been fairly innovative, and the Board has merciless scrutiny of his innovative activity.

David and Brigid started out with nothing. She got a job working in the kitchens of the convent and the college. The ever-frugal nuns paid her a barely living wage, but gave her a scholarship and a dorm residency. Brigid graduated from Chestnut Hill with honors as an immigrant from Ireland. She came here with almost nothing. They met at a Villanova mixer and David graduated from law school at the same time that Brigid graduated. They married the following summer. Dave passed the Bar Exam in September and they opened an office in town. Today Dave owns the largest firm in Philadelphia with a hundred attorneys, plus secretaries, paralegals, researchers, investigators and security staff. Dierdre is the number two in the Security Department. She is a highly decorated combat veteran.

“Yes, I saw the award on television. And Theresa also received an award.”

“Demure, dainty, pretty, well-spoken, and comedic Theresa is a trained killer. She earned a black belt in Karate while pursuing her degrees at Villanova. She upgraded and rebuilt the Jesuit Urban Mission and retired from that a year ago after handing it over to June. She, June, and Maeve plotted the future for years and now the future is here and what a future it is,”

“But let’s talk about us,” said Susan as two glasses of white wine appeared at the table. “I was lucky. I got to go to college on a scholarship to York University because my father didn’t believe in the education of women. At York, I got into the party scene. Although I graduated a virgin, I was known as one of the faster girls on campus. York was a good place, but I was intrigued by the bad boys and dressed and acted the part of bad girl. Everyone was shocked when I graduated with honors. After graduation, I got a job in an accounting office and started studies at Villanova as a night student for my master’s degree. I hated my job and I hated myself. I was dating a real badass guy who was really nasty to me. I should have run very fast in another direction. Well he beat me up and raped me. I was devastated. I didn’t know where to turn and had no one to advise me. My father dominated the household. I was never a church goer. My father was adamantly anti-religious and especially anti-Catholic. The church wasn’t any part of my life at that time. I was upset with my life, upset with myself. I couldn’t talk to my mother because he dominated our household and kept my mom under his thumb. I guess I wasn’t very far from being suicidal. I had a rented apartment that I now own. My mother lives there now. On the way home from work one day I walked past St. Rita’s Church. I went inside and totally vented to God. I was hurt; I was angry; I was lost and lonely. I was never going to go with another man again. I was crying hysterically. I didn’t know what I was going to do, where I was going to go; I was totally lost. As I was walking out, I ran into one of the priests in the back of the church. “I think we should talk,” he said.

He took me into his office in the rectory. I really unloaded on him even more severely than I unloaded on God. He listened to me. My language wasn’t pretty, but he still listened without even blinking. When I finished, I asked him why he listened to me. He said that his feeling in the church was that I had gone through hell. It was his job to keep people out of hell, even the versions they create for themselves. I told him about my non-religious background. It didn’t faze him a bit.

When I finished, he asked if I considered that maybe God was really in the church and listened to my diatribe.

I looked at him in wonderment, “Ya think?. I don’t even know anything about God.”

“Ah, but God knows all about you and now, I do as well. I realize that you have to work your way into that thought, but I am here for you.”

“Can you help me,” I asked? “No promises,” he said, “but I think I can help you help yourself.”

“I was intrigued by his honesty and his confidence. He introduced me to a group of absolutely wonderful people.”

He saw me several times a week and when my attitude was totally improved, I asked him if I could get what he has. I had started going to Mass at St. Rita’s. He introduced me to their RCIA program, a program for non-Catholic candidates for baptism. A few months later, at the Easter Vigil, I made my first Confession, first Communion at the Easter Vigil Mass and the Sacrament of Confirmation. I still stop by and visit with them. My mom is a regular at St. Rita’s and that same priest was a big help to her. I’ll tell you my mom’s story another time.

During this period, I met Maeve Garvey. It was an ad for an assistant at a new company. I may have been the only person to respond but I got the job. The technicality of the job was easy. We didn’t know if we would last a month. I let Maeve become a role model. My whole attitude changed even further. I began to dress like her, clean up my language and speak like her, changed my hairstyle and makeup. I was finishing my MBA and Maeve hired a business superstar who was retired but still wanted to work. He guided the ship of a fledgling business through the rocky shoals. As the business started to do well, Maeve asked me one day if I was willing to stay with her. I didn’t want to go anywhere else. She promised that there would be great rewards for me if I stayed with her. It was fun working there and I really learned a lot from Maeve and Dave. The three of us became a management team. She hired Jimmy as a sale’s person, and finally Theresa came onboard. Know that there is a hope-filled future based on efficiency, decency, competence, initiative, respect, and love.

