

## TABOOS

I'm not a bad person ...

Don't intentionally harm anyone ...

Or break the law ...

Save for a bit of speeding

Or an infrequent toke, but you know what I mean,

No shoplifting,

Or burglering ...

Don't even go to rowdy parties.

And the fact they chose to have a special mass

On a Friday at 5, for a special person,

And the whole village was going,

And me, only hearing about it in Biddy McShane's

After a pint or two ... doesn't change the fact that

I'm just an all-round regular guy - as I see it.

At least I had the decency to stand in the back of the church ...

And **not** sing.

Now, here's why I'm telling you all this.

Next day, Saturday, me and a couple friends went up to Derry.

I'd never been before ...

Fascinating place.

LOVE the wall ...

And me, walking around atop it, I notice this beautiful garden ...

The colors, so warm and radiant against the canvas of cold, gray-black stone.

So, Séan and me, we go down, cross the road,

wander round among the fragrant, neat-trimmed rows,

until I notice the old stone church and we pop in to have a look.

There's these two old folks – man and wife – turns out they're the garden keepers,

And we get to jabbering about this and that, me and – where's Séan? – oh, well ...

the garden,

the awards,

the old stone church,

once Catholic but taken over by the Protestants back in some such year ...

how no one attends anymore, especially the younger folk ...

And me, saying yeah, same with us ...

Telling them about the evening before,

Back in the Glen, Mass and Biddy's and all ...

How there was a crowd only 'cause it was a special thing ...

And they'd emptied out the pubs ... voluntarily, of course ...

It wasn't til later, after I'd left,  
Séan appears and says,  
"Man, what did you say to them? You spooked 'em good ..."

And I thought ...  
Nothing ...  
Flowers ...  
A wee bit of history ... their doing, not mine ...  
Fallen-off church attendance ...

A pint or two before mass?  
Naw, couldn't have been that ...  
Like I said, I'm not a bad person ... and what's a pint or two anyway?

Sure, they told me the place'd been bombed by the IRA ...  
And me thinking, yeah, well, there's a huge spy tower damn near next door,  
which the occupying army uses to watch and listen in on every little thing  
happening in the prison camps, collectively called the Bogside, down  
below.

But I didn't say a word of that ...  
And, jaysus, I don't believe anybody can mind-read ...  
So, it couldn't have been that either ...

And, after all this time, thinking it over, wondering,  
All I can say is,  
It's taboos.

You know ... stuff you don't even have to say to be wrong ...  
To step on toes.  
To cross a line you might or might not even know is there ...  
If you haven't done that at least once in your life,  
You gotta be dead – or a recluse or something.

But think about that ...  
What did spook 'em so ...  
And how the hell am I supposed to admire their garden ...  
Which they were immensely proud of ...  
And rightfully so ...

when I can't even talk to 'em like I had good sense?

By the way ... the IRA says that's all bullshit – they didn't bomb any churches.

Fucking taboos – oughtta be a law.