

Inkslingers Blended Session

15th July 2023

The Prompt from The Bag Was:

“Creativity Solves Everything”

And the Visual



*Donegal Home Made Blackcurrant
Jam*

Stairway to Heaven

Gerard Byrne

“D’ja Know Wha’ I’m Goin’ ta Tell Ya”, Siobhan was overly excited as usual at the fortnightly meeting of death survivors. A group set up for those that came back from the brink of death. Even if it was only a few minutes or ten in Siobhan’s case. A mix up at an all you can eat buffet at Chan’s Chinese restaurant had led to her ingesting a large amount of nuts which nearly killed poor Siobhan, but it did give her a good story to tell in pubs and house parties.

“Do tell us Siobhan”, Gloria threw her eyes up as she said it so that the rest of the group could see. They’d all heard this story dozens of times already and it seemed to get more outlandish with each telling.

“Well, ye see I was lyin there on the ground”, continued Siobhan, “totally flat out on the red tiled floor of the restaurant. I remember that clearly because I was thinkin how much they looked like my ma’s kitchen floor tiles. A lot cleaner lookin mind you, but ye get the drift I reckon. Anyway, all these Chinese people where around me screaming and shouting about this that and the other. Ye think they’d all learn English if they’re gonna be hangin around our shores. Wouldn’t ye think?”, she looked around for some moral support with her views, but nobody replied so Siobhan carried on, “anyway, they were all talkin shite and freakin the fuck out and I’m just laying there wonderin what the fuck is happening and this big light opens up over all there little heads. I mean it was bright. I was wondering who had put the lights on and why use such a strong fuckin bulb. I’m sure ye all know where I’m coming from. Me ma put too high of a wattage in the bathroom one day and I came in that night totally wasted”, she nudged a middle aged man beside her, “dropped too many Es and was riding like an E bike all night. Sure you’ve been there as well?”

“Definitely not”, replied the middle aged man with a horrified look on his face.

Siobhan shrugged her shoulders, “my bad”, she then pointed at young Sonia who sat across from her in the circle of stackable chairs, “bet you’ve been there love?”

Sonia was a shy girl with red hair and thick black rimmed glasses. She struggled to speak at the best of times and wasn’t able for direct verbal contact with most of the group, so she shook her head before putting it down again.

“Anyway”, Siobhan continued, “put on the bathroom light that night and thought I was blinded. Fell into the bathtub and shit meself. Was a right mess”

“Can you please get back to the story Siobhan”, Carol the leader of the group normally liked to give people the time to express themselves, but Siobhan had a habit of dragging out her stories for way too long and if you didn’t push her to stay on track, she would waffle on forever, “we’re running out of time on the session”

“No bother boss Carol”, Siobhan saluted her before carrying on, “anyway, this big fucking light opened up and I was dragged up into this white tube. It was like a corridor in a hospital, but nicer. And there was this music playing that I couldn’t place from anywhere in particular. Nothing you could vibe to but nice all the same. Like the shite they play in church on a Sunday. Don’t remember the last time that I was at mass. Maybe uncle Frank’s funeral. Bit of a creep he was. No one missed his wandering hands and throbbin....”

“Siobhan”, Carol quickly cut Siobhan off, “please stay focused on your story”

Siobhan saluted Carol again, “no problem boss lady”, before continuing with her story, “right folks. This is some freaky shit. I’m brought to this beautiful area that’s just water as far as the eyes can see, but I’m not sinking. I’m like that carpenter dude who they nailed to that cross”

“Jesus”, Gloria suggested.

“Ye don’t have to curse Gloria”, Siobhan put one hand on her hip to drive her disappointment home, “I know I’m a slow storyteller but I’m getting there”

“Continue, please”, Carol hoped Siobhan would move on and not lose the rag again, like the time she turned on old Graham when he laughed about her description of heaven. He had said it sounded more like a Persil advert. Siobhan had to be restrained and Graham never returned to the group after that.

“Anyway”, Siobhan took a sip of her water, “I was walking on water and all these clouds started to fill the sky. I mean there was loads of them. It was like this L.S.D. trip I took years ago...”

“Focus Siobhan”, prompted Carol.

“Anyway, suddenly the clouds opened up and this face pushed through. Reminded me of when my boyfriend goes down on me and I get him in a headlock if he comes up too early”

“Stay on track Siobhan”, Carol checked her watch.

