

D4

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TO THE uninitiated among you, and there are not many, let me explain that D4 is a leafy suburb of our capital city populated by large mansions, 'hot potato in the mouth' speaking rugby players, an Embassy belt, horse show jumping and cricket - not a sliotar or hurley stick to be found here. In psychological parlance "it's a long way to Tipperary".

The thrifty German hausfrau's money rolled into Ireland thanks to our membership of the EU Monetary Fund and along with Gucci, BMWs and Mercedes we bought holiday homes in places we couldn't pronounce let alone spell, in countries that we just had a vague memory of from our geography lessons in school.

The Queen of England arrived in Ireland, bowed her head to our war dead and called us all 'a cairde' in Dublin Castle. We were flying high, so high that unfortunately like Icarus we flew too high and got our wings burned. The other illustrious visitors to our shores also voiced some of the Queen's words "In the past some things should have been done differently or not at all" but they bowed their heads to no one dead or alive and they certainly didn't call us 'a cairde'. They muttered words like 'No Regulation', 'Bank Bailout' and 'Austerity'. The Troika had arrived. The Celtic Tiger did a runner bringing with him half our young population to places we did know and could pronounce: Birmingham, London, Sydney, Dubai and San Francisco and we were left

looking into Calcutta styled black holes that were now our economy.

Many years ago as I pounded the streets of D4 in the Women's mini-marathon, suited, booted, long coated, top-hatted concierges stood at the entrance of D4's boroughs top hotels in case mere mortals like us would dare use their 5 star facilities. But as W B Yeats said "all changed, changed utterly" and it was no beauty terrible or otherwise that was born.

A self-styled or media created baron had purchased the two luxury hotels for a figure that you would use if you were dialling Australia and intended to change them into high rise office blocks. The ladies in the drawing rooms of D4 swooned at the idea that office blocks would lower middle class and so they took on the planning process and won. The baron licked his wounds and opened his hotel rooms at knock down prices—Fifty euros got you a double room whereas in a previous existence it would only buy you afternoon tea.

My husband and I decided to book in. As our accommodation was so cheap we treated ourselves to dinner in another well-known D4 eatery and it was sumptuous. As we arrived back at the hotel, the foyer was packed and a large ice structure spelt out the figure 21. As I looked around I was amazed to discover that I knew lots of people - "knew" as in I'd seen them on TV magazines or papers. We took a seat in the

corner and did a spot of people gazing, putting names and faces together. It's not as simple as you think, without the advantages of air-brushing they sometimes look a little different. There were TV personalities, celebrities and half the government of the day. A kindly waitress offered us drinks but we said we weren't part of the party. She said "take them, there's lots more where those came from".

The party moved into another room and we retired to bed. We were awoken at 4am to noise and a scene like Tahir Square when the Egyptians were demonstrating to topple president Mursi. Shouting and running in the corridors screaming language that was very 'un D4 like'. Some genius thought that our room contained 'goody bags' and I'm not talking about Smarties or Christmas stockings so they proceeded to try to kick our door in. Reception told us that the Garda had been called and sure enough after a while our boys on blue had restored calm and order.

We checked out and headed for the quiet life in Leitrim. The PR machine cut in very quickly and two days later we received a letter apologising for the disruption caused to us. It was signed by the baron himself but one line was very telling. It read "I will never let such people into my hotel again". To whom did he refer? The TV personalities, the celebs or the Government?

We will never know.