

THE 13th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF



ISSEI

International Society for the Study of European Ideas

in cooperation with the University of Cyprus



**Heinz-Uwe Haus**

**OFF DUTY – MAN VERSUS THE VOLCANO**

**Episodes**

Chorus, Giri, Givola, Michelle

Chicago, behind closed doors, today

“When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red’; and in the morning , ‘It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.” (Matthew 16:2-3)

***1. REVIEW OFFERS SOME HOPE***

Chorus: The only sounds were wind and wheezing as we pressed on into the cradle of the sky.

Giri: He said he hoped the once the dust settled on the sequester, the two sides could pivot to renewed discussion of tax and entitlement overhauls. "It may take a couple weeks," he said. "It may take a couple of months."

Chorus: "Led by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night". Finally, we reached the top and peered into the volcano's caldera. Steep, jagged rocks guarded darkness.

Givola: My "baby" is a Labradoodle called Dutch. We wanted to call her Coco but too many people have dogs called Coco. She has a very good appetite and loves it when I bring home leftover bison from the Four Seasons. I sauté it with green vegetables and serve it with a little bit of Fromm Surf and Turf [grain-free dog food] and a dash of Primadophilus [probiotic]. She loves it!

Chorus: "They had to make some very, very hard decisions, and none of the solutions are good, but you just have to make the best of what you have," he said.

Michelle: The police watchdog said that it opened an investigation into the death of the man. The Independent Police Investigative Directorate said a postmortem showed the cause of death to be head injuries and internal bleeding. It noted other unspecified injuries. The speaker said a second postmortem will be presented but declined to give further details.

Chorus: Roped together, Givola and Giri moved forward. Ten paces, break, repeat. The surface of the glacier was slick, but crusted with the residue of old snowfall. "Slam every step into the frozen stuff," Givola said. Giri made sure not to tread lightly. It felt good to be on a rock-free surface, even as it veered upward at a 40- and then 50-degree angle.

Giri: I go out and pick mushrooms. I don't think it's very legal-they're on someone else's property, and they probably don't want me to pick them-but they're hen of the woods, the best. We sauté them or roast them. Sometimes I pick so many I have to bring them to the food bank.

Michelle: The video couldn't be independently verified, but police and the watchdog haven't denied the accuracy of what was recorded in daylight before a crowd of people.

## **2. OVERHAUL THAT HASN'T HAD MANY SUCCESS YET**

- Givola: You have to serve excellent Champagne. I wouldn't go with Prosecco, but I'd serve a Franciacorta from Ca'del Bosco or Cavalleri, or a really beautiful pink Champagne, like Dom Pérignon. Moët & Chandon Rosè is another superb bottle.
- Giri: Givola and I are close, but we don't generally tie ourselves together. He does things I wouldn't – like pick a tattoo off a parlor wall (hummingbird). I had never let my brother guide me up a slick ice sheet before, but I had no alternative; I didn't possess the skills to go it alone.
- Givola: We really like to entertain outside. We have a very large deck that we built ourselves, and I love to barbecue on my Lynx professional grill. Last Easter, I grilled incredible ham.
- Chorus: We'd be satisfied if he'd be satisfied flesh-bound when found for his bones risen. We live in freedom by necessity, as the poet says, a mountain people dwelling among mountains.
- Michelle: A spokesman for the police didn't respond to requests to comment.

## **3. STERN ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN**

- Givola: We have seven beehives in our backyard and make honey every year. We also have a shower outside, and the bees come and check on me there. Even though it's difficult, making honey is definitely worth it; I love being able to make something that's 100% pure.
- GIRI: The rope theoretically increased our chances of survival: If one man slipped, the other could arrest his fall with a wing of the ice ax. Nonetheless, as we slowly

inched forward, I questioned the logic of this setup. I tried to focus only on my footing.

Michele: “Yes there are challenges and we shall deal with them,” the Commissioner said. “What is in the video is not how the police....goes about its work.” Love gave the power, but took the will, they say. What if it wasn’t all it should be?