“Anyway, it turned out to be me gran and all these questions I wanted to ask her started to flood my thoughts. But there was one that was more important than all the rest. One that me ma had kept asking me gran’s picture in the kitchen. So I looked up at the bodiless face and spoke loud and proud. Ye know the way ye do with a bouncer at the nightclub door when yer well fucked up and he won’t let ye in”

Carol was about to protest again, but Siobhan silenced her with a wave of her hand, “I know, I’m getting to it. Anyway, I asked her whether it was true that she was ridin old Dave from down the street and was he me granda for real. Unfortunately those Chinese bastards revived me at that very moment and I never got the answer. Never fuckin ate there again and never will. Cheeky bastards. Didn’t even get a claim out of them for nearly killin me. Said there was warning signs about the nuts beside every dish. I didn’t see them. Not my fault that I’m dyslexic”

The alarm on Carol’s phone thankfully beeped and most of the group sighed with relief, except Siobhan who could have carried on for another half hour.

“Time’s up folks”, Carol was genuinely relieved by this, “see you all in two weeks”

Siobhan stood up before the rest of the group and tried to get all of their attentions, “sorry lads but this is the last time I’ll be here. Moving onto greener pastures”

Carol tried to look disappointed, but it wasn’t going very well, “ahhh, that’s a pity Siobhan. Why are you leaving us after all this time?”

Siobhan shrugged her shoulders as she headed for the double doors of the dreary function room, “need to find a different group that suits me better. Can’t get a word in here edge ways”, and with that, she marched out the doors for the last time. Much to the relief of the rest of the group.

Creativity Solves Everything

Bernadette O'Reilly

Does creativity solve everything?
Or does it create more problems?
As we struggle with life and creativity
We watch those born with a silver spoon
And abundant talent, achieve creative success
Other talented creatives achieve through hard work
For many creating is an escape from ordinary lives
For many, life stops their creative side
To answer the question
No, creativity does not solve everything,
It's still a precious gift.

The Hills of Donegal

Deirdre Powell.

I love the taste of buttered scones, covered with clotted cream and Donegal home-made blackcurrant jam. You can just sink your teeth into the scone and feel the delicious creaminess floating around your mouth, while you savour the taste of the fruit scone. There's nothing like a moment alone with some creamy, buttered fruit scones.

Speaking of Donegal, I am reminded of a family trip I went on to that county many years ago. At the time, I had returned home from spending part of the year away from Ireland, and the homeliness of the county really struck me. Of particular note was a church that we visited in Gweedore, where there was an Irish inscription of praise etched into the ceiling above the altar. I cannot remember exactly what that inscription was, but the Celtic nature of the church really stands out in my memory, probably because I was away from my native country and it made me realise how much I missed Ireland. The beauty of the beaches, the greenery of the surroundings, and the scenic nature of the hills of Donegal are also foremost in my mind.

Later, we went to visit Sligo and saw the mountain of Benbulbin. The memory of visiting the grave of WB Yeats at Drumcliffe also stands out as part of that family holiday, with the inscription on his gravestone reading, "Cast a cold eye on life, on death; horseman pass by." Subsequently, we went to visit Salthill in Galway and went cycling up and down the promenade by the seafront. The memory stands out because my mother and I had to cycle together in tandem – it was great fun.

With the intervening years, there have been other holidays and other experiences and the memory of that holiday in Donegal has faded somewhat. But now, it is nice to look back and to recall the beauty of a scene from times past – perhaps creativity really does solve everything!

Jake Stevens

Matthew Tubridy

Jake Stevens walks down the street,
He's walking down Moore street,
He grabs a fish from a stall,
The swings it around,
Does a dance,
Like Jake Stevens does,
He gets out a knife and slits the fish in 2,
He eats the fish fillet,
When he's was finished he slams the fish innards to the ground,
He walks down Henry street,
Whistles as he goes,
Then a bucket of water is poured on his head,
I'm Jake Stevens he says,
In a muted tone,
There's Rob and Mick on the top floor of Dunnes Stores,
They angle the pouring water to perfection,
With a hosepipe,
So it doesn't go on Rotten Tooth Bill,
Holder of reality,
When Jakes Hair gets wet
He shouts up to Rob and Mick,
Grrrr! There isn't even any hidden cameras on me!
He put
Puts his newspaper over his head and continues walking,
He goes into the Ilac centre,
To a hair saloon,
Please dry my hair he says,
No cut, just a dry,
That will be 10 euro,
Said the enterprising stylist,
Gives Jake a going over,
Hw leaves the salon looking like he was electrocuted! Fizzy hair central,
I'm Jake Stevens! he says,
But for the second time that day his voices is muted,

