

Life by Eamonn McCarthy

The feckin' ceiling is always damp. In Winter on rare occasion the water would drip on your face as the heat rose from our bodies in the bed. Chores were for everyone. Water had to be drawn from the pump down the road, and livestock had to be tended to and fed first. Then you got to eat. Planting potatoes was a thankless, but necessary job. Cold feet. Oh my God, but how I hated having cold feet. Leaky wellingtons always left me with cold feet. Death was everywhere. Raising chickens for food required that they be killed and gutted. Don't faint. Just do it. Dogs hit by cars, too far and too late at night to find a vet. No worries! A Shotgun cures all ills. Dogs chasing sheep need to be executed on the spot. Cows calving..., no vet. Ok who's got small hands? Can you feel the calf? Get a rope on! Let's pull! Dead calf, dead cow. Now what? No worries, Let's go to the pub. Fizzy lemonade will cure the grief. What about the blood and gore? Will it make it go away? Walking home from school as it poured rain...endless rain. Walking to school...it was still raining. Sitting in the classroom trying to stay warm, while watching the steam rise of the backs of the kids in front of me. Am I just a seaming lump from behind too?

Sunshine!! The promise of Summer! Endless days of working on the farm, and the smells! Hay being cut and barley being harvested. Dances in the harvest festivals. What will she say when I ask her to dance? The joy of yes, the devastation of no. Don't get caught smoking! Can I borrow a cigarette? Well if you smoke it...it's not borrowing.

Oh oh, I asked Timmy Murphy's girl for a dance! Now I'm going to be killed! Run! Never mind, we have a football game on Sunday. He will spare me at least until after the game. Who's got a pound note for petrol? Up on the motor bike and away we go! What's a helmet? Ouch! That pothole was not there yesterday. My head hurts. Road rash. Is there anything so stupid looking as a 12 year old boy walking his motorbike home?

New school, new adventure. Oh wow! A flushing toilet! I read about those once. Holy Smokes! No more outhouse? And real writing pens? Not inkwells? Spoiled for choice! I can actually read in the darkened classroom now with electricity for rainy days. Darned socks and worn out elbows sewn together with different colored yarn. Looks cool. Necessity is the mother of invention. We lived like vagabonds. Of another time and another place. A truly magical place, now long forgotten. Hey Eamonn, wake up? Did you let the cat out? Hey Eamonn did you feed the dogs? Hey Eamonn, can you hurry up and do this! Eamonn did you do...did you?, Eamonn? Eamonn?

Sorry folks...Eamonn has left the building.

No rest for the wicked. Jasus, but then I must have done something awful. And death still walks all around me. Hold it together now. No crying. Here, give him a swig of this. Uisce Batha will cure what ails ya! Ataboy, get it in you. It will do you good. Big job today son. Till death do us

part. Up she goes on your shoulder. And whatever you do...just hold on to the coffin handle and watch your feet. Don't look at their faces. Just get to the graveside. Feckin rain! Will it ever stop? My feet are cold. No worries, Tomorrow the sun will be shining, although it is cloudy to day. What did she always say? Oh yeah...Happy is the coffin that the rain rains on. Guess what? I'm not happy. End of the line. Kings and Paupers get the same crack of the spade she said.

What was that noise? Of the weight of the soil cracked the lid. Well, there's no fixin' that. For once I'm Glad its raining. Hides the tears. Hundreds of people here and I never felt so alone. Can I just lie down and die now? Please? Put away the toys of childhood. You don't need them anymore. The realities of life are clear and apparent. What did I read once about the Four Noble Truths? Ah yes...Number one: Life is difficult. Well thanks for letting me know that. I could have told meself, thank you very much. Carry on. Ok. Will do. Thanks very much. No bother.

The stillness and peace that comes with the night is a treasure worth more than any King's ransom. Stars shining so brightly as they call out on the frosty night. Why can't it always be this peaceful? Free to think, Free to be still, Free to drop the façade, and feel. Lights out. Goodnight.

Intentional grammar mistakes: "Meself, Feckin' Jasus, Ataboy, ya.

Uisce Batha- Gaelic for Whiskey. Direct translation; "Water of Life