

# Inkslingers Blended Session

**30th March 2024**

The Prompt from The Bag Was:

**“You’re Trying to Kidnap What I’ve Rightfully Stolen ”**

**The Princess Bride**

**And the Visual**



***Write Now!!!***

## Holy Saturday

Greg Fields

Flynn Murphy sat in an alcove in his apartment, the one formed by a built-in bookshelf that wrapped to the wall overlooking the small garden at the center of his complex. The day was dwindling, and Flynn marked its passing with a glass of wine. Holy Saturday, it was, a singular day in his heart's calendar, the Saturday between Good Friday's sorrows and Easter's joys, really a day of nothingness, with nothing to contemplate and none of Jesus's torments to consider. A day of spiritual emptiness.

Murphy drank his wine and sought the nothingness that the day implied. He could not find it. There was nothing spiritually neutral about this Saturday, nor any other Saturday for the past several months. Neutrality had been lost, and his soul now filled with the sins and griefs that Jesus carried to his cross.

He drank more now. There was rarely a day that passed when Flynn Murphy did not have a glass or two of wine, or a bracing of scotch, or gin, or vodka, or any other hard spirit that came to him. That had not always been his pattern. Things changed that day, and they changed forever. No turning back.

As he drank his wine, his wife came into the small space with her own glass. She was hesitant. Murphy was quiet during these times, emitting a distance that was not to be penetrated or disturbed. Still, he was her husband, and duty called her to be with him, even when he suffered this way.

"Can I join you?", she asked barely above a whisper.

Flynn Murphy nodded to the chair opposite, saying nothing, and Ellen Murphy softly settled across from her husband. There they sat for uncounted minutes under a fearful press of silence. At length, it was Flynn who spoke.

"I still see him, you know." Ellen Murphy sat silently and nodded. A small crack in the wall, and she dare not jeopardize it.

"I see him every day," and Murphy sipped his wine, a deep draught of it. Something inside of him had come loose. "I hear it, too. You know, Ellen, the sounds never go away. It sounded like thunder. Like a bomb. And, God help me, I thought I could even hear his chest shattering, his sternum crinkling into shards and slivers. I heard his body hit the floor. A thump I can't describe, but I still hear it. And tinkling, like broken glass. I don't know where that came from, but I know I heard it."

He paused again for a time, and both sat silently, not looking at the other but focusing on some safe spot within the garden, one that could not offer a rebuke.

Murphy went on. "The blood, of course. They scoured it as best they could. Got it all up, or so they said, but I still see it. Every time I walk into the store I see it. Lady Macbeth, I am," and he gave a low and insincere chuckle.

"I'm so sorry, Flynn," his wife whispered. "I know how hard it is for you. But you've got nothing to feel guilty about. Nothing at all. You know that. He was trying to rob you."

Murphy finished his wine, then looked to Ellen. "And he succeeded. He took from me something I can never get back. A kidnapping with no ransom note," and with that Flynn Murphy rose from his chair to find the wine bottle and refill his glass. He returned with the bottle, now almost empty, and gestured to Ellen, but she needed no more of it.

They sat in silence again then, and Murphy's thoughts did not quiet themselves. 'Holy Saturday,' a voice told him, 'and a resurrection at hand.'

But there would be no resurrection the day following, or any day after that. Not for Dashawn Roberson, whose remains now were in some unknown place, or cremated and distributed with the rest of the city's soot. Nor for Flynn Murphy, who had yet to come down from his own cross, nor hear the voice of God welcoming him home.

## **Gardening**

**Bernadette O'Reilly**

I gardened today  
The writer announced  
You garden  
I mocked him  
Better than facing a  
Blank white page  
His riposte  
Words float like bubbles  
We try to catch  
When falling asleep or busy  
Faced with a blank white page  
The words seem to take off on holiday.

## **Three Crows**

### **Ciaran O'Melia**

Three crows were gathered on the roof. Below them, they see plastic bags, lots for them to rip open.

One says to the other two, "I'm going down there to pick at the plastic bag."

The one in the middle says, "What could be in it?"

"That is why I'm going down."

The one on the right says, "If you go down, I'll join you."

"Not me," says the middle one.

"Why not," asks the one on the right.

"I saw the human pour something in it."

"O," says the one on the right.

He has second thoughts and expresses them.