Finally, Maeve invited me to Thanksgiving Dinner at her apartment, and I met Michael. We’ll be married in May. I have come from the depths of despair full circle with hope, faith in the future, and the experience of love. I have a spiritual life and now my mom has one as well. This is all new, undeserved, and unexpected. That is what I learned. That faith is a totally undeserved, unexpected gift from God.”

There was a pause while the waitress brought their dinners.

“Why did you tell me all of this,” asked Rosellen?

“Because, while I know no details about your life, I somehow knew that you were estranged from Desmond. And now you are back. I simply wanted to give you the opportunity to fit in.”

“Did my father or Maria set this up?”

“Not at all. As far as I know, neither one of them are aware we are meeting tonight.”

Rosellen sat quietly, fiddling with her food with her fork.

“I’m sorry, said Susan. “Maybe I was being too presumptuous.”

“Not at all,” said Rosellen. “Well maybe a little. No one has never been this nice to me without having an agenda of some sort.”

“No agenda,” said Susan. “I just had a sense that maybe we had somewhat parallel stories.”

“I could never be like the women I met yesterday.”

“You may be selling yourself short. What makes you think you can’t?”

“You’re all beautiful women who are super achievers. I am neither.”

“You are selling yourself short. You are a beautiful woman.”

In high school, I was caught up with a group of badass kids. They were exciting and they were fun. They were daring and they had a sense of adventure. We got into smoking pot and we were sexually loose. I felt I was light years ahead of the other girls at my school. I was going to drug infused concerts. I didn’t know my mother was dying and I became distant from her because she had a goodness that I didn’t want in my life. My dad worked restaurant hours and was never around. My mom wasn’t sick for very long before she died. I had no one, or at least I thought so. I took off with my boyfriend, Whitey Bulgarski, now in jail. I left home to follow a heavy metal band. We never married but we were living together, if you can call that living. The band broke up and we were in Detroit. We had a roach and rat-infested apartment and Whitey would go off on his own, sometimes for days at a time. I found out that I was pregnant and when I told him, he was very unhappy about it, to say the least. He disappeared for a couple of days and when he came back, he was extremely nasty. He had been drinking but he seemed sober. He wanted me to have an abortion. There is no way I would consent to that and he became enraged. He hit me hard on the side of the head and I think he knocked me out. He started kicking me in the abdomen until I was hemorrhaging. When he walked out the door, I called 911. I must have passed out because I woke up in the hospital. They were wonderful to me there. They kept asking me a lot of questions about who my husband was. I was honest about not having a husband but mentioned that Whitey was the father of my child. It was then they told me that the baby was dead and that I needed surgery to repair the damage he had done. They removed my uterus and I was devastated because I would never give birth. A police officer came in and sadly, I lied to him. I told him that I stood on a chair to reach a cabinet and fell off. Of course, he knew the damage assessment. A priest came in, the hospital chaplain. He spent the entire afternoon with me. I told him the whole story including that I wanted to be like my mother. He held my hand while we spoke and told me that everything that we talked about would be my confession and he gave me absolution. He also anointed me. I still called it the last rites. He called it the Sacrament of Recovery. I asked him if I was dying. He told me that I had a long and productive life ahead of me and that I should go back and try to start over with my father.

He had arranged for me to go to a woman’s shelter until I was fully recovered. I stayed two weeks. He had also given me enough money to get home. I called my dad, and here I am.

Susan, I want to be like you and the other women.

Maeve was my role model. I didn’t want to be Maeve. I wanted to discover myself. That is a long process. You don’t have to be anyone but your own good self and get on that same road of discovery. Discovery is recovery. This group will love you to pieces.

The waiter brought the dessert du jour, compliments of Mr. Garvey.

“Well, we can’t say no to a gift, can we. Speaking of gifts, would you do me the honor of being a bridesmaid at our wedding in May? You had lunch with the other bridesmaids last Sunday.”

A flabbergasted Rosellen said, “Thank you. I will be delighted to be your bridesmaid.”

