

*Caibidil a haon*  
(Chapter 1 ... Pub Excerpt)

“So, what’s your story, Matty?”

“I’m a writer,” I said. “Not a great one, but one that gets paid to do it.”

As I began my story, Old Mulligan and Ian moved a little closer on one side, and Kenny picked up his Stella, broke away from his football game and moved around an expanding herd of unnamed men, in from their day’s work and mostly bitching about their bosses, as working men everywhere do while pounding down their first beer.

The three regulars were soon within easy listening range, and making no pretenses that they were not listening.

“You write anything I might have read?” Cassidy said.

“Kiss of Treachery?”

“Tha’s what your Eileen said,” Ian said, nodding to Cassidy before returning to me.

“Wife and I saw the movie, few years ago. Don’t like those American cop movies all that much, but it was all the rage that year.”

“The book’s better,” I said.

“Course,” Old Mulligan said, to Ian more than to me. “Now let the man tell his story.”

“Well, I’m here to write about Ireland, I guess. For a few months, the summer anyway. Thought I’d just hang around, talk and listen, see what comes.”

When I stopped talking, I noticed there was silence at my end of the bar, and only a few murmurs from the workingmen end. I glanced over and the pack went quiet as well as the, looked my way, not even trying to pretend they weren’t eavesdropping.

They, too, must have seen the movie.

When they noticed me noticing them, they glanced back to each other and the murmurs began again, dancing around like a soft musical jig.

“Feckin all,” someone from the pack said.

“Staying up on Gleninagh?” another someone said.

“Wife will say I’m tellin’ lies.”

“You always tellin’ feckin lies.”

Cassidy sent a glare the way of the pack. They noticed the glare and silence returned.

“What’s your story goin’ to be about?” Cassidy said, turning his attention back to me.

“Don’t know yet.”

“And you gettin’ paid to come here to write a story what nobody knows it’s about?”

Cassidy said.

I nodded. Kenny jumped in. “Sounds like a job I should look into.”

“You wishin’ you had such a job,” Ian said.

“Not puttin’ him down. Just wondering, old man.”

“Old man? I knocked your papa on his ass once or twice. Can still do the same to you, you want.”

I took the opportunity to sip my beer.

“Drink up and shut up,” Cassidy said, to all but me. “Do continue Matty.”

As the clatter settled, and it seemed everybody moved a little closer, I continued.

“Thought I’d travel a little, make Galway my home but travel around. Got to be some stories waiting to be told here. Maybe something about Gleninagh Castle. Read it has an interesting history. Poke around Galway, maybe up in Connemara, out to the Aran Islands. The Burren seems like quite a place, strange landscape and all. Maybe I’ll write a story about fishing in the area. Don’t really know just yet.”

The jig started up again.

“Fishing? You talkin’ about business or pleasure? Business all but gone away from Galway Bay.”

“He’s not talkin’ business of fishing. He’s talking about the fly rod. That what you talking about, right Matty?”

“Aran’s all tourist these days. Like the cliffs, all tourists.”

“Connemara’s nice. I’m from up that way.”

“How you know what he talking about? Just met the man.”

“Well, I’m listening to him. More than you doing.”

“Drink up and shut up,” Cassidy said.

I took another sip.

“Grew up a John Wayne fan,” I said. “Thinking about taking a visit up to the Quiet Man cottage. Up in County Mayo, on the Galway border, I understand.”

“Up in Cong. Not far really.”

“Big tourist crowd in the summer, I guess. Ain’t been in years.”

“Now it’s a good drive, that’s sure.”

“Hated it when I toured a cousin, Boston Irish, he was. Drank like a fish. Took him and his brats up there a few years ago. Hated every minute of it.”

“It’s a drive, ya, but he got the time.”

“And someone’s paying him. What a racket.”

“Bet that’s the way in Hollywood. Bet ya.”

“That’s a right feckin movie, a right feckin story.”

The jig stopped abruptly. Everybody turned to look at Séamus, where he sat across the pub.

“Quiet Man,” he said, his voice nearly a low growl. “That’s an Irish fairy tale dreamed up by feckin Americans with the right soundin’ names. Nothing more.”

“Hold on there, ya pecker,” Cassidy said, the firm voice of a man used to dealing with drunks in general if not this man in particular. “Man’s a guest here.”

“No offense meant,” Séamus said, awkwardly twisting to look at me and holding up his whiskey glass in toast.

“No offense taken,” I said, turning and toasting him back.

My writer’s radar told me he was a real story just waiting to be heard if not told.

“He’s right, you know. Most think the Quiet Man a bunch of *shite*, nothin’ more,” Kenny said.

“Just an idea,” I said, turning back to the bar, noticing Kenny was right beside me on one side and the old men were just as close on the other side. ...