

Here is the short
story I sent in
to that place you told
me about.

"Cold Tears"
A Short Story
By Joel Baptiste

Any more of
those places?
Let me know what
you think?
Love & Best
Joel Baptiste

Cold Tears

"Have ya got it mate?" He was so nervous and juiced up that he slapped my chest with an impatient demand.

"Of course I got it. I Told ya I'd bring one Didn't I, You brought yours?" I shot back at him with the same impatience.

"Aye, did ya think I wouldn't!" As he patted his pocket.

"Bonny right then, on our way mate," and I led us off into the night.

I had Michael come with me this night because I knew he had the sand to get the job done. I'm a pretty bad fellow myself but Michael is an Irish terror, Part thief, part street philosopher. He has this uncanny way of blending in or standing out; and he does it with the shift of the wind. We both wore black tweed blazers. He often sported a grey derby hat in contrast to my brown one. He has a classy way of working his way into places that other youngsters in our crew couldn't. If stopped, he was handsome enough to soothe a cop right off our tail, criminal enough to avoid costly mistakes.

Three days ago we took down a banker's strong box, Weiland, one of our boys, didn't make it back. Standing in the dark cemetery of St. Steven's Cathedral, about to break inside, he was certainly on our mind. This is our last hurrah in this town, come sunup the entire town would be on us. There wasn't a soul who didn't know that Weiland was our mate.

"Patrick, it's not fair what happened," sighed Michael.

I answered back the only way I could. "Listen, everyone is looking for us, let's make this an in and out job, no need to add another couple of fella's to poor Weiland's list."

In the distance a horse gave out a heaving whinny that let us know we weren't alone on this cold east coast night. But the location of these souls wasn't as important as where they weren't. The Cathedral looked as quiet as the cemetery, and that's where we needed to be.

St. Steven's was built back in 1789, it was now one hundred years old. Inside there were works of fine art, records and deeds to most of the surrounding properties, and a safe which held large sums of the parishioner's assets. The cemetery out front boasted a who's-who of the eastern seaboard. About twenty yards in front of us, a wooden door lay recessed into a stone arch way.

"That's our in mate.", I tossed my smoke into the night and we headed out across the graves.

There had been many attempts over the years to break into St. Steven's; that's because the price of gold relics, and silver trinkets tend to call out to a lad when he's down on his luck. Sometimes Jesus, Mary, and Joseph had to look away when it came to this game of survival.

About a mile down the road a faint orange orb was growing closer, I noticed it was leaving a glowing chain behind it. Soon the distinct sound of hoofs were getting closer. A carriage was clapping along the cobblestones, lighting all of the gas street lamps along the way. Soon the shadow of the arch would be much more visible. We reached the arch, and crept into the recess.

"Pass the bar mate." I wedged it between the stone and the wood of the door. I started to force it, "Michael, lend me some weight." The old door flung open with a clang. The iron girders that once held the planks together twisted loose and bounced on the stone floor of the entrance. The iron on stone echoed throughout the Cathedral. If there was anyone there they would be arriving shortly.

"Squat here with me. If it's one we'll rough him up nice, if it's more, we've failed and we're off." I counted a full five minutes on my pocket watch, then tucked it away nice and tight. "Follow me," I said as I led us into the main chambers of St. Steven's Cathedral.

"Fishy," Michael whispered, "It can't be this easy."

The Moon shone through massive works of stained glass, just enough to make out some objects as we crept up on them.

"Look Paddy. those silver candle sticks, aye-a golden crucifix on the pulpit."

"Leave e'm," I said. "We came for something much-much bigger my boy." I needed to find the parlor and in this light it wasn't going to be easy. "Say have ya ever been in here?" I asked.

"Nay, not once," he shot back at me, we were lost.

"Hush now man, listen to that sound." I had noticed a familiar noise.

"I hear something, sounds like water you dumb Ox," he said under his breath.

"Yaass! Jasas, Mary, and Jooseph, that's it!" I knew it was exactly what we came for when I heard it. "Follow that dripping noise brodie, it will take us where we want."

"Have ya gone mad?" He spat.

"Just follow the water I says."

In the darkness we came to a split hallway off the main sanctuary. Surely one way led to the parish, where the priest probably lay clutching the empty sacrament vessel, and God bless him...I hope it was full when he started. The other way should take us to the parlor, right where we wanted to go. The sound of the drops took us to the right. Echo's drip-dropping on the stone floor acted like a beacon, the sound amplified through the huge Cathedral.