He decides to treat himself and gets a coffee,
Sitting in Starbucks he contemplates his day,
He decides to sell souvenir spires,
But a guard tells to him to move on.

Rolling In The Deeps

Gerard Byrne

It was four in the morning but the moonlight lit the road ahead for Dots and Anto. Not the brightest sparks that Dublin had to offer, but they were always willing to take a chance on a quick profit and tonight was no exception.

“I don’t think this is the best idea Anto”, Dots was glancing around at the dark hedges that lined the road, waiting for some unknown assailant to jump out at them at any given moment, “what if someone attacks us?”

Anto waved the rusty shovel that he was carrying, “who’s gonna attack to hard jaws like us?. Especially when we’re carrying these bad boys. They double nicely as weapons”

Dots held up the garden trowel that he had been equipped with, “don’t think anyone is gonna be scared of this heap of shite. Why do you get the shovel?”

“My mother’s tools so my choice”, Anto tapped his friend on the head with the shovel, playfully.

“But your mother borrowed them off my ma and didn’t give them back”, protested Dots.

“Symantecs”, replied Anto.

“Syman, what?”, questioned Dots.

Doesn’t matter, we’re here”, Anto climbed over the rusty metal fence of the graveyard. It was once black, but that was hard to guess these days.

Dots followed after his childhood friend and made sure not to catch his nuts on the spiky bits of the fence. It happened to his uncle Tommy and he lost a testicle. Dots wasn’t chancing that. He swung his leg wide over the fence. Unfortunately so wide that he missed the ledge on the other side and fell into a pile of cut grass that had been left to slowly develop into compost. He let out a shriek that echoed around the quiet graveyard.

“Shut your mouth”, Anto was starting to wish that he had of gone ahead with his gut instinct of a solo mission. More rewards for him.

“How do you even know if the stuff is there?”, Dots picked himself up off the ground and wiped down his new tracksuit, “all those stories were rumours. I’ve never met anyone that was actually at the funeral”

“The Baked Bean was a local legend and everyone heard about that story from two years back”, Anto scanned the graveyard for the eyesore that was the local legend’s burial plot.

The Baked Bean was the Irish equivalent of Snoop Dog. He had a slew of hits that never sold well outside Ireland. People thought he was gonna be like his father, the Mushy Pea. A folk singer who was well known the world over for his drinking, womanising and sometimes even his music. The Baked Bean had tried to forge his own path in the music world. Releasing rap songs about combine harvesters and stable hands with more cleavage than brain cells. They were novelty shite at best. When he died two years ago, it was rumoured that nearly every person attending the funeral had thrown drugs in the coffin. Mostly joints, but there might be a few bags of coke in there as well. People had talked in pubs about that day, but no one was brave enough to go find out. Especially because of the Baked Bean’s friends. A dangerous mob of local criminals who had a fond spot for the shite rapper.

“There it is”, announced Anto, pointing at a large gravestone that looked like a fist holding a big joint. Etched into the marble was the slogan, CREATIVITY SOLVES EVERYTHING, words that the Baked Bean lived by. Didn’t make him much money, but he lived by those words all the same.

Dots noticed a set of flowers that was made to look like a pot of jam, “what’s that all about?”

Anto shrugged his shoulders, “no idea”

Blackcurrant Jam

Ciaran O'Melia

While working, I happened to visit Donegal, Killybegs specifically. As I was in the wastewater industry, I met a few interesting people, and the chief among them was the Sanitary Inspector for Killybegs.

He was a kind man and nothing but helpful. He and I am, including the wife in this, had a large family, all flown the nest, but more about that later.

Killybegs was the hive of activity with trawlers from every corner of Europe. From memory, they had a bone meal factory where they would process the fish into chicken food. I do recall sitting in a pub having a pint with an associate of mine who was English. We were watching a rugby game. Sitting at the bar, another customer resting his head on the bar. Well, Mike Gibson had the ball and ran with it before exchanging it with another Irish player.

