

Inkslingers Blended Session

7th September 2024

The Prompt from The Bag Was:



Glenariff Forest Park, Northern Ireland

***Try to be a rainbow in someone's
cloud.***

- Maya Angelou -

To Dream of the Sun

Greg Fields

It was the dreams that kept him up, that robbed him of the sleep he needed after hours on the streets, that shook him from the warmth of his covers and the touch of Angie, sleeping next to him with the unfettered sleep of the innocent. Dreams, celebrated in poetry and exalted as the idyllic place where fantasies came true, were nothing of the sort. They were illogical, and contorted, and haunting, and violent. And they kept Thomas Rojas up most nights. He could not lose them.

There was the one that kept coming back to him, the one where he was called upon to clean up a mess not of his own making. It was a murder scene, a mass-murder scene, and there was blood everywhere. In this dream he scrubbed the walls and mopped the floor and shoveled off bits of human flesh with a push-broom. No matter how hard he worked he could never eliminate the evidence of the murders, and when this dream ended, as it always did with Thomas sitting up in bed and panting, the walls and floors still had blood on them, and the couch in the room was lumpy, stuffed with the debris of lives blasted into nothingness.

And there was the one where Thomas got sent to a house, a domestic violence call. When he knocked on the door, no one answered, so he pushed his way in, announcing himself to be police, only to find every table and chair upturned, the carpet shredded and broken glass on every floor. No one there. No one to threaten him. And no one to save.

And always there was the one where he went to the convenience store and found the young man lying in his own blood, his chest blown open. When Thomas stared down at him, Dashawn Roberson opened his eyes, looked up at Thomas, pointed to the storekeeper and said, "He did this," then collapsed again onto the tiled floor while new blood fountained into the air.

So Thomas Rojas came to expect that there would never be enough sleep, that the rest he needed after the long, sometimes tedious,

sometimes unsettling, always uncertain shifts would not be coming his way.

This night was no different. His shift had been uneventful except for the kid he had to wrestle to the ground before he could cuff him, wired on something or other and screaming obscenities at whoever came near him. He had tried to talk with him, to calm him down, to be, perhaps, the gentle father-figure he expected the kid lacked. But nothing worked. Not that he had expected it would, but he had to try the soft touch before he turned hard. He had seen it before. 'The poor kid,' he thought to himself as he pushed the boy's face into the concrete. "He's got no chance.'

But the rest of the night was quiet, and when he came home, when he peeled off his uniform and drank off a quick beer to calm himself down, when he washed away the grime and the guilt, he settled into his restless bed. Angie was already there, had been there, sleeping regular hours while her husband patrolled his mean streets.

She turned to him, and held his arm. "Tough night, babe?"

"Not so bad. Pretty quiet, actually."

"Ah, come on, then," and she nestled against him. "Come here where its warm."

Thomas rolled toward her and wrapped his arm around her shoulders, and as he did so, Angie smiled. "So good to have you here."

"You worry too much, woman."

"It's my job," and she kissed his cheek. "Now, get some sleep. And no more dreams, okay?"

Thomas said nothing, returned her kiss, then rolled onto his back. "You know, you're the only sunshine I can find, Angie. You're the rainbow in all these clouds."

Angie kissed him again, and whispered, "It's because you're Thomas Rojas, man, and I love you."

But there would be dreams. Always the dreams. At least when he woke from them, there would also be Angie. To calm him down. To guide

him through the debris. To chase away the clouds, and let Thomas Rojas catch at least a tiny glimpse of the sun.

Try To Be A Rainbow In Someone's Cloud

Angelina Kelly

Following recent surgery I have just come through a horrible month and I have been reminded that support in troubled times is so important. The people I expected to help me, while they assisted with all the practical stuff, were not willing, or able, to assist with the emotional stuff, so I had to call upon "outsiders".

Thankfully, as part of my after care, I had a home nursing service for four weeks which gave me the help, medical care and assistance I needed. In the darkest hours of my lonely nights, knowing the nurses would be there the next day, gave me comfort and strength. The doctor kept an eye on us all making sure that everything ran smoothly and all my needs were provided for. One day he sat with me and listened while I expressed my fears, concerns, worries and upset and went through each one explaining, and reassuring me.

The "people at the other end of the phone" also took the time to listen, inform and reassure. The van drivers who delivered my supplies even took the time to ask, "How are you, are you OK, is there anything else that you need?" One day we even got into a chat about ancient history.

I am truly grateful for the help and assistance they gave me. Not only were they my angels – but they were my rainbow in my cloud.

Glenariff Forest Park

Ciaran O'Melia

As I went to the forest park, I heard a branch breaking. Listened to see if it had repeated itself. I thought I heard a log splinter; I stopped, knowing that a branch must be worn and exposed in the winter.

I moved on, and sure enough, I heard a fall down and then another. It was then I knew I was being followed.

