

Inkslingers Blended Session

9th March 2024

The Prompt from The Bag Was:

“Life is like a box of chocolates, it doesn’t last long if you are fat ”

Joe Lycett

And the Visual



*Star Trek episode banned for
34 years after unified
Ireland prediction*

End

Tadgh O.Brien

I had a dream the world would end:
Few years off not in the morning.
And it seemed that I should mend
the problem issuing a warning.

In haste I scribbled down my notes
And hours at the whiteboard spent.
I scoured the net I read the quotes
But data's often wrongly bent.

I had a dream the world would end:
This time many people knew.
And in the end they comprehend
there were some things that we could do.

I joined the marches on the street
I wrote my letters to the press.
The common man the old elites
We blamed each other for the mess.

I had a dream the world would end:
All humankind we knew our fate.
Few ways remained to off it fend,
But it was already too late.

Life is like a box of chocolates.

Laura Alves

Life is like a box of chocolates. It doesn't last long if you're fat. It is true to say obesity is a risk factor in life, which drastically reduces your life expectancy. However, there are fat people who won't eat chocolates for some reason and there are skinny chocoholic people. With these, you should be careful where you leave your chocolates as they will claim they have to eat the chocolates before they melt even if they are in the North Pole in winter.

This comparison made me sad as I lost a very dear cousin just a few days ago and he was extremely obese. He was also very young, only 46 and had all sorts of health problems aggravated by his obesity. He was not specifically fond of chocolates as far as I know, he was fond of rice and a lot of meat! However, I can compare him to chocolate as he was someone everybody liked as there was always a big smile on his face. While it has been researched that chocolate is a good remedy for depression and makes people happy, my cousin Fabio also had this effect on people. We were always happy to see him as he was always smiling and had a positive thing to say all the time. He never complained even when he was in excruciating pain, which made it difficult to save him as his illness was only found out when it was too late. He will be sorely missed and we will always remember him with a big smile on his face!

The World will hold its Breath

Gerard Keogh

Chapter 3

The Gates of Moscow

The German invasion force was divided into three army groups: Army Group North advanced through the Baltic States in the direction of Leningrad (St. Petersburg); Army Group Centre was tasked with advancing on Moscow; and Army Group South thrust into Ukraine, towards Kiev (as it was then), and on to the industrial region of the Donbas, and Crimea. Of these, the biggest was Army Group Centre. Hitler disagreed with his generals over the importance of the capture of the Russian capital. Leningrad was the birthplace of Bolshevism, and its port on the Baltic Sea would facilitate the resupply of German forces. Ukraine's industrial capacity, its agriculture, and its natural resources all helped make it a tempting target to the German leadership. Hitler didn't think Moscow was as vital to the defeat of the Soviet Union as were Leningrad and Kiev. In addition, Army Group Centre had advanced farther than the other two army groups had, creating a salient that was vulnerable to attack. Elements of the German army advanced to within 30 kilometres of the Kremlin, and stopped. The hesitation proved fatal. It was December, 1941. The Soviets launched a furious counter-attack and forced the Germans onto the defensive.

For the gates of Moscow, substitute the gates of the Department of Education's head office on Marlborough Street, Dublin. Anthony Armstrong was redeployed to the Post-Primary Building Unit, which occupied a spot next to the main building. Talk about going from the frying pan into the fire. The floorboards creaked underfoot, as if part of the sound effects in a vampire movie. There was a winding staircase that seemed to go on forever if you were trying to get to the top floor (no lift). The civil servants worked with professional staff who were part of the unit. Quantity surveyors and architects inhabited a different world from that of their administrative colleagues. Some of them strutted about the place like arrogant peacocks; one or two of them were almost human.

In the hierarchy of the staff who worked in the PPBU, the professional grades were at the top and everyone else was subdivided into admin roles that came with their own hierarchy, determined by the letters after their name which indicated their grade. It was made clear to Anthony that he occupied the bottom rung on the Civil Service career ladder. More than a decade of experience in the Service counted for nothing.

Skills acquired in previous positions were not even considered when allocating tasks. He was at the constant beck and call of his superiors, who seemed to take delight in ordering him to do all the crappy work that they thought was beneath them. "Get me ten copies of that." "Send this fax to so-and-so." "File that away, will you." "Bring that over to the Minister's Office." "Climb inside that chimney and clean it." OK, not that one; but to each of the other orders, he desperately wanted to reply by saying, "Do it your damn self." Of course, he was too polite to respond in such a manner, so he kept his resentment to himself and the pressure inside increased like a volcano that was about to erupt.

