

## **Choking The Chicken**

Did I tell ever tell you about the time I thought I was going to die? Well, more like the time I thought I was going to get shot? Well, more like the time I thought I was going to get shot in the buttock? No? Well, happened a few years ago, on a soccer tour of America. My university at the time, U.C.C, were doing a tour of the east coast. New York. New Jersey. Same old Boston. I think it was out third night in same old Boston. Realised that same old Boston was a lot like Ireland. Same old same old. Pubs closed at two in the morn. What the funk? This is the land of the free! They should be open all night! Unfortunately, they weren't. We were clueless. So ended up in the China part of town, hunting down a munch.

So there's my buddy McGovern, Kaka and myself. Strolling through Chinatown, trying to find a Chinese still open. Preferably one that's not more of a brothel than a restaurant. Strolling the streets. No joy. Kaka strolls ahead. McGovern and myself convinced we know where we're going. Swivel to the left. Down a side alley kind of place. Some dude slunks out from the shadows. Black guy. Hoodie up. On a BMX. You guys lost? No, no, all good, cheers boss. You looking to buy? No, no, all good- Buy what? enquires McGovern? What you want? What you have? What are you doing, McGovern? Just having a laugh, chill. (By the by, we're fairly hammered at this point. Anything was a laugh.)

Hoodie wheels his BMX closer to us. You wanta buy some weed, man, I got some good weed. McGovern laughs. Sees what the guy has held out in his hand. Small bag of brown stuff. In my clueless opinion, crack. Now I'm laughing. Here, I don't even smoke, and I know that's not weed. McGovern is strolling now on. Thanks buddy, but we're good. Hoodie turns his attention to me. You wanta buy some coke, some ice, some blow, that it?! Actually, I just want some Chinese food, know a good place? Hoodie is now prodding a bag towards me - Best s\*\*t you'll ever get. Prime coke. Finest around. Hang on a minute, that's the same horrendous bag of brown stuff you just showed me earlier. Ha, some joke. You're a brutal dealer!

McGovern has now reached the end of the alley. I'm about twenty feet behind him. Hoodie is slowly following me on his BMX. Not a fan of me laughing at his dealing techniques. What you talkin bout fool! Jumps off the BMX. Hand now in his hoodie pocket. Pointing something at me. Being Irish, the thought of that thing he's pointing at me being an actual gun didn't even enter my mind. Until he whipped his hand out of his pocket. And I saw a gun in his hand. Pointing. At. Me. OH. MY. FUNKING. SWEETJESUSCHRIST! For some reason, I leaned forward to check- Yeah. That looks like a gun. Then quickly swivelled on a sixpence. And started powerwalking for dear life.

Why I didn't turn and run at first? I didn't want to startle Hoodie. Make him do anything rash. Power walk. Power walk. Power walk. Oh my funkking Jesus. Oh dear Jesus Christ. Oh Sweet Lord. Hoodie shouting at me. Turn around fool!

I'm not capping you in the back, turn around b\*\*ch. Oh dear Jesus. McGovern is now crossing the road ahead of me. I'm emerging from the alley. All that's going through my head is: Please don't shoot me in the ass. Not in the buttock. Or the back. Definitely not the buttock though. Oh s\*it he's going to shoot me in the ass. How am I going to explain that one to my Mum?!

McGovern has now paused in the middle of the road. Turned. And looking at me. More looking at Hoodie behind me. Leaning in. Is that a... gun?! It is, funk, run! Hoodie is off his BMX. Powerwalking. Not so funny now bitch! Myself and McGovern are sprinting for a main street. OhdearJesusohdearJesusChrist. Run run run!!! Get around the corner and belt it. Arrrrggggghhhh! He's gotta gun! Run! Dodge through a street of traffic. Get to the other side. Spot Kaka just about to get in a cab. Shout an Arrrrggghhh at him. Holds the cab. Jump in. Away we go! Funk. Me. Pink.

Thankfully, that was the last we saw of Hoodie. Decided to call it a night. Freaked beyond belief. Got back to our hotel. Three of us freaked. Get into the lobby. Big group of our soccer team in there. Huddled around a table. Kaka bursts in: Lads! Hayes almost got shot. Seriously, f\*\*king crazy! Whole table in chorus: Shut up! Big game. Huge money. No one cares! Typical. People only love you when you're dead. By now I'm slumped next to a couch. What if he shot me in the ass? What would my Mum have thought?! McGovern tries to re-tell the tale: No, seriously lads, close call, almost got done. Again: 'Shhh. Tell us later. \$100 dollars riding on this next card.' And with that. I went to bed. Lying on my ass. Delighted it was still in tact.

