



VISIONS OF SEAN

Place: Dublin, Killarney, Pawtucket Falls

Time: Present and 1972

Characters: Sean Kieran Hickey
The Storyteller

Glossary:

Busaras: bus station

Granny Smith: an apple

'Ti Jean: Jack Kerouac, American Beat writer

Bollocks: balls, also spelled "bollix"

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BOB CONDRON

VISIONS OF SEAN

Last night I dreamt that Jack Kerouac was a musical instrument. An alto sax to be precise. In place of a cockhead he had a mouth piece. And when I blew him, he moaned out a melancholy jazz riff, spiraling up the scale towards high 0. Behind him stood a closet and, as if on cue, with the final blast, the doors flew open to reveal Allen Ginsberg blowing his own trumpet and keening a gut-wrenching howl.

Sean introduced me to Jack Kerouac. Not literally, of course, but to his literature. This event marked the transition from passing acquaintance to friend. Sean Kieran Hickey was about to become my best pal. Appropriately enough, the transformation occurred “on the road.” Crushed together on the back seat of a ramshackle bus. Rattling our bones all the way from Belfast south to Dublin.

I hadn’t wanted to talk. I was determined to read. My head was stuck in a book as soon as I’d found a seat. But from the moment he stashed his hand luggage overhead and squeezed himself in beside me, he made it impossible to concentrate on anything beyond the friendly press of his athletic knee and his mellow voice, talking on and on and on. Thing was, once he started, I was happy to have him continue.

I’d only known him by sight. We’d both finally completed our first year of teacher training, but our paths seldom crossed. Him, Physical Ed. Me, English. Sure, I’d seen him strutting around campus often enough and had watched him battle it out on the soccer pitch a couple of times, but we’d never had reason to connect until that holy day, that day of revelations.

“Yer majoring in English?” Sean said. “Do yeh know Jack Kerouac?”

“Who’s Jack Kerouac?”

“Who’s Jack Kerouac! Only the Daddy of the Beat Generation! Only the greatest American author-poet ever!” Sean leapt to his feet, reached up to the luggage rack, and, from his battered sports bag, produced a well-thumbed copy of *Book of Dreams*. Tossing it into my lap, he said, “Meet the man!”

I flicked through the book till I reached the back page. There was a photograph. A portrait of the author as a young man. Handsome, virile, a football jock. Blue-collar casual with Gaelic features and an athletic build. Super-handsome. I did a double take at Sean.

“But this Kerouac looks like yeh!” By chance or design?

Sean beamed, clearly delighted. He set out his stall to convert me. As his passion erupted, he fairly swept me away. By the time we arrived in Dublin’s central bus station, I was totally beguiled. Sean and I shared a coffee in the Busaras on Store Street whilst he waited for his connecting bus home to Killarney. His eyes were a flame that never diminished.

“Yeh could borrow the book,” he said.

“How can I return it?”

“Yeh must read it.” He gave me his address. “I want to know what yeh think.”

“I’ll write yeh.”

“I want yeh to.”

Last night I read into the wee small hours. Fell asleep with my face in the book, my nose pressed up against the print. Could smell Sean on the pages, the lingering odours from his sports bag. Man-sweat, liniment, damp earth. Colouring my dreams in my dreamscape of a library, the size and shape of a soccer pitch. At one end a goal where Sean, with soccer shirt hiked up in line with his nipples and shorts dropped around his ankles, was wanking furiously over an enormous pile of books. When he shot his load, cumspray gushed foaming, creamy across covers and titles and open pages of the spill of books. In the moment, I became the heap of books, a face looking up through the photographs of authors, looking out through a bubble of translucent goo. Sean stood looking down at me, his face knuckled up in the pleasurepain of orgasm. When he spoke, his question was rhetorical. “In for the big win? Join the winning team!”