"If I go down there, will you promise me I will not get poisoned?"

"Ok, I'll promise."

"One other thing." Said the second-thought bird.

"What's that," said the promiser.

"You must look after my young."

"You're at it morning, noon, and night; how many young have you got?"

He had to think about that before saying, "They're all gone, flown the nest."

"Fair play to ya, educated?" Said the middle one.

"A wing and a prayer."

# **Energy = Mass x the Speed of Light squared**

**Gerard Keogh**

## Chapter 1

### More bang for your buck

The speed of light in vacuum is 300,000 kilometres per second. That's a big number. Now square it. That's a huge number. Albert Einstein's famous equation  $E = mc^2$  tells us that mass and energy are equivalent; they are two sides of the same coin. The approximate amount of energy released from the fission of an atom of uranium-235, for example, is 200 megaelectronvolts, or MeV. With a sufficient quantity of this fissile material, and under the right conditions, you can get a very big bang for your taxpayers' buck. In addition to the obvious military application of  $E = mc^2$ , there are many everyday examples of technology in use today that also take advantage of Einstein's little equation. Electricity generated by nuclear power stations is just one of them, although this country has chosen not to go down that road. Our nearest neighbour is one of those countries that have gone down the nuclear path, which is why the Department of Public Enterprise had a Nuclear Safety Division back in 1998, when Anthony Armstrong finally made it out of the Gulag and returned to something resembling normality.

For the first time in many years, Anthony had a real interest in the work he was doing. The person he replaced had zero interest in it, and she seemed to be happy in Anthony's old job in the Department of Education, so the swap worked out well for both of them. He was already familiar with some of the terminology that was being thrown around the office; it didn't sound like a foreign language to him, which meant that he picked it up without much difficulty. But perhaps the best thing about working in Nuclear Safety was that as far as the general public was concerned, very few people even knew it existed. This came as such a relief to someone who had spent the last nine years on the receiving end of all kinds of abuse from members of the public. It enabled him to do his job without living in fear of the next phone call, even though there was no shortage of stressful days, with things that had to be done...NOW.

The nuclear reprocessing plant at Sellafield, Cumbria, in the North-West of England, is practically on our doorstep. Spent fuel from reactors was sent there to be converted into plutonium for use in nuclear weapons. Sellafield was then and remains today a repository for nuclear waste, with spent fuel rods and other waste products submerged in a large pond, and highly radioactive liquid waste encased in glass through the vitrification process for safer long-term storage. For understandable reasons, many people have a great fear of radioactivity and of what it can do to the human body. Successive Irish governments have objected to the activities at Sellafield, much to the annoyance of the British side. Part of the reason for the public antipathy to all things nuclear can be attributed to the disaster at Chernobyl and its aftermath, and to the ever-present threat of the outbreak of thermonuclear war. However, there was one incident here around the time of the turn of the millennium that bordered on the comical. It prompted parliamentary questions and received coverage in the news media. The concern centred on feral pigeons that had allegedly flown all the way from Sellafield, and which may have been contaminated with radioactivity. The pigeons were unavailable for comment, so our own nuclear scientists provided expert advice to the civil servants in Nuclear Safety, who then advised the Minister of State on how he should respond to this “crisis.” Remember: they were pigeons.

Another panic that gripped the nation at the time was the potential for harm caused by the use of mobile phones, which were well on their way to becoming ubiquitous. Spending too long with one of these devices pressed against your ear could potentially fry your brain with radiation, was the gist of the concern that some people had. Once again, our nuclear scientists had to explain that there was no need to worry: there is a difference between ionising and non-ionising radiation. The former carries more energy, and is therefore more likely to be harmful to human health; while the latter is a form of lower-energy radiation of the type emitted by mobile phones, for example, and is less likely to cause serious harm. If only someone had possessed the foresight to predict the greater danger to the public posed by TikTok.

One other alarm bell that was rung loudly during Anthony’s time in Nuclear Safety proved to be a little foretaste of things to come in our

present age. Reactor No. 4 at Chernobyl had been encased in a huge concrete sarcophagus in the wake of the disaster in 1986. When concerns grew that the sarcophagus was not fully secure (a development that could potentially lead to a further release of radioactive particles into the atmosphere), an international fund was established to assist the Ukrainian government in building a more permanent containment structure over the reactor. The fund was administered by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the amount of money raised was substantial; contributions totalled more than \$750 million.

