



eoin

Friends, family and clients from all over the world filed into the quaint Catholic Church in County Kerry. Two nephews from Australia, a CEO from Boston, a lifetime client from France and a prince from the Middle East - entourage in tow - had made the journey. The pews were packed. Some guests made the trip over the windy road from Dublin, while others had journeyed from up north to attend the service. Hoards of locals crammed into the chapel. Every shop and business in the district had closed their doors for the day; such was the love the local community had for Eoin.

Father Doherty gave an uplifting homily. Liam Clifford read the eulogy. He was a lifelong friend and former village postmaster who spoke fondly with jokes and stories strung together from Eoin's life. After he delivered the eulogy, Liam read heartfelt tributes that had poured

in after the news of Eoin's death reached the community. These tributes matched the official proceedings for length, however official protocol was on hold today as the world gathered to say goodbye to a gentleman; a hero; a legend.

Seated along the wild western coast of Ireland, Eoin's homestead was a place where time stood still and midnight conversations frequently greeted the morning sun.

Close family had been called to gather at the cottage during Eoin's final days. They sat around the open fire for three nights, sharing stories and reminiscing about the years that had passed. When he wasn't dozing off, Eoin used what energy he had left to puff his pipe and listen to the tales others told as he quietly stroked the head of his chocolate lab, which lay loyally by his side. While others spoke, he swung slowly back and forth in his rocking chair - one of the first pieces of furniture he'd ever made. He rejoiced in the stories and took pleasure in correcting any facts exaggerated by his company.

The loving words from friends and family who popped in to say their final goodbyes eased the pain of the cancer that riddled his body. These visits gave him strength for his remaining days on Earth.

Eoin grew up an only child. When he wasn't causing mischief in school or helping his father on the farm, he ran up the lanes and through the fields, exploring every inch and acre of their land. Eoin had secret dens at each turn and tree houses at every clump of trees.

The southern boundary of Eoin's family homestead touched the largest village in the parish. It was a village where everyone knew one another's names, background and birthdays. Businesses, few as they were, lined the main

street: a pub, post office, grocery shop, bakery, a butcher's shop and a doctor's surgery. A schoolhouse nestled in the grounds of the local chapel. For any other service a trip to the city was required.

It was a stormy night in late November, at an inter-parochial dance, when Eoin met the radiant Aobh. Outside, rain lashed the stony walls of the hall. Inside, Aobh, the beauty in the blue dress; the queen of the dance, jived gaily past Eoin. His eyes were awakened the moment he cast eyes on her. A storm of passion erupted within him as Aobh's slight figure captured his young and unbridled heart. After a short spell of courting, Eoin proposed as the sun set over the beach one late May evening.

Five months later, the two were married. Eoin and Aobh moved to Dublin and made their home in the city where life was faster, and at times, harsher, than the West coast. It was in Dublin where Eoin set out to further his trade as a carpenter. In little time, he made a name for himself designing highly fashionable and sought-after furniture. Life was what they made it: good, in the Genesis sense.

Within a year Eoin found himself crafting cots and spinning tops for the twins Aobh bore. The twins development matched that of Eoin's flourishing business. Eoin and Aobh remained close with their families on the West coast; Eoin's mother and father made monthly trips from their homestead. They planned to move to Dublin to spend their remaining years alongside Eoin, Aobh and their grandchildren. However, as Eoin crafted sleds for city children during the winter of '63, he received word of a

fateful motor accident that had claimed the lives of both of his parents.

That winter was a trial for the country, and it was especially toilsome for Eoin as he wrestled with the finality of his parents' lives. The wind of death had blown into his life as fervently as the gales that used to roll off the Atlantic and into the homestead during his childhood. Emptiness surrounded him.

A longing settled deep in his heart as he tried to come to terms with the loss of his parents. He desired for one last lingering conversation with his father about Kerry's chances in the All Ireland's and he yearned for the taste of his mother's freshly baked breads one last time. She used to bake them by the open fire in the family cottage, and he begged with fate to allow him another bite.