I have a photograph from that first Summer. Black and

white. An almost exact replica of another photo of Jack Kerouac and his soul brother, Neal Cassady. Except that in our photo Sean and I take on their roles. Standing up against a pale stone wall, an arm casually slung around each others' shoulders, our free hands stuffed in the pockets of our jeans. We're not smiling but somehow knowing.

Sean never looked more handsome. His thick, dark hair swept back from his strong forehead. His face, tough, resolute, like a boxer, yet somehow vulnerable like a wounded boy. The bulge at the crotch of his faded jeans still hits me as hard as it did at the time, like a fist on the chin. I loved him then. He didn't know it. But behind our pairs of eyes in that photo, I can still see how I adored him then, and him pretending he was too cool to notice.

Even as I'd fallen in love with the Beats, I fell in love with Sean. Love scared me and thrilled me. Sean was the first guy I'd ever allowed myself to feel such feelings for and those feelings simply escalated with each letter he'd written. He was sharing himself with me. Sharing intimate thoughts and feelings. Sharing his passion.

As I devoured the collected works and delved into the biographies, the Beats enraptured me, fueled my fire for the daily ritual of our correspondence between him, shepherding tourists in Killarney, and me correcting student essays in Dublin. We'd compare and discuss critiques. We'd philosophise over friendship. The intense relationships between Kerouac, Cassady, and Ginsberg seemed to mirror, if not model, the burgeoning relationship between Sean and myself. Within the month he'd invited me to come visit. To share, face-to-face, soul-to-soul. Hence the photo. Against a pale stone wall. Very serious. A gag shot. A jape. A joke. Clowning that summer. Arms slung around shoulders. In Killarney.

His great-grandfather, Sean assured me, had been rightfully proud of the bathroom. The first of its kind in the village. He turned on the taps. Hot and cold water began to creak and chug through the pipes before gushing into the huge cast-iron bath. Sean kicked off his boots and pulled off his socks whilst telling me how, as the youngest of twelve children, bath time had been done in shifts. Three and four in the bath at any one time. So if I wanted to join him, it was no problem. His little joke.

He undressed with all the assurance of an athlete who, with a life spent in a communal locker room, knew he compared with the best. I sat back on a wicker bath chair and watched him as he yanked his teeshirt over his head. His upper torso was impressive: chest and broad shoulders. He popped the button fly on his blue jeans, let them fall around his ankles, and stepped out of them, wearing only white cotton boxers he peeled down without a blush. He crossed to the washbasket and dumped each item inside. Taking his time. Time enough for me to enjoy his muscular nakedness. His cock was a joy to behold. A handful-and-a-half curved out from a dark bush of pubic curls. His ballsack swung beneath, jewels his great-grandfather would have been proud of, rich, round, and rolling. He smiled the way Kerouac must have smiled at Cassady.

I didn't want to stop his show. I cast my eyes up to the ceiling. I made conversation. "I was just wondering..."

"Yeah?" He climbed into the bath.

"Ginsberg had sex with Cassady and Kerouac..."

"Yeah? So?"

"Does it bother yeh?"

"Why should it?"

"I don't know."

"Did sex hurt their writing?" He slid down under water and, with a whoosh, resurfaced, his dark hair shiny and slicked back. "Did sex hurt them?"

I studied him, smiling, droplets of water glistening on his tanned skin. "Yer full of surprises."

"Am I now." He smiled more broadly. "They were rebels, right? Constantly testing the boundaries, challenging convention." He squeezed water from the end of his nose. "A lot of love there."

"I guess."

His eyes narrowed to a new intensity. "Come on. Don't tell me yeh wouldn't suck my cock if I asked yeh."

His words caught me short. I managed to stifle my reflexive gasp. Then a pause whilst I scrambled around for what to say. What was the answer? My mind was racing, but my mouth was stock still. Was this a test? Yes? No? Words failing me when I needed them most. I could win or lose either way. Then he spoke again.

"Ah come on," he smirked. "Don't worry. I'm not about to put my theory to the test."

I wanted him.

"In any event, make yerself useful." Again he grinned. "Wash me back?"