My friend shouted, "Good scissors".

The man resting his head on the bar woke up and said. "What"

"Good scissors." Replied my friend.

"Scissors?" He asked.

But by now, the game had moved on, and I noted that the English are not afraid of showing their skills, so a long discussion developed.

But back to why I was there. I was fed up watching the game and listening to a discussion on the merits of good scissors and decided to contact the Inspector. He invited me into the kitchen and met his wife. Now I know he must have a large family as he had a big kitchen and a long table.

It seems he was a forester; the table could have come from the forest wood.

He asked the wife to put the kettle on and maybe a few rashers, tomatoes, mushrooms and anything else she could find.

She did this, and we had a lovely meal.

“That’s grand,” I thanked her.

“ Have you ever tried fried bread?”

I lied to the negative as my mother made it every chance she had.

She soon produced four pieces of fried white bread and jar of ‘Donegal Home Made

Blackcurrant Jam. She tells me she picked the blackcurrants herself.

There is nothing like fried bread, with blackcurrant jam, especially with melted butter running down your sleeve.

‘Finger-lickin’ good’

Creativity?

Fiona Deaton

With this prompt I cast my mind back some 25 years ago and I wonder whether my success in the business world was creativity or not. Today it would be called innovation, but in my early 30's when it came to negotiation which was part of my job, I did a lot of just plain 'ole bullshitting'.

I recall a certain deal I brokered over a two month span which really all I did to achieve the outcome was bullshit. I had a capital expenditure form for £36,000 punt and the list price was £78,000. I needed 36 desks for the 'Indian software engineers' who were due to arrive mid Quarter two 1999 and begin working in the Dublin global headquarters of a software multinational.

Looking at the quote, with only a sole supplier, I knew I needed to get creative. So I set off on a challenging journey. The supplier who was part of a global chain, my first port of call was to get a member of their UK outfit to consider the said quote. He considered same and said it was overpriced by £20,000 punt. I then got the Irish supplier armed with this information to reduce the quotation by £25,000 punt. But that still left a delta of £17,000 punt. Then I worked the issue through my brain, and realised that we had a lot of redundant furniture we had purchased from the said supplier. The sales rep after many visits and inspections of the redundant furniture agreed to a lower price of £40,000 punt on the new furniture.

I was within a hairs breath of sealing the deal, but I still had £4,000 to go. Some say I am hard worker, but in the main I am nothing but persistent. I purchased the new furniture for £35,000 punt in the end. After another (6) weeks later the India staff were sitting in their brand new shiny desks and I had a £1,000 to spare with which I bought a second hand vending machine that dispensed free coffee.

Later in my career I attended an Advanced Negotiation course with a bigger multinational IBM and I was in a real jam, on an exercise in deadlock. I remembered the creativity I brought to above negotiation, and walked away from a deal with the promise to return in 5 minutes. I

used my creativity to figure a different angle on the deal and shone like a shiny star on the course attended by many of my global peers.

I concluded then as I do now, that creativity is valuable in every walk of life not just the arts. It has evolved from bullshitting to innovation, its application can spread far and wide.

'Now where is the blackcurrant jam' I thought today, so I can spread it over my toast or else I will be late from my job as a sales assistant in Dunnes Stores.

Dancing to the Book

Greg Fields

It was Rosie's dancing that sparked something in her, some fire that warmed her soul before flaring outward into the world. When she was small she danced to whatever music she might find, songs on the radio to birds' calls to orchestras in her mind. A child's response to the world around her, an emanation of some unspoken internal joy, the wonder and energy simply of being alive, that was all. The eight-year-old Rosie Carter danced her way through the simplicities of her life, and loved every minute of it.

But the dancing faded as Rosie aged. The expectations grew more pressing and the time to play contracted, and Rosie conformed to the regularity of school and home and friends who wanted to do more things than dance. She was a good girl – studious, and committed, and invariably polite. Quiet enough to be slightly mysterious to the girls around her, and pretty enough for the boys to notice, she navigated her way through the teens. 'My God,' she thought to herself one night, 'It's all coming around so fast,' and with that thought she asked herself what might come next, and, with it, what might any of it mean for a small girl from the suburbs.

