

A Story from Seán Mac Mathúna

"Accelerated Curriculum": Intro and Part I

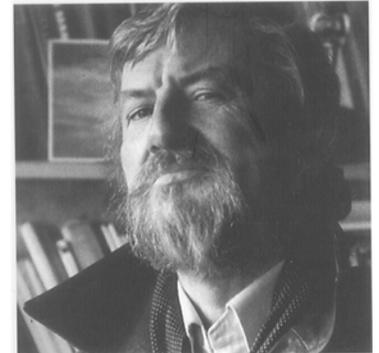
The Author

Seán Mac Mathúna is a native of Trá Lí, Co. Chiarraí, born in 1936, and educated in Cill Airne and UCC (Cork), and spent many years teaching (secondary school). He has published numerous short stories in Irish and in English, in places like the Irish Times and Comhar.

His first collection of short stories, *Ding*, came out in 1983, and the second, *Banana* -- in which the tale we'll work on appeared -- in 1999. *Banana* won the Gradam Uí Shúilleabháin / Irish Book of the Year Award that year.

In between, in 1992, the Abbey Theatre produced his play in both languages -- on different nights, but with the same cast -- *The Winter Thief / Gadaí Géar na Geamhoíche*. He has also had a play, *Hula Hul*, presented by the famous Irish language theatre in Galway, An Taibhdhearc, and has written at least one novel, as well as having an interest in screenwriting and haiku.

As you'll discover, his stories can be quite imaginative and amusing.



The Story

The story is titled, "Accelerated Curriculum," and I thought we would work on it over the next several weeks. There are several aspects of interest.

1. This is basically a recently written fairy tale, very much in the character of the stories we translated into Irish over the holidays, and much like a retelling of a tale right out of the oral tradition.
2. Mac Mathúna makes no attempt to follow the standard, and is very squarely in his home dialect of Munster. You will need your big dictionaries, and occasionally some imagination, to crack this one.
3. I read it while up north over Christmas, and I really liked it!

Besides the fact that I like it, I thought plowing through a hunk of text would be a good way to get back into the swing of things. My plan is to hand this out in pieces, kind of cliffhanger or serial style, and then (as with some of our other literary endeavors) give out or post summaries of pieces we've finished, in English, so that you can still do the homework even if you've missed a week.

Naturally, I hope you'll find time to do as much as you can, but we'll finish up a section every week in class one way or another, so we don't get bogged down with this forever. It will be a good project to finish up before any students might move up from Wes's class.

As you work through it, you might keep an eye (and highlighter) out for clause constructions.

Hints

I'll try to put up a page, in the next couple of days, that will give some hints about especially obscure dialect items or phrases. Go to my class page and look for a link at the top to the new section.

ACCELERATED CURRICULUM: #1

A leithéid seo de dhuine, Tadhg Ó Catháin, théadh sé ag imirt cártaí. An oíche áirithe seo agus é ag filleadh abhaile cé chasfaí air ach bean ón gcomharsanacht. 'Mhuise, a Thaidhg,' ar sise, 'nach mór an trua tú, ag filleadh gach oíche ar do thighín uaigneach is gan de chuileachta agat ach an tseanchroch shúiche.'

'Dhera, éist,' ar seisean, 'ná fuil an madra agam?' Go gairid ina dhiaidh sin casadh bean eile air. 'Hé, a Thaidhg,' ar sise, 'an bhfuil aon chuimhneamh agat ar chailín deas a phósadh?'

'Pósadh!' arsa Tadhg, 'canathaobh, airiú, agus prátaí, min is móin agam is an saol ina shuí ar a thóin agam?' Sea, lean sé leis go dtí gur casadh seandúine air. 'Muise, a Thaidhg, a chroí, nár bhreá leat go mór bheith ag éisteach leis na coisíní ar urlár na cistine ar maidin agus gach aon gháir suilt astu?'

'Is binne liomsa go mór méileach na gcaorach ar bhord an tsilé' amuigh ná a bhfuil de ghártha suilt sa tsaol so,' arsa Tadhg is bhailigh sé leis.

Tar éis tamaill b'ait leis ná raibh an baile bainte amach aige. Stad sé is d'fhéach ina thimpeall. Ambaist, a Thaidhg, ar seisean ina aigne féin, go bhfuil tú ar strae, a mhic. Na daoine sin ó chianaibh a chuir amú tú ní foláir, aicíd orthu!

Ar shliabh a bhí sé, sliabh nár aithnigh sé! Shéid an ghaoth air is ba bheag nár srac an cóta da dhroim. Ghlan cuid den spéir is nocht réaltaí ná raibh aon chaidreamh aige orthu. Cá raibh sé? Ghabh freang tríd. Ó, a Thaidhg Uí Chatháin, ar seisean ina aigne féin, tá deireadh leis an laochas.

Díreach ag an bpointe sin thóg an ghaoth dá bhonnaibh é is rug chun siúil é de dhroim na mbeann, de dhroim na ngleann, tríd na sruthanna ceo, isteach i nguairdeall sneachta gur thuirling sé sa deireadh in áit ná feadair sé -- gleann, is tost ann. Chonaic sé solas uaidh is dhein sé air.

Caisleán de shaghas a bhí ann is na gártha scléipe ag éalú as. Isteach leis. Níorbh fhada go dtáinig sé go dtí halla mór lán de mhná uaisle is iad ag caitheamh fleá is féasta.