"Is this another wind-up?"

"Would I?"

"Silly question!"

"Yeh can reach better than I can. Please!" He leaned forward, bringing his knees up to touch his chest, wrapped his strong arms around them. Please!"

I knelt behind him as he handed me a sponge and soap. Green apple soap. I remember the bouquet was crisp as a crunch into a Granny Smith. His skin was magic under the lather. I pressed the sponge against the top of his spine and squeezed. Suds oozed out and eased over his shoulders, running down to the water line lapping at his narrow waist. With a sweeping rub, I wiped the sponge across the width of his back. Sean flinched.

I pulled back. "Yeh really caught the sunburn on yer neck and shoulders."

"Yer telling me!"

"Want me to stop?"

"No. Lose the sponge. It scratches. Use yer hands."

I dropped the sponge into the water and spread my palms over his pliant skin that was warm to my touch touching him. *Ah, God!*

"Gently does it," he sighed. "That's the ticket." He sank under my hands back into the water of his great-grandfather's tub where his chest and thighs and head and dick rose like islands in the soapy wash of the bath water.

Legend tells how the band played on whilst Titanic sank slowly beneath the icy waves of our collective dreams. I was there. Kerouac and Cassady and Ginsberg formed a jazz trio, merrily chugging out a version of "Sea of Love" whilst chaos reigned all around. Sean looked dapper in evening dress and bow tie as he grabbed me urgently by the elbow and pulled me into a suite already abandoned. The door closed and we were alone together in our own dark, silent world, going to die, gotta go sometime, twining our arms tightly, chest to chest, as the ship groaned, I love yeh, Sean, I've always loved yeh, going

down, going down together, drowning in a sea of sperm, the only way to go, Sean laughing and singing along with Kerouac and Cassady and Ginsberg.

I woke in bed alongside him. Sleeping together. Only sleeping. Something I had never done before. Had never slept alongside a man before. Morning light streamed in through the window as Sean lay on his belly, his head turned towards me, his face shaded from the sun, quietly snoring. His hands were tucked under the pillow that cradled his head exposing his curly armpits. From where I lay, I could smell him. Could breathe in deep and fill my lungs with the heavy scent of him. A sweet, rich, earthy smell offset by only the merest hint of apple soap.

He woke. His eyes opened to meet mine studying him. He was not surprised at my vigil. "Sleep well?" He murmured and cleared his throat.

"Yeah. Dreamt a lot," I said.

"About me?"

"As a matter of fact."

"And what did we get up to?"

"We went down with the *Titanic*."

"Together?"

"Aye."

He was silent for a moment. "There's friendship for yeh. Together forever beneath the deep, dark sea."

"Yeah? That's one interpretation, barring a lifeboat!"

"I'm serious. It's like that beautiful passage at the end of *Off the Road*."

"Yeh mean *On the Road*?"

"No. Cassady's Missus wrote her own Beat biography. At the end she describes this moment when Jack and Neal's ashes were brought together, intermingled. Together forever. It totally blew me away. That woman is some talent, I tell yeh."

"Guess that moves to the top of my reading list."

"Right." He reached out his long-fingered hand and clasped my shoulder, "One day, yeh and I are going to visit his last resting place. Pay our respects to 'Ti Jean."

"Then we'll go stand on the banks of the Merrimack. Go stand at Pawtucket Falls. Go with the flow."

"Yeh got it! Soul brothers like Neal and Jack. Yeh and me, brother. Yeh and me." And then he asked me, "Yeh ever

kiss a man?"

"What? A proper kiss? Full mouth?"

"Yeah."

"No."

"Do yeh want to kiss me?"

"Guess so."

"Come here."

The first kiss was clumsy, awkward, virginal. His lips grew moist and warm as he pressed his stiff cock against my hip. The friction of cock and lips ignited. He open-palmed the flat of my belly. His middle finger toyed with my navel before sliding up to brush my nipple. A shock wave hit me. Such a simple action but profoundly felt. He was keenly aware of the power of his touch upon me. His fingers and thumbs tweaked and tugged my tender nipples.

