

# 40 SHADES OF BLUE

It was a gnawing pain, as much at his soul as his damaged hip. Was it loneliness? No! He'd been on his own since the night in London. Maybe it was Christmas? But he dealt with that every year. And it wasn't homesickness, although he still dreamed about old Wexford. Me bollocks on the begrudgers who live there! The next time I hit Main Street, I'll be in a white stretch limo, with a big black hooker on either side, a bottle of Remy in one fist, an ounce of rock pure Colombian in the other!

He stuck his hand out at an approaching yuppie. The master of the universe jumped back in alarm and surrendered a crumpled bill. Five fucking dollars! Will that asshole be pissed! Kevin pulled his collar up against the south wind and limped across St. Mark's. Down the cracked steps into the warmth of the Grass Roots. He bought a mug of draft and over-tipped the prick of a bartender. Prickface gave him a dirty look before handing over the darts. Kevin narrowed his eyes at the board and threw three double 20's. Still got it, thanks be to Jesus! Now for the turkey shoot!

He took a swig and aimed a centimeter away from the board. The dart crashed into the wooden wall and fell to the floor. "Hey, watch out there," Prickface shouted, "it's easy tell, they're not your own!" No, you fucking dickhead, when I had me own, they were light as a feather and not shite like these stumps of trees! The first turkey waddled up. "Wanta throw a game?" He inquired, Wall Street to the eyebrows, up in the East Village slummin' with lesser mortals. "Ah, I'm not very good," Kevin protested. "You're Irish, aren't you?" The Suit countered. "You guys got darts comin' out of your ass!"

"I suppose," Kevin acquiesced reluctantly, "but let's make it for a couple of bucks to keep it interesting." The sucker

played abysmally. Kevin's patience was infinite and he trailed discreetly, until a final double 19 landed him the game.

"I can't believe I won!" His cry of innocence would have put a Method actor to shame. "Double or nothing?" The Suit demanded. Careful now! The second is always the trickiest. By midnight, Kevin was up over forty bucks with 6 shots of Black Bush warming his gut.

The sweet hustler's glow was shooting through him as he searched for Johnny Cash on the jukebox. The Suit's eyes had narrowed to slits of suspicion. Fuck you and the horse you rode in on! That's the one thing they taught me in Wexford, how to shark at darts. "I fell in to a burning ring of fire, I went down, down, down...." He harmonized with the Man in Black.

The Suit was whining to Prickface, but Kevin was on a roll! The whiskey brought out all his old arrogance and he was back in Tommy Roche's pub beatin' Wexford's best - not some trumped up yob in pinstripes who couldn't hit a cow's arse at six inches.

"Give him his money back!" Prickface demanded but Johnny was sinkin' deeper into the fire and it was goin' to be a cold night on the streets. "Fuck you, you little..." He was on the floor before he could finish, the blood spouting from his mouth. He scrambled up the steps and out onto St. Mark's. The warm blood was salty on his tongue and the tears of rage stung his eyes. Then the old pain returned and he remembered the night in London. He stood on the corner of the Bowery and roared at the Christmas sky. "Johnny Cash, where are you now...."