All sorts of things ran through my head. Was it an animal? Or a human? Maybe a pig?

What was it?

I hurried to a clearing I knew was there. I have visited these woods in the past, and I stood my ground in the clearing.

"Hello," I called out. The only thing it answered was the crack of a twig being broken. As

I turned to where the sound came from and saw what was following me, death.

My hair stood on the back of my head as I stuttered an "HHheello."

Is this the end game?

Maybe a little Poetry. As its vast jaws opened, I smelt his foul breath. I wondered what she meant, "Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud."

Glenariff

Elaine Reardon



Have you ever been to Glenariff, in West Cork? Any time I've visited the sun was warm, the sky blue. Arriving felt like coming into Brigadoon. You can drive through the Healy pass from Cork to arrive, a drive that is heart thumping both because of the high narrow passes, and the beauty laid below you.

When you arrive in town, the Cahra mountains rise behind you, and the sea is laid out like a fine feast table, filled with delights. The small village is welcoming. There are seals basking on rocks.

On the waterfront you can take a boat to Garnish Island, and you should. The warm air, sweet-smelling flowers, and turquoise waters make it seem that you've arrived in the Mediterranean, instead of the Beara Peninsula at the western edge of Cork.

This island is the setting for a grand Italian garden filled with roses tumbling around pools of water and archways. There are interesting statues - my favorite is Mercury. Despite there being guided tours of the garden its easy to poke around on your own. When I arrive here, I think of Paradise Lost, turned upside down. This garden island is Paradise Found



Clouds float gently overhead

Deirdre Powell.

Clouds float gently overhead,
Like soft balls of cotton,
Lazily seeping into the blue psyche
Of the evening,
The azure pool dissipates
As the white cotton extends from east to west.

Clouds float gently overhead –
Cumulus, nimbostratus, cirrus, stratocumulus,
The long tentacles of cirrus clouds
Like angels that sing plainchant in the evening,
Sounds and songs of silence,
Plaintively pleading into the twilight.

Clouds float gently overhead
As though they ease onto a train to heaven,
Falling, floating, lying fallow,
Almost as if they are a fistula to another world,
An unseen, unknown entry.
The heart is full of wonder.

The Dublin Riots

A Love Stoey

Gerard Byrne

Their eyes met across the burning rubbish. The glow of the flames dancing in the reflection of their wanting eyes. Dean had never seen anyone as beautiful a Sinead before. Tied up blonde hair topped off with a pink baseball cap. Light blue tracksuit with juicy printed across the backside. Her host of colourful tattoos from a spiderweb on her neck down to a picture of a joint on her left boob. And the way she held the lump of that metal railing tightly in her hand. Ready to swing at any guard that came near her. Yes she was special and Dean wanted to be the lucky man who brought the young lady on a hot date to Wetherspoons with a slap up meal afterwards in McDonald's. He was kind of hoping that the rowdy mob would not burn down the two on O'Connell street because they were his favourites.

A young man ran past them carrying the lights off the top of a Garda car as he shouted, "ne naw, ne naw", repeatedly at the top of his lungs. His unwanted appearance didn't faze either Dean or Sinead.

All they saw at that moment was each other.

Sinead tightened her grip on the lump of metal in her hand as her heart seemed to pump harder in her chest. She wasn't sure was this the first sign of physical attraction or was it more to do with the three lines of coke she had after just snorting off the bonnet of a nearby car. This fella in front of her was what she always wanted in a man. Shaved head, stubble covered face, ripped T-shirt underneath an expensive red jacket that still had the shop security tag hanging off the sleeve. She

could even make out the large bulge in his jeans were he had hidden a load of stolen mobile phones.

He was perfect. Especially as he held a flaming petrol bomb in his right hand, ready to be thrown at an unsuspecting guard.

Without saying a word, Dean threw his petrol bomb towards a nearby Garda line. It fell a few feet

short of its target but the guards still jumped back in fright. His eyes never broke from Sinead's

during this. She swung her metal bar and fired it towards the Garda line as well. It bounced off one

of their shields and clattered to the ground.

At that moment, no one else mattered around them. The shouting, screaming and general loud

verbal abuse was all drowned out by something that neither could put their finger on. Their bodies

moved towards each other. It was instinct. Like two animals on the plains of Africa. Both wanting

something from each other that no words were needed to explain. Their lips meeting under the

clock at Clery's. The same place that Sinead's parents had met many years ago. Her father being a

young up and coming businessman while her mother was on the game for her eight night in a row.

That one brief fling had created Sinead and now here she was meeting the father to her future kids

and stepfather to the three she had already, in the exact same spot.

Dean wrapped his arms around her and felt the sweat of her skin on his.

He never thought that he'd

ever experience this moment. There was that one time with his father's new girlfriend but that was

more lust than anything.

