

Erich Romberg

Mystical stories in and about Ireland

About the stories in the stories

Vol. 2

Dedication

The Art

Storytelling is an intimate and interactive art. A storyteller tells from memory rather than reading from a book. A tale is not just the spoken equivalent of a literary short story. It has no set text, but is endlessly re-created in the telling. The listener is an essential part of the storytelling process. For stories to live, they need the hearts, minds and ears of listeners. Without the listener there is no story.



www.storytellersofireland.org

Erich Romberg

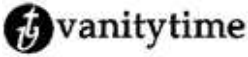
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Vol. 2

Dangerous encounter on the One Man's Pass

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Foreword

In the foreword to the first volume, the author goes into detail about his motivation for publishing the series of stories. In the following volumes, he confines himself to the content of the respective volume.

As in the first volume, the author gives voice to fictional narrators in this second volume. The only thing that is real is the way in which the stories are told, as experienced by the author, and to some extent the background to the stories told. The author leaves it up to the attentive reader to judge which stories could have a real background. But be careful, it is easy to be deceived.

In the first story, the narrator finds himself on death row. He is said to be a parricide.

In the title story, the narrator ventures up the legendary One Man's Pass on the cliffs of Slieve League one day despite his fear of heights. At a particularly narrow point, of all places, where no two people can pass each other, he has a dangerous encounter with a stranger who moves safely up here.

Nobody wants to back down, but does he have a choice? Then the stranger makes a surprising proposal.

In the third story, the narrator picks up an old hitchhiker in Kinnegad late at night in stormy weather and is drawn by her into a maelstrom of eerie stories dating back to the sixteenth century. Has he fallen into the night of the

eternal judgement of blood, a curse from the past? On this night, the devil takes a traveller every 70 years at the hands of an old woman who joins him on the road.

The author then gives the floor to a storyteller from Donegal. He tells four stories:

How do you become a dream designer? The first story provides the answer. The author has borrowed a little from Novalis here.

In the second story, he tells of a man who must have realised for a moment that his vanity was nothing.

The third story is about a ruler whose greed for power and vanity lead to his downfall.

The last story is about addiction, deception and self-deception.

The author really lets it rip in the last story. It is guaranteed to have no deeper meaning. As Albert Einstein so aptly put it:

Even the senseless still has a loose meaning.

About love (poetry)

Soul, your fairest brightest gift,
Orpheus this once sang about,
is your most sacred desire,
is the womb that unites us.

Joy that is your holy lyre,
lets your loveliest song ring out,
Love is called your precious giftedness,
Out of chaos, she gave us life.

Soul, your fairest brightest gift,
Entity of earliest time,
just like Gaya, our mother,
Seed you have prepared to sow.

Soul, in blooming summer time,
you weave us a golden dress,
let us fall in loving arms,
dwelling there for all our time.

Time and vanity (poetry calligramm)

Fleeing his transience, human being creates foolish things at the fairground of life.

He wants to erect unmistakable monuments, proof of being, of having been.

Like a drowning man, he clings to the skeleton of his individuality.

Extroverted, he makes his mark in order to be recognised.

But time is the incorruptible enforcer of the vanity.

Years and millennia pass all over everyone,

over man and his sad individuality;

over all that he has ever been,

he had thought or created.

Even the greatest of us

is devoured by the

wild predator

time.

A memorable dream

On a warm weekend night in summer, when the hustle and bustle of the disco at the Cill Aodain Court Hotel had died down, I sat with a few friends in Joyce's. Paul locked the door and drew the curtains in front of the windows. The lights were dimmed and a peat fire lit. Joyce's didn't have a night licence. First, they had a drink. Then Paul asked if anyone wanted to tell a story. I said that someone had told me a dream years ago, which, as usual, he had not forgotten and would never forget.

I asked the group what they thought about the fourth commandment from the second book of Moses. Very spontaneously, everyone pretty much agreed that it should be obeyed exactly as it is written in the Bible. I followed up:

"So, you should put your parents on a pedestal, no matter what they did to you?"