As part of its effort to secure the funds, the Ukrainian government made thinly veiled threats that it could not be held responsible if there were to be a catastrophic failure of the sarcophagus. It was nuclear emotional blackmail, and it could be argued that similar techniques are part of the playbook of the current government in Ukraine: "If you don't supply us with weapon X, or vehicle Y, or ammunition Z, your country will be next. NATO member states have eagerly sent vast quantities of ammunition of various kinds, as well as the weapons systems and platforms that use them, to the beleaguered Ukrainian armed forces, resulting in the present stalemate on the battlefield, with no end to the fighting in sight. Meanwhile, European munitions manufacturers say it will take ten years to replenish stocks of ammunition that have been severely depleted by just two years of war in Ukraine. If direct conflict between Russia and NATO breaks out in the next few years, NATO member states may come to regret caving in to emotional blackmail from Kyiv, and wish they had kept more of those precious 155mm artillery shells for their own defence against Russian aggression. Time will tell.

The decision to commence the Manhattan Project emerged from the worry that Nazi Germany could be first to develop an atomic bomb, a possibility which was brought to the attention of President Franklin D. Roosevelt by Albert Einstein, he of the famous (or infamous) equation  $E = mc^2$ . As events transpired, the war in Europe ended before the successful detonation of the first fission bomb, and Germany was spared the fate which later befell Japan. Could the Germans have developed and used their own atomic bomb before their eventual



unconditional surrender in May, 1945? That remains open to conjecture. What is historical fact is that the Americans succeeded in building the bomb and using it; just four years later (largely thanks to the many communist sympathisers who worked on the Manhattan Project), the Soviets detonated their own bomb, and the genie was well and truly out of the bottle.

If not for the fear of the National Socialists getting their hands on the technology that now endangers us all, the nuclear physicists of the 1930s and 1940s might have said to each other, "Yes, a weapon of this kind is theoretically possible, but building one would be morally reprehensible, so let's hide this at the back of the 'Bad Ideas' filing cabinet." Making decisions with a metaphorical gun pointed at our head is almost certain to lead to bad outcomes. Whether radioactive pigeons, or mobile phones, or a crumbling sarcophagus, or the letter Z on a tank, or even the Third Reich, the desire to prevent something bad from happening often results in reason being thrown out of the window, and emotion taking its place.

Anthony found himself dealing with a wave of emotion that severely rocked his boat in Nuclear Safety, and which ended the three years of peace he had enjoyed since arriving there. He couldn't have known it at the time, but his final day of normality in the Department of Public Enterprise would be Monday, September 10, 2001.

## **Golden Years**

**Gerard Byrne**

Those extra years,  
Not always a god send,  
Sometimes a hell that keeps on giving,  
Varicose veins and sagging skin,  
Wrinkle marks and failing organs,  
Is it really worth it?,  
Is it really worth the extra years?,  
Pissing and shitting yourself in a nursing home that is far from your first  
choice,  
Two tickets to Austria,  
One for me and the other for a loved one to hold my hand in those last  
few moments of life,  
Squeezing my wrinkled appendage until my life beats no more,  
Till my consciousness has drained from this earth,  
Till my toes curl up in mortal retaliation of my heart ceasing to beat,  
As Kurt Cobain once etched on paper,  
It's better to burn out rather than fade away.

**Under the Kis'ah**  
**Bridin Mary Harnett**

He had slapped his sister across her face as it is reported.

In the light of the knowledge of such a mishap, I rather consider genealogical impairments.

Of a rising temper of strength of warriors of old.

As a derivative of an ancient almost obsolete coding of the Attila the Hun typology of assimilated human origin. Indeed the former was renowned as the scourge of God in his time. Perhaps his descendents are DNA carriers of strength unravelled in appropriate situations for wont of knowledge in the absence of loss of control of the self and the likelihood thereof. As one is coded by God as one might understand him, one is, in conscious and unconscious definitive approaches to life trajectories. I am rather afraid that the remnants of such an aforesaid imbued coding exists in me, given my propensity not to know my own strength, and as I fear the realization of the same – the realization of having been given the innate sense I have to be. Then such a loss of control might carry me out of myself in apparency for fear of the impact of myself. Indeed this puts me in a terrible situation of self suppression in efforts to shield people from my potential self as I exist according to the levels of interaction other people bestow on me. Some might call it, crumbs.