They held onto each other tightly as the guards arrived on the scene to separate them. It took eight

of them to pull their new love apart. They both kicked and screamed at everyone around them as

the handcuffs were snapped onto both of them. Dean ended up with his face pushed into the road.

Sinead was pushed up against the shutters. She'd already broken a guard's nose and was trying to kick another in the balls. Dean lashed out with his legs as well, but unfortunately he was easily dragged off by four guards.

The last thing either of them seen of each other that night was when Dean was thrown into the back of a Garda car. Sinead was still fighting the guards as best she could with her hands cuffed behind her. She watched her soulmate being taken away from her by force. There and then she promised herself that she would find him. Even if she had to search every Garda station in Dublin and visit every courtroom over the next few days. She had to find him. That was a must.

The Rainbow in my cloud

Miguel A. Rivera, Jr.

“The rainbow in my cloud”. Johnny Mendez read it over and over again as he sat in his English Class digging desperately for inspiration while the clock on the wall ticked annoyingly loud. The river of nervous perspiration that made its uncomfortable way down his back also hampered both his concentration and creative juices. But just then, out of the blue, it struck him. “Why not simply tell the truth?”

“The rainbow in my cloud”, “the wind beneath my wings”, and every other corny phrase that humans had ever conceived, all meant the same thing. That guy/gal that uplifted you in a time of trouble or tragedy. That pivotal soul who’s minor action or actions of kindness blew just the right kind of wind in your sails to get you through whatever storm was physically, mentally, or spiritually killing you.

For Johnny it had been Mr. Nix. The tall, black, friendly, and insightful sixth grade teacher who understood the neighborhood full of hardcases he was teaching. A legion of kids whose backgrounds were mired by drugs, broken homes, and daily violence. It was the canvas upon which the very clever Mr. Nix skillfully painted Picassos. Such was the case with little Johnny, now 18 and in his Senior year. He recalled with fondness and some emotion, how Mr. Nix showed up at his bedside in a hospital 3 hours from the school, bearing comic books when Johnny came down with meningitis.

Later in life, Johnny was that wall of strength to others because of Mr. Nix’s quiet, clever teaching. As a Prosecutor in his later years, Johnny was able to strike that elusive balance between justice and mercy because of the Mr. Nix’s in his life. Whether a traffic violator, robber, or murderer, the formula implanted in Johnny’s soul was the same, and he applied the true spirit of the law, not just the letter penned by men long dead.

Just as Mr. Nix’s kindness, Johnny’s approach to all things seemed to have a supernatural and special quality. Something other legal professionals marveled at and at times even envied. It was that gift of legal understanding and application that led Johnny to become “Judge”

Mendez. Then years later, a day came when one defendant in his courtroom threatened to unravel Johnny's long-held belief system.

A man was brought in for arraignment, accused of multiple robberies and two murders including a young mother and a Policeman. The name of this unusually perturbing defendant, you may ask? It was Terrence B. Nix. The Great Grandson of Judge Johnny's gentle teacher and life-inspiration. The "Rainbow" in his cloud had somehow spawned a monster...

Try to be a rainbow

Mark L'estrange

The lads had a great first day in the universal studios park their favourite thing was the spiderman ride and cinema magic, although Larry couldn't stop talking about his extra nice double Lamppost burger. Saying, "That was great hope we can go back to this park before we go home, to get another one."

Johnny met his teacher on the bus back to their hotel. "Please don't give us any sums to do we are on holiday." "That's a good idea, only joking, we can wait till we get back for that." The lads were relieved to hear this, Johnny said to Larry "I thought I put my bare foot in it there." Larry laughed at the way he said it.

They were actually happy to have met him because he gave them all twenty dollars each. Johnny said "Thanks teacher you are a rainbow in my cloud in school and my favourite teacher, my maths has got so much better since you thought me great technics." "I'm glad I have helped you."

They all had a fun filled week going to all the parks in Florida. Larry even got to go back to the park where he got his famous double Lamppost burger where they all got their free meals. Then it was time to go home as they made their way back to the airport they weren't too happy, Johnny's dad said. "Think of all the good times you had this week, and Halloween will here before you know it."

To be continued

Sunshine and Rainbows

Laura Alves

When someone has a permanent cloud over their head, it may be hard to reach out to them.

The fastest and most effective way in my opinion would be not to be a rainbow, but to be the sunshine in their life!

Being the sunshine you heat up that cloud until it melts down in pouring tropical rain with all the thunder and lightnings that come with it and your friend sees a beautiful clear blue sky in no time at all!

The best way to do this is to be there whenever they need and always bring their attention to the positive things in life.

These things may be hidden behind all the heavy issues they have to deal with and bringing them out will make it easier to get by each day.