"What do parents do to a child?" asked one of the group, "a slap behind the ears? That never hurt anyone."

How did he know that it wouldn't have harmed anyone, are there any studies?

There's no need for studies, everyone has had a spanking or two as a child and they are all healthy and coping with life.

I asked if anyone had ever heard of Munchausen's proxy syndrome.

Parents deliberately hurt their children and then take care of them in public.

Nobody would do such a thing, they were sure.

But, I said, the English paediatrician Roy Meadow was the first to write about such cases from his practice in 'The Lancet' in 1977. Thousands of cases are now known. Then I said:

"Well, I didn't really want to talk about that, people who are more familiar with it will do that. I just needed a transition to my next story. I'll tell it as if I'd had the dream myself. I can't guarantee that it was told in exactly the same way, but the essentials are included. Just imagine that the protagonist of the dream experienced what I have described above. Or he has other valid reasons why he cannot honour his father and mother, as required by the fourth commandment. No third party is allowed to judge this; only the person concerned can judge. I am sending this in advance so that you do not judge my protagonist too quickly. After all, he didn't murder his parents, he

dreamt that he had done it. I have the impression that the dreamer's subconscious has triggered something that he had repressed for a long time. A tin whistle is strangely interwoven in this dream. That's why I called this story 'The Whistle':"

The Whistle

I can't even play her properly. Don't get me wrong, I can play her, but not the way I want to.

My whistle is handmade, a genuine Overton tin whistle. I own many tin whistles, English ones made of steel, Irish ones made of brass, in C major, in D major, in every key. They sound tinny and shrill, but none of them is like her.

When I hold my whistle in my hands, she feels soft and warm. She is made of matt aluminium and has the six holes of a tin whistle, but she is something special. The way she feels is the way she sounds. Not that you think she's easy to play. I mean, it's as easy to play as a tin whistle- technically, but she's not easy to speak to her soul. My tin whistle has a soul. So you have to play she with soul to ignite her warmth and fire. Used without feeling, she blocks. She simply stops making sounds. Then I knock her out because she is clogged with saliva. Then she plays for a while, but then she refuses

again. She can be very stubborn, but on those days, when she feels soft and warm, she is willing, then she makes me believe that I am playing her, but she is playing me. I close my eyes and hold her in my hands, soft and warm. A melody resonates in me that she projects, a warmth that she radiates, a fire that fills the room. In these moments we are one, not whistle and flutist, but just me.

Now I'm sitting here, on death row - without her. I wasn't given the time to look for her. Yes, you can believe me, I should have looked for her at the crucial moment. Forgetting her was normal for me, how often had I misplaced her. At times I didn't even think about her, I lived my life without her. But from time to time, often in difficult times, I missed her. I became restless and obnoxious. I just wanted to find my whistle. Like a man possessed, I searched for her, turned flats upside down and accused friends of stealing her. In those moments, I realised that I couldn't live without her. I found her again and again, she spoilt me with her most beautiful sounds, she felt soft and warm. She never took offence at my neglect. How often was she especially loving towards me after a long period of carelessness.

At those times, her sounds resonated with the vibrations of my soul.

I'm sitting here waiting to die. I think I killed my father, or my mother. Maybe I killed them both, I don't know for sure. They told me I was a parricide and that's why I had to die. I realised that, because in this country parricides have to die. But they taught me that you don't kill parents. I did it anyway. They taught me that you have to honour and love your father and mother, but I killed them anyway. Now I sit here and wait for my just punishment. Yesterday, my brother and sister visited me. I asked them to bring me my whistle, but they said that I am evil because I killed my father and mother.

They loved me very much, but I didn't thank them.

That's why I deserve to die. I realised that. They didn't want to look for my whistle.

That was yesterday, and they said they wouldn't come back - until then.

I sit here alone, waiting to die, missing my whistle. I hear footsteps that I know are coming to me.

