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For My Teacher

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Marcella Gajek

For My Teacher

Ladies and gentleman, constable, esteemed judges, I must say that it is a privilege to be here tonight accepting Ballyferriter's Best Arse Award. Just being nominated for this kind of award is an honour in itself, and actually winning it more than makes up for the molesting my arse has suffered through these past few days.

I'd like to thank my parents for their genetic contribution to my entry, all of the friends and family who have supported me over the years and especially the Guinness Company, official sponsors of my arse. I'd also like to thank my two giggling roommates. Without the two of them swooning at my whispered plan and agreeing to wake up at the signal and let me in the kitchen should the plan fail, I might not have had the guts to get out there and compete.

But most of all, I'd like to thank my teacher. She was the wind beneath my wings. She was the one who organized this Irish Language Academic Excursion to Ballyferriter, which inspired me to organize my own Academic Excursion to the pub. She was my guiding light, providing me with a curfew to break, taking the only key to bed with her, patting it under her pillow with assurance, while I slipped out thinking *Anois taim ag dul amach an fhuineog. Cen fath? Mar Bond is anom dom. James Bond.*¹

Ah yes. She taught me well. And her rules were sacred in their breaking, the holy dim light of An Teach tucking me into the arms of the boy I had snuck out to meet, re-flavouring the barley drink entirely. And as for re-flavouring, I like to think that it was this unsanctioned aspect of my field trip that heightened my senses towards the nuance of grammar. As in *Ta lonn leathair orm*².

¹ I'm going out the window. Why? Because the name is Bond. James Bond.

² I want sex.

As in that skipping stagger through the street, hand in hand with Sean Pol, the thought *Anois, taimid ina h'haonar le realtai sin agus bothar dubh seo*.¹

It was this ugly business of the curfew that tuned my spine to the drumming of the waves, the sound of his lips on mine, the taste of salt and moss and *Slan mo run*² whispered from the dorm window.

Unfortunately as I stand here tonight accepting this award, my arse is not in its best form. This morning, my teacher saw incriminating photos of the lock-in hanging up in the shopkeeper's window. Consequently, my arse received a great kicking up and down Main Street earlier today.

It saddens me to know that my teacher could not join us for tonight's award ceremony (due to the fact that she is busy failing me and having me banned from all future field trips), but I know in my heart that if she only knew just how much studying went on that night—*Piont Guinness eile, mas e do thoil e*³—she would approve. If she could only see the coaster where I wrote *Is fear gneasach e Sean Pol*⁴ with no fada out of place, A+ and his phone number to commend it, then maybe she would realize just how much in keeping with UCC's great academic tradition this award really is.

On that note, I'd like to dedicate this award to my teacher. Though she may not appreciate its significance, it would not have been possible without her. So teacher, this arse really belongs to you.

*Go raibh maith agat*⁵.

³ Now we're alone with those stars and this black road.

⁴ Goodbye, my secret.

⁵ Another pint of Guinness please.

⁶ Sean Pol is a sexy man.

⁷ Thanks.