As time passed, Eoin gradually came to terms with his parents' passing. He accepted that he wouldn't sit around the fire with them again. Butter would no longer drip down his fingers as he ate his mother's breads; his feet would never again ache after standing alongside his father on the terraces, watching the boys do the county proud. All he had left for comfort were his memories and crinkled pictures.

Spring rolled in. The frozen ground thawed and the bulbs rose from their extended slumber. Once again shoots broke through the stubborn earth and, over time, bright colour erupted across the land.

Partially patched up and with work on his mind, Eoin returned to his workshop in Dublin's Quays in mid-March. He dusted off the order book and immersed himself in his craft. A busy mind and active hands would surely help soothe the lingering pain of his parents' passing. Eoin no longer listened to the wireless as he worked. Quietness

accompanied him in the most comforting way: silence spoke in grief's emptiness. His creativity was stirred.

Some of Eoin's finest work emerged from this period of grief and sorrow. During his mourning he carved a stunning Baroque-style grandfather clock – a piece so breathtaking, members of the Belgian royal family left a blank cheque when they set eyes on it. They asked Eoin to value it as he pleased; sure-fire evidence of a priceless piece of art.

He fine-tuned his craft over the rest of the year as his work continued to make renowned waves throughout the world. He carved bespoke picture frames for The Factory and a dining table for the Kennedy Compound. Other famous names celebrated Eoin's talent and commissioned his work on a regular basis. As Eoin created more masterpieces and sketched out future projects, a sense of peace swept over his being.

His newfound fame and success required him to travel to distant places and faraway lands in order to produce specially commissioned pieces. He enjoyed these rich experiences, but he often heard the call of the West throughout his working life. When he wasn't jetting off across the globe crafting furniture for esteemed dignitaries and dynasties, Eoin would pack up the car and venture westward to the homestead to work. The familiar territory was a place of constant inspiration.

Dovetails soared while Eoin crafted collections in his father's old stone workshop. Whenever he could, Eoin brought Aobh and the children along to enjoy the treasures of the land. They spent each summer relaxing, playing tig and listening to the voices floating in the western wind.

Eoin and Aobh spent their lives side by side. When their children grew up and were married, the aging couple moved back to Co. Kerry. They strolled along the beaches by day and entertained guests by night. As this pair moved into the final season of life they were content and fell deeper in love as each precious day passed.

Even in retirement Eoin felt an artist's work was never finished. When Eoin's beloved Aobh was called to be a heavenly angel, he once again buried himself in his craft to keep his mind busy. Eoin went door to door throughout the village and took a mental note of each repair that was needed or new item he could create for his neighbours. Then he got to work: he crafted tiny dancing robots for tots, kitchen chairs and wooden bears, trains and hurling sticks and drawers with swirls. He created anything the villagers needed.

During his professional life, Eoin's work commanded fees in the tens of thousands, but the payment he requested from the locals was far more modest. His invoices read, "A cup of tea, something sweet and a piece to take home for supper." Since Aobh passed, Eoin ate in the local pub each night for dinner. He was a terrible cook, and the treats he received in return for his services warmed his body and satisfied his sweet tooth.

Eoin was a local hero, even amongst tourists who stopped by the pub. He was revered by many and a friend to all.

Eoin's daughter, Sibeal, tried to wake her father, but he wouldn't stir. He had passed onto another world. She pulled back the patchwork quilt to reveal the picture of her mummy, that Eoin held each night as he slept, now poking out from the chest pocket of his pyjamas. Eoin's pup lay curled at the foot of the bed, as loyal as he'd ever been. Tears

dripped down Sibeal's face. As she made her way towards the living room to inform the rest of her family, she called softly for the dog to follow. The house fell quiet upon hearing the news.

Later that night, as embers in the fireplace gave out a faint heat, Sibeal topped off the fire and replayed the last words her father spoke to her; words he'd formed in his workshop during that dark winter of '63:

*When your tears come, remember why they flow;
It's for the memories we made as life happened around us.
So when your tears fall think of the memories, our memories.
Play them over in your mind and allow a smile to rise in every
corner of your heart.
Remember that love was but a word until we brought it to life.*

Sibeal knew her father was now at peace, catching up with her mum – his angel. In his spare time, she knew he'd be hard at work, carving harps and thrones for the other angels above.

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