Yes, crumbs from their tables of reticence and envy.

Unless...

Yes, there is mercy and I believe that by the mercy of God, I might be admitted to him, for not even love for another human being can overcome the mercy of God.

Mercy for the poor, for the ignorant, the needy, the lonely...

Yes, I slapped my sister too – when I was young.

Both of them...

Nominally, I discover feelings in degrees of intensity, normal natural human feelings of worth which progress and flow in cadences of the

intricate windings of the mind, then projected on the propensity of phonemic sounds. But this kind of anger feeling rises inside from nowhere, perhaps from a depth external to a given physiological system. Not that I blame myself when it happens to me, not even in moments of self-righteous reactive spouts of loud quibble which I am prone to every now and then.

Tempers rise indeed.

Anger does not flow within as feelings of pleasure. If love is all encompassing, then anger over comes one in extemporal moments of unpremeditated lashing out at any given provocation in accordance with the threshold of the afflicted. For those inflicted, then the fear of such moments is real and there can be no such protection of such an onslaught of feeling except that which might exist in a kind of counter skills training, in drill like behaviour of rigorous actions to take, should a deemed feeling rise to usurp the best of any given physiological self.

Yes.

Actions the like of which are somehow honed to the imperative orders of; 'Sit down' 'Head down' ' Squeeze your middle' 'Be quiet', until the onset of the unnatural sense of temper is somehow weaned away and returned to a great place of anger, if indeed such a storage space might exist.

Then a person's struggle with such depth of feeling in efforts to overpower the inception of the same is a worthy struggle. The struggle in the individual to overcome such negativity is never in vain and is recognized. In such red flag struggles, a person can earn light veils of wonder causing the intuitive sense to become more finely honed until the most beautiful self is apparent. The inherent struggle against the basal self and the precise win against such a fight is the crux of my admiration of the man who slapped his sister. My purest admiration may not be so pure, but there, you have it, and it is indeed unadulterated and sound, and it radiates for you.

My love for you...

It is said that he (the man who slapped his sister) had the ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

He threatened for fear of a sinister plot against a beloved woman at that time. I suggest this insight.

He slapped his sister and in efforts to save a beloved woman, he hurt her.

He hurt her. Her ribs. He was trying to get her to see.

But she, the holy woman was steadfast. She didn't flinch in her certitude.

His anger that she wouldn't comply to his command to remove her to safety. I suggest this insight.

Her ribs.

I had seen the other man leering at her through her window. Perhaps there had been an intent there.

Only God knows.

She died resultant from injury. She is much mourned until now.

And God only knows.

## **Rightfully stolen**

**Miguel A. Rivera, Jr.**

It was another warm evening in El Paso, Texas. Jose wanted to get his money early today. Bringing wetbacks across the border was his bread and butter as it had been from the time he was thirteen. A school dropout whose mother was a hopelessly addicted meth-addict, while his biological father remained an unsolved mystery. Quite probably one of the many dates his mother had gone on to feed her insatiable habit, which by default made Jose have to practically raise himself. He and everyone born on the North side of the Border knew the pecking order.

Those born on the U.S. side exploited, bought, and sold those born South of it. It was simply the twisted reality of Jose's world. Although of Mexican descent, speaking the same language and having the same cultural roots, meant nothing. Only that magical stack of green paper Jose received every time he dropped a busload of farm workers off, had any real relevance to his life and existence. Two dozen or so should do it. He could then spend the rest of his day smoking weed, drinking beer, and playing PS5 with his friends.

The recent change in U.S. administrations had made getting people across, that much harder. On the bright side, it was also now much more profitable, as the black-market status of illegal immigration had been, in Jose's view, wonderfully restored to normal.

Under the stars in the desert night, he walked in silence with twenty-five hopefuls following his steps. As they approached the pre-set crossing point, He tried to forget the prior night's dream or nightmare as it were. He'd envisioned a pair of strangers in uniform dropping from the sky and killing him, his charges, and even some Border Patrol Agents. He didn't comprehend the dream's meaning but it sat in the back of his mind, bothering him like a repeated mosquito bite to the brain.