They may not notice it so clearly at the time, but in future when they look back they will clearly realise what got them through that bad patch. Maybe they will take this lesson for life and in a similar situation will find it easier to see the sunshine coming through a slot in their window and will open the curtains wide so it fills the whole room - and will be ready to help other people in similar situation!

Without meaning to be ironic...

Bridin Mary Harnett.

My goodness, I had almost completely disappeared in an ionic sense – ionic transfer I think they call it, in a kind of transportation technique – not being sufficiently au fait with technology to be able to coin the notion exactly.

But I felt my throat constricted due to a kind of technological clamp on my neural activity until I had realized myself in such a precarious condition that I could hardly make connections to put a thought together.

Yes, rather bereft of any notion so to speak and with a strange heavy feeling located on the left side of my brain.

I imagine it so.

Yes, ionic transfer, akin to the transposition of musical keys and notation, I had considered. A scientific value in terms of a loss of electrodes in perturbation of human activity as the body somehow reconfigures to constitute its sense of stability. What a wrangle I think in consideration of 21st century technology.

Indeed, Shakespeare's tragically rendered, 'To be or not to be', rather yields new significance in the throes of siphon-infusion activity in technological feats of wild robbery and in global considerations of powerfulness afoot.

Indeed, I suffer as my very life's breath is transposed repetitiously from cable to cable, of a black box charger via the conduit of a simple circuit system of a plug and a single socket to uphold this kind of activity.

Indeed, my neural filaments in distinction are in distress, victimized as I am by incessant cyberhackers and as deenergized as I find myself by the end of the day as a result.

Suffrage to sufferance to severance is the agenda really.

To think that AI initiatives attempt to equalize those naturally imbued with capacity with those who are not – not that capacity is absent in

humans, but perhaps that capacity may not be up to par in a manner of speaking in certain individuals imbued with negativity.

Yes, as I write and think, I am in the being of myself.

Yet, I do not want to appear to be flippant, but at present, I am at my most relaxed self. However, should it occur that I suffer writer's block, I should not despair it seems.

Yes, indeed I can enter any given writer's prompt onto an AI generator, click on the attitudinal icon, the theme, voice and on a potential list of other functions and click, I shall find poetry or prose to my heart's desire and without a singular thought or twitch of a neural synapse.

And then...then. I can render it...here.

Imagine.

You know, it's a little like cooking. Like trifle cake from the shops. Buy the cake, make the jelly and with canned fruit and a spray can of whipped cream, I can confect a non-alcoholic sherry cum cherry trifle and from scratch. And yes, I can complain that I spent hours in the kitchen cooking it up and then I might ask;

'How's the cake part?' And then you might consider whether or not the cake part is too moist, floury or even dry... Then I might plead something like this;

'Well, I made it myself and the recipe is original and I hadn't needed to refer to any recipe book to construe the given trifle in such a presentation,' so that you might be bemused.

And so, in repartee, AI may function to equalize those who have the capacity to make trifle cake and those who prefer to indulge in the bought variety of cake cases.

In fact, I do not want to cause resentment but I should like to exemplify further in referral to those who engage in the buying and selling of university degree certificates – apparently big business.

Yes, honorary titles and degrees by circumstance are earned, but discounted varieties of certification sold on the internet are a matter of

abhorrence to the academic communities who toil and trouble to earn degree qualifications through sheer unadulterated effort.

However, the distinction with AI applications is this – any given AI system behaves with you in accordance with what it knows about you, as with human relationships in this following exemplification.

Listen to this, I am known to other human beings to the degree and quality of my interaction with other people. Then in turn taking, the quality of an interlocutor's response in communication matches my conduit in terms of output.

Indeed, we can construe our projected AI relationships in the same manner. As an AI system is aware of my cyber activity, it generates responses in accordance with the quality of my production – that is unless I feed into another individual's cyber system – indeed a fraudulent thought.

Yes, I do consider that AI is an all-knowing system, but it is not God, however faculty struck we may become.

No, it is not God at all.

And so, with a voice assistant from afar, I can command any search engine to generate as per a given writer's prompt and then I might lie and say,

'Well, I had difficulty coming up with that. It was a stop and start sort of writing thing that I had made a hames of. Yes, inspiration failed to rise me on this occasion...'

Then you say, 'Oh.'

Actually no, I refuse to tell such a lie in dispute.

In signaling an end to creativity and talent in effect, I mean to indicate that there may be no future requirement for creative abilities once the world's most extraordinary qualities have been harnessed and infused into a given AI system and what a tragedy that would be.

No rainbows there, it seems. How cloudy is that!

Yes, I have to say that I do feel rather clamped, confined, constricted, albeit a caged bird who would open its throat to sing.

Sometimes, it seems as if it's all I am able to do. I mean 'sing' – barred as I am in being and in captivity by a despot crew who in copulatory sequences demean in subsequent renditions of hypocrisy, abhorrent abuse and tyranny, propagated by those who say that they take care...