Chorus: Headphones that wrap around the back of your head may seem old-school, but when you put on these, you realize there’s a lot to love about the classic form. The band seems to float behind your head – only a slight pressure tells you that it’s there at all. Since the buds don’t go too deeply into your ear canals, you get a good dose of outside noise – not enough to interfere with sound quality, but plenty to hear an oncoming bus.

#### ***4. CHARGED IN DRAGGING DEATH***

Givola: We needed to make it another half mile, tied to the same short cord. Then we’d be on top.

Giri: I briefly lost my nerve, however, when I saw butterflies entombed in the ice. And then a plane flying at eye level, a curious sight to behold. “That was a plane, right?”, I asked Givola. “Yes,” he replied. “And that’s a baby crevasse,” he added, smiling sheepishly. Fortunately, the long crack in the ice ahead of us was only an inch wide.

Chorus: When you’re entertaining at home, if you have incredible guests, you don’t have to worry about anything else. Candlelight is beautiful, and we use old Venetian glasses – the short ones without the stems. They’re much more fun.

Giri: “We’ll be fine,” Givola said, stepping over the tiny fissure in the glacier’s surface.

Michelle: “It’s obvious that his rights were violated in the most extreme way.” “The behavior of the suspended members is condemned...in the strongest terms.” But this story was different. It was raw, immense, and too close to home.

Chorus: “When you are not wanted in, you want in, but maybe making you want in is the sense of a door, its purpose.”

## **5. WHY NOT FOUR TERMS, AND WHAT ABOUT MICHELLE?**

- Givola: *I have so many cookbooks.* I like “A Platter of Figs and Other Recipes.” But I love the cookbook of my favorite dishes that my wife compiles. It’s spectacular. Some day we should publish it.
- Giri: At 18,000 feet, the atmospheric pressure was half what you experience standing at sea level.
- Chorus: “There’s so much to see,” Givola said. He was talking about the landscape spread out below us, of course. But also the world.
- Michelle: The video showed four police officers strapping the man’s wrists to a bench inside a police van. Two police officers then stood behind the van holding his feet as the vehicle started to move, before dropping the man’s feet on the ground and allowing him to be dragged along the pavement. “We need you to sign off on everything,” he replied in a joking tone.
- Michelle: Givola is pioneering a whole new form of masculinity.
- Chorus: He is a creep, a good looking creep, one of those whose eyes seem like spy holes for the demiurge of creepiness to peep on creation. He is all over the teleprompter.
- Giri: Find semblance of rhythm in the strikes.
- Givola: Don’t pause too long or you’ll lose your sense of the task.
- Giri: What the hell is that? At rust in rotting shed?
- Givola: Then come boils, and numbness, and blindness.
- Giri: And the casualties keep coming, leaking and moaning.
- Michelle: As if on a baggage carousel of disaster.
- Givola: Go on, old boy. Pound away. Get that nail in there.
- Giri: Get to work. Find some semblance of rhythm in the strikes.

Chorus: Life sucks, bad things happen to good people, all of that, but Michelle turns away quite leisurely from the disaster. Moving naked over Acheron, victor and conquered together. "Hear without listening. Breathe without asking." Behind closed doors reflect: the place was not worth stopping for...

(end)

Comment on OFF DUTY:

OFF DUTY's episodes spin audacious, even deviant fables about contemporary American politics and culture. But rather than projecting familiar characters in logical events, Bodin seems to be intent on inspecting the fragments of broken lives, de-constructing situations, that loop back on one another, demonstrating the sur-real actions of alienated protagonists. (...) It is a crowded, teeming tone, but the reward is an off-kilter precision, one that feels both untained and unique. Playing from memory (quoting gestures and attitudes), with reportage and documentary, the episodes narrate in a matter-of-factness that excludes all doubt and misunderstanding about the incidents in question. How do we know what is true in the world and in ourself? The Chorus' communal act of asking keeps the reader/spectator, for a time (off-duty), from the dark and cold.

Rick Cunnings (New York)