It was her second year of college that revived her, revived the latent Rosie that had danced through a safe childhood. She had been interested in a young man in her journalism class, a handsome, brooding, dark soul that spoke in whispers and riddles. By mid-term she sought him out each class, made sure that she sat next to him and tried to engage him in small talk, in idle chatter and, finally, in flirtatious banter. The young man, whose name was Salvador, would have none of it. He replied in monosyllables, kept his gaze moving about the room, and never smiled. By the term's end, Rosie had determined that flirtation would not work, and so she followed him one late afternoon after class, gathered her courage, and touched his sleeve.

"Sal," and he turned. "You must know that I'd like to get to know you better, and all this subtle flirting doesn't seem to be working," and with this she covered her nerves with a tiny giggle. "So I'll be direct. Would you like to have coffee with me, or maybe we could meet for lunch?"

Sal looked hard at Rosie, his dark eyes seeming to pare away her very being. She stood before him then, as naked as she would ever appear to any man. "No, Rosie," he said at last. "I can't do that. Please leave me be," then turned and walked away without a glance.

Rosie stood transfixed on his form until it rounded the corner at the end of the hallway. She did not move, and her heart pounded through her ribs. She felt her face grow red while tiny droplets of perspiration laced her brow.

When she returned to her dormitory room that night, she did little but look out her window onto the quad below. Her roommates were out, the room was quiet, and Rosie for once had space. There, at the end of it, she rose from her chair and went to her dresser. In the third drawer she kept the things she needed that were not clothes or books, and from that drawer she pulled out a journal, something her mother had given her last Christmas. She had never used it. But now, as she held it in her fist, she felt a pulse rise from its cover, down her arm and straight to her heart.

Rosie sat back down at her desk, picked up her pen, and wrote about Sal. She wrote about the girl who had danced her way in hope and wonder, who had never known much in the way of disappointment or rejection, and how Sal had taught her something, although it would take her a while to digest it all. She was a girl no longer, that she knew.

The start of something, this was. Intuitively she knew this, knew that this book would be with her, and next to her, and would sustain her by anchoring the thoughts and emotions and bruises that were bound to come. Creativity in these pages, perhaps, or maybe just an intellectual bloodletting, but it would be enough. Creativity would help solve the riddle of Rosie Carter, woman at large.

When she finished this first entry, Rosie placed the book back in her drawer. And as she turned away from the dresser, she danced a few small steps to the window, then pirouetted into the falling night.

Creativity solves everything

Michael O'Brien

As John came down the stairs the musty smell of the carpet wafted up his nostrils reminding him yet again of all the work that needed to be done in this house, and in his life in general, he had let things slide he knew it, alcohol helped him forget it sometimes, but every morning despite whatever entertainment or distraction he indulged in the night before, there was always that musty little reminder, every morning.

It wasn't laziness that held John back it was more anxiety, or his nerves as the older folk would say. He had started to realize that anxiety was only a part of it, there was cowardice too, anxiety plus cowardice equalled inaction, sometimes seen as laziness.

He had taken to learning the trumpet, twice a week he went to classes, that took care of the inactivity. Then there was the fear, so to counter that he had taken to going to his local park and sitting on a bench with his music sheets on a stand before him and practicing, he did this as an attempt to cauterize his anxiety and out of consideration for his neighbours, who he liked, he could not in all conscience subject them to the moans of agony from his trumpet. It was dawning on him, that this new creative endeavour was moving him away from the sloth and suffering in his life, to a brighter and braver future.

Saving lives at sea

Matthew Tubridy

The boats going under,
I'm a lifeboat volunteer!
Called Rob,
I live in Howth,
When the pager goes off,
I race down to the harbour,
But it's just the musician duo 'Versatile'
making their music video for their song 'Perfume'
How are ye lads? Rob asks,
Cool man!

Another day Rob rescues a 8 year old girl who fell off Howth pier,
Rob pulls her on board,
After the girl is reunited with her father
Rob goes back to the boathouse,
Has a few cups of tea,
He slams his hand on the table,
Goes 'I saved a life today!'
Later that week the girl comes back to the boathouse,
Gives Rob a card she drew herself,
It says 'Thank you!'
The next day Rob walks with a spring in his step.