

Home of the Amber Nectar

Jonjo knew it was time, his doctor had confirmed a faint heart cannot run the family business. He had given forty years to the estate which produced the finest Irish Whiskey. Yet Jonjo's contribution was just a fraction of the many hundreds of years it had taken to become the thriving concern it was today. He could trace his ancestry back to the sixteenth century to the small farm in Donegal, and an illicit Pot Still. The family had made shrewd investments and with the successful navigation of the many twists and turns in Ireland's history the reward a highly successful business. Jonjo was aware of his duty, not just to his family, past and present but to everyone who worked to produce the prized product. The farmers, distillers, marketers, they were many and varied. Last but by no means least to Ireland, the country, the culture, the people, he loved every aspect.

Jonjo put out the call, to his surprise James, Anna, Ailan, all three children answered. The succession details were settled in the palatial mansion called home. The surroundings were perfect reminding everyone of family week, the third week of July. They were duty bound to come, it was sacrosanct. Brothers, sisters, cousins, grandparents came together to mingle, play, and seep up their place in Irish history.

Without his beloved wife Maisie, Jonjo had devoted the last ten years entirely to the firm, ensuring experienced and competent people managed the different areas of the business. He asked his children to take up the reins slowly and carefully and to respect everyone employed in the business.

Jonjo knew the decision to return to Ireland and run the company was not just a decision for his children, their families would also have to agree. He knew succession may be straight forward or easy, but it happened.

Six months later Jonjo walked down the wide steps and out the family home offering a smile and a wave, knowing his service was over and with three children and seven grandchildren, for once in the family history, there would be a wealth of descendants to take over. The smile continued as he chatted to the driver on the journey to his new home. He knew his retirement may not be a

long one but the apartment in the nearby coastal town would suit him very well.

Jonjo and Maisie's children were successful in their chosen careers, and their families settled, and growing in their own environments. The siblings knew one day in the future they would return to Ireland. Their childhood home was full and lively while Anna, James and Alains' families relocated to new lives and homes.

James was a research scientist, a middle-aged eco-warrior his interest tilted towards the farming and distilling side of whiskey production. He was excited about the resurgence of interest in 'pot still' grains. His father had spotted the trend a few years ago, and during one holiday week had taken him on a tour of the farms to discuss with farm managers, the pros, and cons of using a mix of ancient grains in pot still whisky.

Anna had studied economics and making the figures work was her passion. Her expertise in tax laws was second to none. She knew her specialism would cover every aspect of the business. Plus, mediating between her brothers was a skill she learnt early in life, and this ability would also be an asset in future negotiations. Anna's daughters were both at university one starting and the other nearly finished. Her husband, an historian, was happy to move to Ireland his only request was a quiet study to work in.

Alain is more difficult to define. A natural linguist, an excellent communicator, charm, and charisma flowed through Alain. He dipped a toe into the corporate world after university, but soon concluded it was not where he wanted to be. Ailan and Emma, a fellow language student, set up a translation business. Partners in business and life they developed their own specialisms. Emma concentrated on book translation and Ailan's were people, it took him all over the world. His ability to work a room, talking to everyone picking up the vibe, interested many a chief executive as did his linguistic skills. He built a good business and reputation, people trusted his opinion; many of his clients considered him a friend.

James, Anna, and Alain kept their word and slowly picked up the reins. James was looking into the feasibility of growing ancient grains for the pot still mix.

His father had experimented with the idea, and a mix had been maturing for several years, it would soon be due for bottling. James was also looking into using a different type of storage barrel. He voiced his request at the last meeting, “preferably madeira barrels, but oloroso would also be acceptable”. At the same meeting Anna put forward her proposal to turn the family home into a hotel, and some of the adjoining land into a golf course. It made sense, the house would still be available for family week, and for the rest of the year it could offer a different strand of income for the business. She convinced her brothers *the hotel would offer many other spin offs, and the possibilities were endless*. Ailan listened, agreed, and started to research into how to bring both expansion plans to fruition.

This is how all three siblings found themselves at the food and drink exhibition in London. Anna and James huddled together standing back from the podium, watching Alain bow and greet the Japanese visitors. It seemed to Anna such a natural and effortless encounter, without a hint of the research and planning behind this moment.

Alain suggested two countries where they could expand sales. The choice considered, existing and future stocks, and the ability to increase production. Plan A was targeting the Japanese market. Anna was unsettled by the cost of exhibiting, she balked at the price of hiring the ginormous screen, which had been a logistical nightmare to have delivered to the exhibition centre. Anna winced, as she watched Alain place three tasting glasses onto the podium counter, each glass with single shamrock expertly cut into the crystal. Anna was sceptical about at how important, and expensive these expertly crafted the glasses were. The thicker crystal in the soft curved bowl of the glass which fitted comfortably into palm of the hand, the gradual thinning of the glass as it made its way up towards the soft, barely perceptible curve of the lip. The small Irish firm who took on the brief insisted on a minimum order of 200. Anna conceded, *Cost effective? Time will tell*. Alain picked up the matching decanter containing the 10-year-old single malt, Anna had to admit the crystal displayed the amber liquid to perfection.

Ailan poured just sufficient into each glass, his fingers slide over the computer keys gently tapping one. Raising his glass to ‘good health’ he turns towards the

screen and invites his audience to stand beside him and watch how the finest Irish whiskey is made. Anna and James also looked over to the screen. The film starts, yet another thing Anna thought which had cost a fortune. Ailan lightly adds a comment or two during the screening he's confident, the film shows off Ireland and their very special product to perfection. Anna and James exchange a smile the film was ending and the area around their exhibition stand was slightly congested. Anna and James move forward to greet their audience, to market the finest Irish whisky, and dish out some goodie bags to the captivated audience; who were delighted to receive them, producing a very convivial end to the first promotional screening.

Ailan kept his audience slightly to one side, and as the crowd began to move on he reached under the shelf and produced two special goodie bags handing them over with hopes the recipients enjoy the rest of the exhibition and a gracious farewell bow. The three siblings exchanged a smile after all the doubts, this was going to be a successful marketing project. They looked around at the people milling past. Plan B delegates were here somewhere.

The siblings flopped into the comfortably worn chairs in the hotel's lounge bar and toasted the end of an exhausting two-day exhibition. The logistics of the setting up and dismantling the stand, plus being the firms' representatives to hundreds, no thousands of people left them temporarily drained. Nonetheless after a few sips of their very own amber liquid, from the bottle they had donated to the bar, energy gradually returned. They talked through the successes of the exhibition. Anna agreed it had been money well spent. James conceded he had enjoyed meeting prospective buyers and discussing the eco credentials of the company, and the intricacies of producing a good pot still whisky. Ailan acknowledged it wasn't just the alcoholic spirit he the wanted people to remember but the Irish spirit, the people, the country. It had survived much over the years. He smiled at his brother and sister *and here we are* he thought, *just the beginning our journey*