It's my carer. He looks at me with compassion.

"You will be executed on Monday. The request for a pardon has been rejected."

I look this poor man in the eye, he is visibly affected.

"It's only a small step," I try to comfort him.

"I know," he says, "but it would be so easy to change that. I've realised for so long that nobody needs to be executed, but there's nothing I can do about it."

I look at my warder. He's sitting huddled on my cot, a heap of misery. I feel very sorry for him, this poor man.

Suddenly the colour of his face changes, he seems determined, but his eyes still show hopelessness.

"Let me do something for you - please."

I don't have to think:

"I need my whistle, an aluminium tin whistle. I couldn't find her when they came to pick me up."

At this moment, the guard's face brightens.

"Is she an Overton that sometimes feels soft and warm?"

He looks at me hopefully. I don't have to explain anything to him, he is also a whistle player.

"I'll find her!" he says.

There are still three nights until Monday, but I'm not worried. My warder will find her.

Another guard arrives on Saturday - he's not a whistle player. He tells me that his colleague is looking for something important, but he doesn't know what.

On Sunday evening, I hear those footsteps again, which I know are coming to me. With a beaming face, my warder hands me the whistle.

"Everything will be fine now," he says. I take her and say: "Yes!"

He looks at me and admonishes me:

"But don't play until tomorrow when they've picked you up. I'll be with you."

I look at him lovingly and reassure him:

"You can go now, it's all done."

The next morning, I hear many footsteps that I also know are coming towards me. I clutch my whistle tightly.

The cell door flies open and grim faces look at me. An important-looking man dressed in black reads to me from an important-looking document that I have killed my father or my mother, or both. In any case, I would be hung by the neck until death. They lead me through a long dark corridor. An indeterminate number of people walk in front of me and another indeterminate

number walk behind me. We enter a high room with a platform in the centre. A gallows with a noose made of thick rope dangling about fifty centimetres above the floor of the platform protrudes from it. I know this is the noose that will be placed around my neck.

There are a lot of people in the execution room, they all want to see a parricide die. I can see my brother and sister in the front row. Sitting near them are nephews, nieces, uncles and aunts. They are all waiting for the brother, uncle or nephew to be executed for killing their parents, aunt, uncle, brother or sister. They all know that I deserve this punishment.

As I stand at the top of the platform, this important-looking official reads from the important-looking document that I have killed my father, or mother, or both, and will therefore be hanged by the neck until death occurs. I see my brother and sister applauding in the first row of spectators. My eyes search for my keeper, but they can't find him. The whole time I clutch my whistle tightly with my right hand, but the absence of my keeper worries me. The important-looking official has just finished reading from that very document. He looks at me and asks if I have any other requests.

At that moment, someone taps me on the shoulder. I look around and recognise my guard, he is the executioner. He looks me kindly in the eye and says:

"Ask them to play one last piece on your whistle."

I am allowed to do so and my warder puts the noose round my neck.

"Have faith in me and in your whistle," he says.

I take her in both hands and she feels soft and warm.

Undeterred, she plays 'Once Upon a Time in the West', the melody of which I could never remember.

"Trust your whistle," my executioner repeats and pulls the lever to the trapdoor.

The flap opens and the melody of death drifts lonesomely on the wind.

"Then my protagonist woke up and the melody ' Once Upon a Time in the West ' was still ringing in his ears."

The redeemed self (poetry)

Worldliness slips away from the ego,
it flows without restraint.
The meagre nourishment is consumed.
It clings desperately to the now.

Maya is essence-free,
transformation to the point of dissipation.
Redemption is promised by a reflection on the horizon,
a luminescent myth.

Projection from infinity.
Being strives longingly towards the absolute,
creating in order
to escape its dissolution.

Eating one's fill of the unattainable goal,
a piece of eternity.
Dilating towards one's own creator,
creating from the ashes.

Rising like a phoenix.
The myth beckons from infinity.
The premonition of the absolute
speaks from his creations.