I leaped up. I flung the sheets aside and dived open-mouthed down on his big erection. Even as my throat struggled to swallow him full down, my mind spiralled off into outer space. Intoxicated. Every sensation intense and acute. Every cell and fibre of my being up and yelling in celebration of this moment. This passionate consummation of fierce friendship.

I curled my fist around his cock and drove my tongue around his salty bollocks bouncing full and fertile enough to be a million times somebody's father. The tip of my tongue licked from his ballsack to his forested crack. I gripped the back of his knees, hoisting them, gazing wantonly at his perfect fair skin pulled tight over muscular buttocks. His hot little hole rose up exposed for my inspection. I ploughed my face between his ass cheeks. He growled like an animal in rapture, clutched my head, and forced me to eat deep.

He groaned. "Oh, yeah, love me, brother, lick my fuckin' hole, know me like no other, fuckin' do me!"

"I'm doin' yeh, Sean. Have no doubts. I'm lickin' yeh head to toe. Tastin' every inch of yeh."

"And yeh?"

"Yer goin' to taste every inch of me."

"I love yeh, soul brother, love yeh like no other. Yer a poet."

"Shut up."

I turned my attention once more to his beautiful phallus. Translucent droplets of pre-cum oozed from his piss slit as I slid my lips over his crimson glans. My tongue probed into the

opening and, in the instant, must have pushed him beyond his endurance for he yelped, flipped free, spun around, and crushed his mouth against mine, pushing me down, chewing on my lips and tongue. His taut, muscular body ground against mine, forcing my legs apart, his dick jabbing into my welcoming hole.

"I want yeh. I want to be a part of yeh," he said. "I want to be inside yeh."

"Climb on into me."

Spit and push was all it took. I relaxed and welcomed him home. The fullness of him stretching wide my ring with his sheer width was a revelation of what an asshole could be really for. Slowly pumping, we fused to one, building a head of steam. I wrapped my legs around his powerful back and drew him ever deeper into me, wanting him whole, his lips kissing my lips, never leaving my lips, his arms holding onto me for dear life, and for Neal and for Jack, neither of us knowing or caring what this meant.

That summer in his great-grandfather's house in Killarney, there was no skill or artistry in our lovemaking. Only innocent bodies clashing in a raw, aching experiment, trying to find ourselves by being someone else. We were both strong and fit and young. Quickly, athletically, he shot his load inside me. An outpouring of tender energy. A magic moment. The very essence of him inside me. All the while telling me he loved me. "I love yeh." On and on, telling me he loved me. "I love yeh."

Last night I dreamt that Jack Kerouac was a musical instrument.

Finally, living in America, I stood on the banks of the Merrimack. Where were you, Sean? Of course, I know. Home in Belfast with the wife, the kiddies, the job, and the pension plan. You always say you admire me for living the dream. That you just took another road. But I think that's okay.

I visited Jack's grave. The cemetery was closed when I arrived, but I jumped the wrought iron railings that ringed the perimeter. I'd come this far. Nothing was going to keep me from reaching my goal. A winter frost had turned the soil underfoot as solid as cement. The trees were bare of leaves and bird song.

I found his resting place in a matter of minutes, knelt on the frozen earth, and kissed the plaque that marks the spot.

“Ti Jean, John L. Kerouac, Mar 12, 1922 -1969, - He Honoured Life - ” And I told him, “Jack, I guess this is as close as we’ll ever get.” Just Jack and me. The graveyard was deserted. For one moment I had him all to myself.

And yet, Sean, you were also beside me in that moment. Your spirit. His spirit. Reunited. God, I loved you—yeh—back then. Took you with me to Pawtucket Falls. Looked down into the foaming waters. Felt your arm around my shoulder. So strong and handsome and heroic. And I love you still. All that happened? You just took another road.

So I raise my glass to you tonight and before I drink, I spill a drop for lost brothers.