He received the customary text and proceeded with his group through an opening. All was dark and he was grateful that this would soon be done. As they emerged on the U.S. side, a sudden floodlight blinded him and sent some of the migrants scurrying back through the opening.

“United States Border Patrol! Lay down on the ground with your hands at your sides or we will open fire!”, An authoritarian voice bellowed over a police vehicle’s loud speaker.

Jose could hear the crackling of police band radio transmissions while making out the silhouettes of many rifles and handguns pointed in their direction. Out of options, he laid down and cursed his luck, wondering who had ratted him out.

Just then a flash of light not unlike a lightning strike, caught his attention. It made his stomach queasy and gave him a sensation as if the world were suddenly in slow motion. The next moment, a dark-haired Hispanic woman along with a red-haired man stood before him in black uniforms, the like of which Jose had never seen in his life. The commander of the Border patrol attempted to speak but the Hispanic woman nodded her head and all the cops collapsed. The sound of bodies and weapons striking the ground was the next thing Jose heard. He could not decide if these odd strangers worked for the Government or God forbid, the cartel. He felt on the verge of self-defecation in either case.

“Charlie do something with these cop car lights, please”, she said in perfect English.

The red-haired man waved his hand and every light, siren, and even all the police radios died as though some giant plug had been pulled.

“Is this the one?”, she said pointing to Jose.

“Yes, Doctor.”, The ginger man responded.

“Good, Darlene will be pleased. I think he’s pivotal and rightfully stolen.”

## **The Gloves**

**Bridin Mary Hasnett**

Was it something I bought that you liked? You know that I like to buy new things now and again.

Yes, shopping as I consider it rather elevates the self a little. And then, when I buy something I imagine that I am at one with my new purchase.

Gloves.

The fingers of gloves over my fingers so to speak. Indeed I had looked fondly at them.

Green leather with golden buckles at the edges.

And then there is a disparity. Perhaps it was the golden buckles sitting on my wrist bones, or the embroidered flowers on the index fingers which I took to myself?

Velvety.

I caught sight of myself in the mirror, elegant and long, as such I had thought about the most endearing gloves ever. Yes, indeed, I placed them on the desk, left glove over right glove in ordered deliberation so that I might observe how they sit together, my approach to most things in life, however erroneous.

A leather, suede dichotomy and then - all of a sudden they were gone. Just not there. I stared in disbelief at the space where I had laid them.

As incensed as I felt, it wasn't the first time I had something stolen from me and so I have trained myself not to feel upset. But they were new, you see. Yes, the gloves were brand new. I was proud of them, but sufficiently aware not to be arrogant in wearing them. My heart falls just a little and then I think to buy another pair – less gaudy perhaps – to lift the spirit so to speak.

Cheap.

I return to the shop where I had bought the green pair. I find a faddish pair. Black, non-descript, I should think. And yet when I slid them on my fingers, I find beauty in their narrow length. I tidy them over my hands.



They fit like gloves should fit.

And you know that I know that you took them.

'What,' I hear you cry?

And if she had asked me, I would have given them to her. Quite the kleptomaniac she is too in all apparency.

Aquandry as the Irish anthromorphic etched stone face as I wish her, and without a shriek of humanity from her other face.

And is there such a thing as rightly stolen in the event that a given item is not claimed in ownership? Can we presuppose that the items when taken out of view were stolen? After all, the woman in question may surmise that the gloves were not in my proximity and that the gloves were laid in exposition on the table for taking. After all, it's not my desk. The desk theoretically belongs to someone and I am a mere user of it. Can I presume that because I paid for the gloves that I owned them at the time of the stealing event, theft, whatever you might like to call it, or was the purchase of the gloves a lease and rent kind of transaction, a return to the owner sort of thing?

If indeed the gloves were placed on a desk that is not mine, then are the gloves really mine, if I do not wear them?

I might still have the receipt...

Perhaps the woman in question considered her action of theft as such.

I really cannot say what might have run through her conscious mind at the time. The gloves must have attracted her to go to the trouble of sullyng herself to take them without consent.

Yes, as I consider all precepts of law appear to rely on the notion of the violation of consent. In fact, such a notion appears to be the basis of morality.

I think in defiance of the stolen item in an ensuing left wing approach and I consider dialectic materialism in reciprocation.