The Second Battle of Kharkov (Kharkiv) in May, 1942, resulted in a German victory, and set the scene for the great summer offensive conducted by the Germans that year. Army Group South was divided into Army Groups A and B. Army Group A was to advance into the Caucasus and capture the vital oil fields; Army Group B was tasked with protecting Army Group A's left flank, while advancing towards Stalingrad, on the Volga. Having failed to achieve the necessary quick victory over the Soviet Union, Hitler realised he was now fighting a war of attrition, one that Germany could not win without gaining control of the oil fields in the south of the country. This imperative, coupled with his decision to divide Army Group South in two, ultimately led Hitler down the road to disaster and the annihilation of an entire field army in the city that bore the name of the Soviet dictator.

Anthony had the good fortune of not being in southern Russia in 1942. However, just like Army Group B, he found himself on the move again. He was transferred to the Youth Affairs Section, within the department. As with the fighting on the Eastern Front since the start of Operation Barbarossa, each new situation in which he found himself in the Department of Education seemed to outdo the previous one in its

awfulness. Youth Affairs was located on the eleventh floor of Hawkins House, just across the River Liffey from Marlborough Street. Hawkins House was widely regarded as Dublin's ugliest building. It was a monstrosity built in the 1960s, and no one shed a tear when it was eventually demolished in more recent times. The ugly façade made it an unlovable building for those who stood at a bus stop on Hawkins Street, or who walked past it on their way to work. But the unattractive exterior concealed an even more unpleasant world behind this steel and glass mistake from the sixties. The German Sixth Army, led by Friedrich Paulus, is forever linked to the Battle of Stalingrad. The name of that battle is synonymous with urban close-quarters combat at its worst. The outcome of that titanic struggle on the Volga would prove to be a turning point in the war in Europe.

For Anthony Armstrong, read: Friedrich Paulus; for Youth Affairs Section, read: Stalingrad.

What would I ask for

Deirdre Powell.

What would I ask for
If I had the choice?
Should I ask for health
Or should I ask for wealth?
What should I ask for,
That is the question.

Should I ask for a long life
That spans the generations,
A big house and a fast car,
Popularity beyond compare,
A trip to the Moon
Or a diamond as big as the Ritz?

But maybe I would ask for
A good life crowded with the footsteps
Of friends and camaraderie,
A healthy life with not too many bumps,
Or a home where there is ease of conversations
And a sense of place.

What would I ask for:
To be so blessed
As to live peacefully
Under the sun, high in the sky,
A sense of the divine,
Interior peace,
And wisdom.

“It’s censorship, Jim; but not as we know it.”

Gerard Keogh

The High Ground

Sometimes facts sound like fiction. An episode of Star Trek: The Next Generation was indeed banned by the BBC (and by RTE) for years after it was first shown in the U.S. in 1990. The offending episode from season three was titled, “The High Ground,” and the British state broadcaster had a problem with one scene, in which Lt. Commander Data (the android) gave a few examples from Earth’s history of successful campaigns of terrorism; one of them resulted in the reunification of Ireland in 2024 (I kid you not). You would like to think that someone at the BBC would have said, “Eh, it’s a story about terrorism on another planet, set in the twenty-fourth century, Stardate 43510.7, to be precise. It’s not real.” Maybe they did. In any event, word came down from on high that this episode must not be broadcast on the BBC. Or, as Captain Jean-Luc Picard would say, “Make it so.”

Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry was a visionary in many respects. The original series from the 1960s featured a black actress whose character formed one half of the famous interracial kiss scene with Captain Kirk. The bridge crew also included an East Asian, a Russian, and a Vulcan (given the current state of geopolitics, Mr. Chekov would have more trouble finding a job in Starfleet today than would Mr. Sulu and Mr. Spock). If the storyline of “The High Ground” proves as prophetic as some other episodes turned out to be, we may be in for a bumpy ride this year. At the time it was written, 2024 must have seemed such a long way into the future. Well, here we are, folks. With the recent shift in the demographics of Northern Ireland, there are rumblings of a border poll to determine if there should be a change in the territorial status of that part of the island of Ireland. Is it likely that Ireland will be unified sometime within the next nine months? Is it possible that the android got his facts wrong? I don’t know which of those two possibilities is the more terrifying.

By the way, the BBC (as far as I can recall) had no problem with the two-part episode from season five, titled “Unification.” In it, Ambassador

Spock (he'd been promoted) went on a secret mission to help bring about the possible unification of the Vulcans and the Romulans.

Double standard, or what?