Anyway, that was the time I thought I was going to die/get shot in the ass. And this is the time a chicken almost killed me. Big fan of chicken. Simple man. Simple desires. Simpleton. Chicken is a staple. Enjoy a good chicken anywhere. Out last night for The Man's last night in town. At a bar/restaurant called the Village Idiot. Nice spot. Apt name. Sitting around. Few boozes. Couple of cocktails. Chat to some girls. Every one of them was a lesbian? Or else they were just trying to get rid of me. Maybe it was a lesbian bar? Who knows. Banter flowing. Good old hoot.

Seated. Ordered. Served. Betsy, this chicken looks unreal. Can't wait to have a big huge bit of this breast. Mmmhhmmm. C'mere breast, into my mouth. Not sure what actually happened next. Just that the chicken almost killed me. Must've offended it somehow. Tried to strangle me. Wringing it wings around my neck. Should've chewed the recommended twenty chews. But I didn't. Swallowed a big roasting lump of chicken, whole. Tut. An idiot. In the Idiot. Choking on chicken. Not realising at first. Cough. Cough cough. Nothing. Ahem. Cough. Nothing. Don't make a scene now, take it easy.

Started to quickly go through the different stages of choking. Start off in denial. Initially. Brush it off. Something's just stuck. It'll slide through. Give it a second. Wash it down. Slide through at any moment. Not sliding down the hatch. Hit

the chest a bit. Subtly. Don't want to draw attention to yourself. Table manners. Etiquette. Hit hit. Thumper thumper. Not sliding through. Feels like a bone is stuck. Along with a lump of chicken. Oh Jesus. Burning my throat. Eyes watering. Now slightly gagging. Getting worried. Ah, still no need to panic. Calm down. Only a bit of chicken. Just face away from the table. Cough it up. Thump thump. It'll be fine. No-one chokes on chicken. You'll be fine. This is not fine. This is dodge!

Slowly going blue. Turning away from the table so as not to be rude. Facing the table next to me. Two lesbians who I had been chatting to earlier. Either liked me. Or really disliked me, and merely tolerating my banter. Couldn't figure out. Just knew I was staring at them. Eyes bulging. Neck choked up. Air growing thin. Life starting to flash. Maybe just drunken flashbacks from the night before. Hard to tell. Seriously choking. Seriously struggling.

Which is the point when you start struggling for air. Stomach starts heaving. Unable to cry out. Or wave for help. Too busy. Gasping. Grasping. Looking for help. Facing away from the table. In your attempt to not look like an idiot. Who is coughing up chicken. No more politeness. Try to wave at the two girls next to me. Purple head. Throat veins pumped. See them looking back at you. Disgusted. Ignoring your waves for help. Ignoring the bizarre noises coming from your throat. Ignoring all that. Whores! Just giving me a look of 'Oh, how rude. Simply disgusting.' Apologies, girls. My bad. Should not be choking in such a manner. What am I thinking? Where is my etiquette?!

Eventually the splurts get loud enough that people notice. You're not just coughing. Something's up. Jesus, he's gone blue. Whack him. Whack him. Harder! On the back. BELT HIM!!! Eyes rolling. Dizzy head. This is it. On the way out. Thanks everyone, she's been mighty. Just about to pass out. When one of the lesbians gets up and Heimliches you. Out pops the chicken. Sails through the air. Flapping its bone about. Lesbian dumps you back on your seat. Lie there. Like a used towel. Sweating. Freaked. Death. Sip on your water. Look at your table. And be told: We thought you were just coughing. Or texting. Are you OK?

Yeah yeah. I'm OK. I'm good. Close call though. Relief. Gushing in the air. Dizziness disappears. Realisation kicks in. Thank funk. I didn't just die. Particularly from choking on my chicken. Not the most glorious of ways to go out! Up there with Elvis on the bowl. (Did I just compare myself to Elvis? Ha.) Phew. Oh God. That was close. Jesus. Haven't felt like that since that time in Boston. Did I ever tell ye about that time...

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