

Excerpts from 'A Bit of Irish Mist' by Stanley Salmons (Medlar Press)

From 'Starting Them Young'

Seven-month-old Milo and his grandfather regarded each other seriously across a gulf of sixty-nine years.

“Now, Milo, you are very welcome here and I won't say ye're not. But I have to tell you that I was planning on goin' fishin' today. Your grandma must've forgotten that when they decided to leave yer with me, but it was no use me tryin' to remind her. She'd just say, 'What's more important to you, yer fishin' or yer' grandson?' Ye have to understand, Milo, there are some battles in this life you can win, and there are some you can not.”

Milo waved his fists jerkily and said, “Aaaahhhppplllgh.”

“Ay, it is frustratin', it being such a nice day for it, an' all.”

They continued to look at each other. The old man absently extended a gnarled, wrinkled finger, and Milo's smooth plump digits closed around it.

“On the other hand, now, I hear that fresh air is good for babies. Are you thinkin' what I'm thinkin', Milo?”

Milo said, “Pffffff.”

“You were? I thought so.”

From 'The Luck of Michael Mulligan'

“Am I disturbin' yer work, Joseph?”

“No, I have just this minute finished muckin' out. Come on in. Ye're lookin' a bit down now, Michael. Wife been shrewin' ye again?”

“I can't recall it ever stoppin'. It's me own home, Joseph, and I feel as welcome as a fox in a chicken fairm.”

Joseph shook his head sadly as he placed two glasses on the table. He turned and went to the larder and Michael's raised voice followed him.

“All I said was I comin' round to see you. 'What about the leak in the roof,' she says, 'and the hole in the fence, and when are you going to clear out that shed like I asked you to do a dozen times already?' 'Now pet,' I says to her, 'you want me to be neighbourly don't you?' 'Neighbourly?' she says. 'I know what you mean by neighbourly! Sittin' around in his kitchen drinkin' beer, that's you bein' neighbourly!’”

Joseph returned from the larder carrying a crate of beer. “That's a very injurious thing to say to a man.”

He uncapped two bottles and pushed one towards Michael with a large unwashed hand.

“Ah, thanks a million, Joseph. Ye’re a prince.”

They filled their glasses and drank deeply.

“I used to do a bit of fishin’ in my boat. She won’t hear o’ that now, though, always findin’ me other things to do. I’m tellin’ you, Joseph, she has a tongue on her could lash the skin right off of a man’s back.”

Joseph pushed a second bottle towards him. “Have another, Michael.”

“Ah, I don’t want to be drinkin’ all your beer, Joseph,” his guest replied, uncapping the bottle without hesitation.

Joseph topped up his own glass from a second bottle and drank half of it without pause. He belched unselfconsciously. “Now you know me for a peaceful man, Michael, and I am opposed to violence of any sort, but have you not tried givin’ her a good clip around the earhole?”

“Ah, I couldn’t do that to someone so much smaller than me, Joseph. In any case she has a handy right hook herself.”

They drank for a while in silent contemplation.

Joseph wiped his mouth with the back of a hand, a gesture that left a white streak on his hand and a muddy one on his chin.

“What ye need to do, Michael,” he suggested, “is buy somp’n she really does not like, somp’n like a stud bull. Then ye can say ye’ll get rid of it if she will agree to yer goin’ fishin’. In exchange, like.”

“Ah, that’s a great idea all right, Joseph, but I’ve no money to go around buyin’ things like that.”

“Talkin’ about buyin’ things, did ye know I got myself a tractor?”

“Did ye now? Let’s take a look, can we?”