

FAIRYTALE OF NEW YORK

Fairytale of New York was released as a single 35 years ago, in November 1987. Jem Finer and Shane MacGowan wrote the song, and it features the singer-songwriter Kirsty Maccoll on vocals. It was the first single from The Pogues' third album, 'If I Should Fall from Grace with God.' The song captures, with kindness, the fragility of human life and relationships. It offers an unflinching picture of addiction, unfulfilled dreams, and damaged relationships, but it is the depiction of kindness and love in the song that offers comfort and hope.

The song is a tale of an Irish immigrant's trip down memory lane on Christmas Eve. The singer begins by recalling a night he spent in a New York drunk tank sleeping off a heavy drinking binge. As an old man beside him starts to sing the well-known Irish ballad, *The Rare Old Mountain Dew*, the singer (MacGowan) begins to dream of, and talk to, his lover.

The remainder of the song is a conversation between the singer and his lover (or it could be a conversation he is having with her in his head) about their dreams that never came to fruition. After winning big on the horses, they had high hopes of success in the city that never sleeps. But now they can't find sleep or happiness in a city that is no place for old people.

The couple's conversation turns from sugar to vinegar, and we quickly hear of the hard times that they went through from their alcoholism and drug addiction as they bicker and reminisce. And yet, almost miraculously, the song ends with love and hope as MacGowan's character tells MacColl's that his life revolved and revolves around her.

Despite all they have been through, they still have each other on Christmas Day (a lonely day for many expatriates) as church bells ring out and the police choir sings another Irish classic ballad, Galway Bay. Even though they did not achieve their hopes and dreams, the couple still find themselves together for better or worse and, against all the odds, are alive and telling their story to the only people that need to hear it, each other. I cannot help wondering why this song has such enduring popularity. It's as if it's not Christmas until we hear it on the radio! MacGowan has often been credited with having an enormous ability to capture so much about the human condition in his songs: desire and excess, love and hate, success and failure.

In his new book *Faith, Hope, and Carnage*, Nick Cave (in conversation with Sean O'Hagan) talks about his love and respect for MacGowan's ability to write so compassionately about people's stories in his songs. Cave and McGowan have a friendship that goes back over 30 years, and they have recorded several songs together. But it was relatively recently that Cave started to understand MacGowan's brilliance. He says that he only understood MacGowan's writing style after his own teenage son died on a family holiday. Through his grief and suffering, he says he became a more complete person. In

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Parish of Ahamlish and Inishmurray

Grange • Cliffoney • Mullaghmore

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Sunday 18th December 2022

Fourth Sunday of Advent



Online Mass

Every Mass from Grange Church available on our Facebook Page

Adoration

Every Wednesday, 7-9pm, Cliffoney Church

Every Thursday, 7-9pm, Grange Church

Mullaghmore Masses

Saturday 17th December	6:30pm	Tom Duffy, Mullaghmore (20th Anniversary) Martin O'Rourke
Christmas Eve Saturday 24th December	6:30pm	Christmas Vigil Mass

Cliffoney Masses

Sunday 18th December	10:30am	Bridie Hargadon (11th Anniversary) Jacqueline O'Carroll (7th Anniversary)
Friday 23rd December	10:00am	Enrollment Mass
Christmas Day Sunday 25th December	10:30am	Michael Burns (22nd Anniversary)

Collection 5/12: €858 Collection 8/12: €116 Collection 11/12: €934

Grange Masses

Saturday 17th December	8:00pm	Michael Caraway & Michael Caraway Jr
Sunday 18th December	12 noon	John Patrick & Ellen Moffatt and sons Sean, PJ, James & Kevin
Monday 19th December	6:30pm	For the People of the Parish
Tuesday 20th December	6:30pm	Feast of St Fachann
Wednesday 21st December	9:30am	Feast of St Peter Canisius
Thursday 22nd December	8:00pm	Mary Langan (1st Anniversary)
Christmas Eve Saturday 24th December	8:00pm	Christmas Vigil Mass
Christmas Day Sunday 25th December	12 noon	

Collection 8/12: €244 Collection 11/12: €845

Grange PPS Christmas Carol Service

In Grange Church on 21st December at 10:00am. All Welcome.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

- Grange: Monday 19th December at 7:00pm
- Cliffoney: Monday 19th December at 8:00pm

Christmas Novena Leaflets available in front porch.

Please Remember in Your Prayers:

- Private Sean Rooney. Killed in action in Lebanon, 15th December. Our sympathy to his fiancée and family.

Grange Tidy Towns Annual Calendar

On sale now after mass and in Grange SuperValu and Post Office

Christmas Lunch

To celebrate the upcoming opening cliffoney day care centre. Monday 19th December 11:30am - 3:30pm at Cliffoney Hall. This event is for clients that intend to use Cliffoney Day Care Centre and other invited guests. To confirm your attendance please contact Gilda at Sli-go Leader Partnership on 071 91 41138 by Wednesday 14th December. Booking essential.

Grave Wreaths

For sale in aid of St Vincent de Paul and north West Hospice. Spruce Wreath €20, Moss Wreath €25. Contact 0876310100.

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a similar way, the couple in Fairytale of New York are realising who they are and what they have. Through their desires and excesses, dreams and realities, and as they go over and back in their bittersweet exchange about the life they have and could have had, there is the tough talk of love and hope that they still have for each other. For Cave, many of McGowan's songs perceptively capture the way people deal with their hardships.

Nick Cave, for his own part, maintains that this is the job of the creative artist - to capture that which is unavoidable in life - what he calls a 'deconstruction of the known self.' According to Cave, we will, all of us, experience some kind of devastation in our lives. It might be a death, or a relationship breakdown, an illness, or a betrayal. It may be a shattering experience and one from which it feels like there is no coming back. Cave argues that people who go through such devastation (and he is referring specifically to his own experience of his son's death) can gradually 'put themselves back together'. And the thing is, when they do that, they often find that they are a different person, a changed, more complete, more realised, more clearly drawn person. I think that's what it is to live, really - to die in a way and to be reborn. And sometimes it can happen many times over, that complex reordering of ourselves.

By the end of Fairytale of New York, the singer (MacGowan) realises that, in the end, it is the dreams of another (his partner's) that he has held close to his own, that have kept him going. And he is still in a relationship with her despite the addictions and bickering comments. There is obvious affection in their wish of happy Christmas to each other.

Michael Sherman teaches theology at Carlow College, St Patrick's. Remembering Shane's friend Noel Kenny, Grange RIP.