“No, thank you. You are related to us as Desmond’s daughter and Maria’s step daughter. Maria, June, and Theresa are Maeve’s surrogate sisters. They adopted Brigid to be their mother away from home. Maria and June have marvelous parents. You will get to meet them, Wear any kind of gown that you would like. Maria might have one in her closet that you can wear.”

”I have a gown that Maria just bought for me. I’m going to be the Maid of Honor for their local wedding in two weeks.”

“I know that. Most of Philadelphia will be asking about the beautiful girl in the wedding party. You’ll be like a debutante.”

“That will be an interesting new role for me. Thank you, Susan. I’m glad this dinner worked out. I want to be like my mother. I want to be part of this group of friends. I want to go to college. I want to have a normal life. I want to leave all the craziness behind me. I want to make myself into the person God intended me to be.”

On this Day in Irish History

June

1st 1944 - Fianna Fáil wins the general election.

2nd 1942 - Speed limits are introduced to reduce wear on tyres.

4th 1984 - US President Ronald Reagan addresses both houses of the Oireachtas.

7th 1921 - James Craig is elected first Prime Minister of Northern Ireland.

1944 - Further rationing of electricity is announced.

1996 - Garda Jerry McCabe is shot dead by the IRA in Limerick.

2001 - Ireland rejects the Nice Treaty in a referendum.

8th 1886 - Home Rule Bill is rejected, triggering riots in Belfast.

9th 1903 - University of Dublin agrees to award degrees to women.

10th 1961 - Prince Ranier and Princess Grace of Monaco are received in Dublin.

1983 - Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams is elected MP for West Belfast.

11th 1843 - Tuam is the location of the first of a series of Monster Meetings calling for Repeal.

12th 1986 - Two giant pandas arrive at Dublin zoo.

13th 1951 - Éamon de Valera becomes Taoiseach with a tiny majority.

14th 1928 - Amendment to the Court of Justice Bill ensures certain judges must have competency in Irish.

15th 1977 - Fianna Fáil win the general election.

1988 - IRA kill six British soldiers in Lisburn.

16th 1871 - Westmeath Act allows detention without trial.

1904 - James Joyce meets Nora Barnacle, and later sets Ulysses on this day.

1922 - A general election in Ireland shows 75% support the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

1997 - National University of Ireland, Maynooth, comes into existence.

18th 1969 - French President Charles de Gaulle meets President De Valera in Dublin.

1992 - Referendum in the Republic approves the Maastricht Treaty.

20th 1890 - St George's covered market is opened in Belfast.

1936 - Irish government declares the IRA an illegal organisation.

22nd 1911 - Sinn Féin protest Irish participation in the coronation of King George V.
1932 - 31st Eucharistic Conference opens in the Pro-Cathedral, Dublin.

23rd 1914 - Government of Ireland Bill introduced to the House of Lords.
1929 - Pontifical High Mass at Phoenix Park marks the centenary of Catholic emancipation.
1993 - Dáil Éireann passes a bill to decriminalise homosexuality.

24th 1973 - Éamon de Valera retires from office aged 90.

25th 1938 - Douglas Hyde is inaugurated as the first President of Ireland.
1945 - Seán T. O'Kelly is inaugurated as the second President of Ireland.
1959 - Éamon de Valera is inaugurated as the third President of Ireland.
1966 - Éamon de Valera is inaugurated for a second term as President.
1970 - Bishops lift the ban on Catholics attending Trinity College Dublin.
1973 - Erskine Childers is inaugurated as the fourth President of Ireland.

26th 1887 - Highest temperature ever recorded in Ireland (33.3C, measured at Kilkenny Castle).
1949 - 80,000 people attend a Pioneer Total Abstinence Society meeting at Croke Park.
1991 - The wrongful convictions of the Maguire Seven are quashed.
1996 - Crime reporter Veronica Guerin murdered in Dublin.

27th 1963 - US President J. F. Kennedy addresses both houses of the Oireachtas.
1998 - The Republic of Ireland qualifies for entry into the Economic and Monetary Union of the EU.

30th 1922 - Anti-Treaty forces storm the Four Courts and take 33 prisoners.
1932 - The Tailteann Games open in Croke Park.
1981 - Fine Gael leader Dr Garret Fitzgerald is elected Taoiseach.