

## Love, loss and Lola

As we were on the boat at Brandon Pier, the old man told us all about his life and his tragic tale of love, loss and Lola. Mick ruffled his beard under weather beaten furrowed brow and stared out upon the ever descending sunset. He placed his hand on the rudder and steamed out toward Maharees. The waves gently caressed the bow of the boat, the breeze warm and kind. Mick had a crimson tan, leathery hands and wore a cap which he bought at Cloghane pattern 30 years ago.

‘So Mick, tell me, when did you first meet her?’ I said.

‘I remember like it was yesterday’, said Mick nostalgically.

The year was 1972 the smoke unfurled throughout Nora Murphy’s bar, the rich drum of a bodhrán could be heard pattering in the corner, the hiss of the Guinness tap was a constant as creamy pints settled as the unsettled waited in thirst. A chorus of laughter, roguery and yarns was the order of the day as people shuffled in of a Friday evening after a long week's work. Fishermen, farmers and tradesmen alike all traded stories of the week gone by and Mick was perched at the corner of the bar deep in conversation about the price of rams.

‘Twas then I saw her, the door sharply opened, the smoke parted and in she came, long shining black coat, well kept, immediately she commanded the attention of everyone in the room, she was a real beaut’ said Mick.

Mick was smitten. He watched her every move as she pattered around the room.

‘I immediately knew by the look of her that I wanted to take her out’, said Mick

‘Even before you spoke to her? I asked.

‘Even before I spoke to her I knew she was the one’ replied Mick.

Mick sat on his stool as he gazed at her lovingly thinking of how wonderful it would be to have her, when Tom shouts across at him;

‘Tis your round haigh’

Mick awoke from his daze and turned back toward the bar.

‘As the night wore on I grew more confident and I was trying to psyche myself up to go talk to her like’

'She had the most wonderful eyes they were just so full of life'

'As the bar cleared out me being full of gusto after the night trapsed over to Jim who was with her, to ask about her'

'Where was she gone at this stage? I asked.

'She was out in his van waiting I think' said Mick.

'He said he'd let me know if I could take her out the following day and I hoped it was the beginning of something special..

'Did you get to take her out? I questioned.

'Yerra sure I was too sick the following day and I missed the call' said Mick reluctantly.

'Did you see her again? I queried.

'The next time I saw her was the day of the regatta in Brandon' said Mick.

The pier was alive that day. Currachs weaved their way through the crowd as the sun beat down. Earlier currachs landed with a plop on the bay, gleaming, pristine waiting for the excitement of the day's events. Children raced around asking parents for loose change for the stalls as inside in Murphys people sat oblivious to the theatrics outside. A chorus of noise filled the air as rowers listened out for their race.

'Then I saw her in the midst of the chaos, she looked as beautiful as ever, easy on the eye and polite in her ways. I stood longingly gazing at her from afar and kept my eye on her throughout the events. After a while I noticed that she has become separated from her group. This was my opportunity. I approached her, said hello and asked her if she would come with me and before I knew it she was with me in the van. It all happened in a whirlwind. I brought her straight out that evening'

'What was she like?' I asked.

'Ah sure there was nothing like her, she was just amazing, never had anything half as good and I've been around a while!!' said Mick with a wink.

'And did it last very long?' I queried.

'Well see the problem there was that after a while people were beginning to spot me around town with her and before long word got round and I was in a spot of bother with Jim, he wasn't very happy at all and he took her away from me' said Mick sadly.

'You must have been heartbroken?' I asked.

'Ah sure I was of course and sure worse again was she started going off with other local fellas' said Mick.

'That must have been hard to take?' I asked.

'It was very tough, I mean there were others after Lola, but none even came close'

'She was the best damn sheepdog I ever had'

By Gearóid Fitzgerald