As we entered the circular chamber, a faint luminescent shaft from the Moon cast light onto the object of our mission. There it was in front of us, we were stunned in silence. Right in the center of the chamber lay the body of Weiland. The thick ice that had been packed around his corpse, preserving him for the morning mass, had been crying to the cold stones that would soon receive his body...Cold endless tears. I noticed Michael's hesitancy in moving closer to Weiland: "Content yourself with what ya are mate, tis one day our own fate." Eventually he came to where I was and together we looked at this freezing cold memory, rigid like wood. In the silence a lifetime of laughter, tears, and agony plagued us both. Weiland's wax like face looked ghastly in the Moonlight.

"It wasn't but three nights ago that i turned to toss him two pieces of the Banker's gold."

I nodded, "Aye, tis strange, the exact payment we bring tonight."

"Tis a shame we won't be seeing the mass in the morning." He bowed his head as if tonight's few minutes would have to suffice.

"We knew the game could come to this," I countered.

"Do ya believe poor Weiland knew the price?" He rattled back to me.

"He knows it now," I quipped.

"He doesn't know much of nothing if ya ask me!" Michael was looking me square in the face when he said that, I felt it burn even in this luminescent light, a stone like glare.

"The existence of a man is no small thing to take!" As he said that I could feel a shift in his spirit.

"Enough of this debauchery," I said. "We came here to pay the tool for our dear mate. I'll not have him standing on the banks of the river Styx while we pis and Whinny about the past. Have you brought it now mate, your share?" I waited for him to react, he acted as if he was in deep thought.

"Aye! I told ya I brought it," he said.

I reached into my pocket, right next to me watch and retrieved a solid gold coin. I made the sign of the cross above the corpse and placed my coin on Weiland's left eye. Michael said a hail Mary and produced another, he placed it on the right.

"It's done mate," he whispered.

I turned to him, "Let's grab the lads and push for Philadelphia, we can make some way before the morn. I know a shop that has diamonds, just a waiting fer to grab e'm."

With a foul manner, Michael spat back, "I'll not be riding with you, not this morn, nor the next. Seems I been carrying the Devil's scratch too close to me own skin."

He stepped to the side and started to exit the chamber. As he left he flipped two shinny things my way, they caught the Moonlight and chimed on the floor beside me.

"What's this my boy?" I said, as I went to pick them up.

"That's two piece for the ferry you'll be taking across the river. We're no longer mates Paddy. I been passing the tool around much too long."

Stunned, I listened to his loafers make their way down the hall and out the Cathedral. I stood there with Weiland for some time. When I turned to leave the chamber I immediately bumped into something, someone, "Aghh!"

The warm sensation started to spread beneath my blazer, yet I felt no pain. But there, beneath my sternum, hung the handle of a long dagger.

"My son, I came to catch a thief, you startled me...Oh please forgive me my son." The priest sighed, but all I could do was smell the sweet tinge of alcohol on his breath as he helped me lay down on the stones of the dark hallway.

"Lad, your business in this world is over, I'm afraid I have stolen your life, forgive me my son."

I started to feel the pain and panic come over me.

"If we remove this dagger I'm afraid your time will run quick," he said.

"Ay, bless me father, and then tend to my confession," I replied.

"Tell me your weight lad." whispered the priest. I let loose the whispers of my past, they masked the sound the two pieces made as they slipped from my grasp to the floor...

The morning mass for Weiland concluded and the priest asked the sexton to meet him in the furthest corner of the cemetery to help him with the internment. When the sexton arrived Weiland's body lay next to the empty grave, tightly bound in burlap.

The priest said, "Before we finish up, go fetch your pipes from the chapel Seamus, these were Irish lads."

The sexton returned a puzzled look, "Did you say lads father?"

"Ahh, forgive your ears Seamus, it's been a long day, I said lad, son."

The sexton ran for the Cathedral, and his pipes. By the time he returned the priest was drenched with sweat, already heaping loads of dirt into the grave like a mad man. Together they continued until about three feet was left open. The priest stopped and broke the silence:

"Seamus, play the ballad son." Danny Boy wailed out from the corner of St. Steven's. When it was finished the priest made an odd request.

"Would you play it once more son."

As the second round of Oh Danny Boy broke out on the pipes, the priest tossed the two gold coins into the pit, and then commenced with filling the grave.