Am I a material girl, I ask myself? In this regard, 'to have or to have-not' becomes less of a concern.

Somehow.

Supposing I am kidnapped, then how should I find myself?

## **Write Now!!!**

### **Angelina Kelly**

Because of my recent health issues, I've let me writing lapse. I was so caught up in the recovery that I actually didn't want to write and – more importantly – I discovered that writing took up a lot of time and even more energy and was exhausting. While I had the time, I did not have the energy. My whole focus was on getting through the experience and getting better. Thankfully, almost seven months later, after tests, scopes, scans and X-Rays I have now been given a complete clean Bill of Health.

While I was lying in bed recovering after surgery I dreamed that one day I would be well again and back out in the world – and here I am. My energy has returned and my mobility is improving daily.

My old life is gone – it's a thing of the past. Once this reality set in I was able to ask the big question –

“So, What Now”?

While I had a few ideas, I had no clear indication or direction. Scrolling through Facebook recently a meme popped up of Homer Simpson, dressed in a suit, shirt and tie, with a determined expression, pointing his finger out at me with the caption –

“Write Now!!!

I looked back at the screen and exclaimed –

“Well, that's telling me straight.”

If my decision wasn't already made – it is now. Here is the clear indication and direction I was looking for. Now it's up to me to get up and get on with it.

## **Yes, No, Yes, No**

**Bridin Mary Harnett**

I suppose I am politically imbued with socially ratified content in an existentialist sort of matter.

Yes, rather.

What I see I take to heart and sometimes unconsciously by osmosis. You know what I mean - people, places and things in incumbent attempts to latch onto me, figuratively speaking of course, as I consider myself an enzyme in a lateral space and the former as floating substrates in my social context. This recognisance censoring activity as it happens behaves as a cognitive moral filter of my existence, call it my protocol for living, my guarded intuitive sense - and labels are boundless as we extend them to the human sense of honed intuitive value.

Indeed, not every substrate will latch, I say. No, I say – float out there in the plasma surrounds a little more. You are not quite ready, I say.

No.

Yes, I absorb people, places and things and as I engage in interpretation to make meaning to bring to myself, until I sense the benefit. Sometimes my honing sense rather frightens me and I have recently thought that it is not my eyes which see, rather it is my heart which sees. My heart is a seeing heart as I have trained it to be. Mind, it has a tendency to be subjective and resentful at times, but for the most part, its vision is sound. The problem is that I don't always follow its vision or take the recommended actions one ought to take after purveying on a given heart to figure something out. Yes, the tendency to procrastinate may be interpreted as a political stance by some, depending on contrived or otherwise notions of a given interlocutor. Indeed, pauses in speech are very useful indeed and are often covert and overridden by such idiolect repertoires of donned fillers like, 'er' 'um' 'very' 'quite' which appear in the dialectics of interaction in speech.

Yes.

It appears that my heart is a seeing heart, imbued with people whom I select to reside there. In fact, I see with their eyes as I write – people

that make up the greater part of myself. I think that these individuals are my most loved. I shall dare to nominate them as beloved. Yes, I consider that the selection of individuals to partake in my life process is rather a political matter of subsequent imbuelement. Indeed, my vision, call it perception if you would like, is as true and clear as those who reside in me, their experiences, their feelings and thoughts, the best of which become me – by osmosis and habitual contact as afore stated.

That these individuals are much loved and valued indeed.

Do they know?

Probably not because I am shy to tell them so.

Then I think - until I am them and they are me in completeness and without a single political ploy. I forage depth in their faces and I see what they have earned there.

And, yes, I look deeply in the faces of my loved ones, faces I cannot leave. For the maps of time cannot extinguish what I drink from them and they tell me how to find my way home - there.

And I never tire to look at the beloved of my blood in whom I breathe when I rest and in whom I have lived for infinity by the grace of God.

Didn't you know that? Did you hear me?

Yes, I shall extend the art of social practice into a kind of political fielding. Yes, the practice of mingling is in fact a political pitch, the patterns of movement across a social floor, the design of select social interaction in choosing conversant social partners, perhaps a pre-meditated art indeed.

Indeed such political fielding as described is not gameworthy. It's real.

Didn't you know that you are in my moon's arc and that I swallow in the dance, my neck up stretched and long.

How I love you.

All of you.

Every day.