

The Real - Honest to Goodness - True Story of Ned Kelly.
(As Related by a Remote Viewer).

Techno-bland was a good description for the chamber. Twenty-one consoles with twenty seats inhabited by silent naked, obese, and bald men and women. They were naked because they were sub-human and yet to prove their worthiness to be promoted to human. As sub-humans, they weren't allowed to hide their body language with clothing. However, they were allowed to suppress their body odours with a jumble of fragrances permeating the chamber as each sub-human dialled up their own air freshener in an attempt to rid their space of the smell of stressed fat.

The empty seat's owner stood staring at a wall screen the size of a scenic window in a penthouse overlooking an unpolluted beach. He wore a prim royal blue uniform over a wafer-thin body. His hair was silver, and mirror sunglasses hid his eyes in the dim light.

"What the frig is that?" Even when agitated, Jolson remembered not to say hell or fuck, as both words were officially obsolete. 'Hell' because science had proven such a place did not exist, and 'fuck' because the concept of fucking had been disowned by sexual psychologists. In the fourth millennium, if a sub-human wanted to orgasm, they were meant to plug into a virtual world where a sensitive and caring neo-person would make sensitive and caring love to them. Unofficially, 'hell' and 'fuck' were still part of the language as the maladjusted still worshipped deities and fucked.

Jolson marched over to the screen, which displayed a mixture of shades of grey broken by cracks, and pointed a big stick at it. "What the frig is it showing us?"

None of the twenty technicians answered because they did not know the answer. (Rule number 1: If you do not know the answer to a question, do not theorise, hypothesise or guess.) If sub-humans wished to rise to human level they must not break any rules—especially rule number one.

Number Six, who controlled the screen's picture, had no idea what it showed. He tried to adjust the receiving frequencies from the remote viewer, but the picture stayed the same. He fiddled with the focus control—still a grey nothing—and then the contrast; that did not help

either. The screen blurred, went fuzzy and then lost vertical hold as the remote viewer technician randomly touched icons on the console before him. The screen turned blue.

The other 19 techs breathed a collective sigh of relief as they no longer had to ponder the images on the screen and risk breaking rule number one.

“Brilliant Number Six. Did you receive any training before you got here, or did they just force-feed you jelly in the academy?”

Luckily, Number Six remembered not to answer a rhetorical question, which would have broken rule 748. He touched the establish connection icon, and the blue screen of death changed back to the grey-lined scene. He then swivelled a joystick and a bearded face with wild hazel eyes and tangled dark brown hair appeared. Six forced down a shout of triumph (which would have broken rule number 211).

“Is Pigsarse inhabiting that body?” Jolson asked.

Number Six sighed and shifted his tense body in the moulded plastic seat. The pressure of performance had shifted from him to Number Eight.

“According to the remote viewer he is,” Number Eight answered

“Good. Whose mind has he transported into?”

“The computer recognition prog is 96 per cent sure it’s Ned Kelly,” Number Eight answered intelligently. (Rule number two: never take personal responsibility for anything, especially when you can blame another person or a computer).

Number Six especially liked rule number two. He almost revered its creator, George W. Bush the Fourth, who blamed the near-total destruction of the earth in a war started by his Missile Defence Shield on computer error.

“Who’s Barry Jones?” Jolson asked.

Everyone looked up from their consoles to focus their attention on Eight. Jolson stood behind her with his big stick ready.

“According to the computer, he was an Australian Science Minister who was good at picking boxes.” Number Eight eventually answered.

“Picking boxes?” Jolson rubbed his chin.

“That’s what the computer says.”

“So, the computer is 96 per cent sure it is Ned Kelly and is placing a side bet of four per cent on Barry Jones?”

Was that a rhetorical question? They waited in anticipation of Number Eight’s response.

“That is what the computer says,” Number Eight answered uncertainly.

Jolson smirked. “Number One, did Pigsarse indicate any preference for Barry Jones before he went tripping?”

Everyone looked at Number One, whose face was already a Niagara of perspiration. She needed only to get through this mission without breaking any of the 4200 rules in the Zuckerberg, and she would be reclassified as human. She had already been on 99 missions, moving up a rank after each, but would she crash and burn on her hundredth mission? She had looked pale and nervous at the mission’s briefing and even more pale and nervous when they were told they were going after a rogue mind-tripper.

Scientist Pissedoff Pigsarse (you choose your name when you become human) had illegally used a mind projector to travel into the past. What’s worse, he overrode the retrieval mechanisms so that his mind could not be forcibly pulled back to the present. Another scientist, Dropdead Gorgeous, volunteered to help with his retrieval by becoming a remote viewer. On locating Pigsarse, Gorgeous would be ordered to latch onto Pigsarse’s mind and pull it back to the present with hers.

Number One appeared industrious as she waved her fingers over the many icons on her board. While they waited, in one explosive burst, Number Six defecated into his seat’s built-in toilet. Before the stink could overwhelm the room, he dutifully released some jasmine air freshener.’ Number Five replied with a release of petrol freshener.

“Petrol-head,” Six mouthed at Five.

“Hippy,” Five’s abundant lips mouthed back.

“According to the information provided by his family, friends and experts as well as all other witnesses questioned about his unauthorised use of mind-tripping, Barry Jones was not a preferred location for Pigsarse’s mind trip,” Number One finally answered in a voice indicating she was only a few nano-seconds away from a nervous breakdown.

“So, we can safely assume this fellow is Ned Kelly?”

Number One did not answer. She was sub-human and, therefore, according to rule 621, not allowed to assume.

“Can I take your silence as agreement?” Jolson toyed with Number One.

“According to Number Eight, the computer recognition prog, is 96 per cent sure it’s Ned Kelly.” Number One deflected responsibility magnificently.

“Well answered Number One, you might just make human after all. Number Six, who is Ned speaking to?”

Six’s head jerked up so he could focus on the main screen. Kelly’s lips were moving. Six touched the audio icon.

“Ned, do you seek absolution for your sins?”

A siren blared. Ear plugs sprung out of the back of the seats and were inserted into every technician’s ears except for Numbers One, Six and Eight. “Religious Alert” flashed devilishly across Six’s monitor.

“Numbers Six and Eight will accompany me to a religious debriefing after this session,” Number One ordered.

“Number Six, who is he talking to?” Jolson said.

Six fiddled with the joystick again. The remote viewer scanned around the primitive, minimalist cell of roughly cut grey stone walls, which were cracked with age. Another man came into focus. He was clean-shaven and dressed in black. A strange stiff collar with a white insert under the chin was wrapped around his neck.

“Zoom out so they are both in the picture.”

Six complied. The bearded one, most probably Ned Kelly, was sitting on a lumpy mattress on a steel bed frame.

“And turn the sound back on.”

“Ned, it is too late for an insanity plea, so why not just confess your sins and seek absolution in the forgiveness of the Lord.”

“He is a priest,” Jolson interrupted.

“God doesn’t exist, you dog bait,” Kelly replied.

The priest's eyes widen, “Repent, Ned, or you will go straight to hell.”

“There’s no such place, you Welsh Squirrel.”

“You’re a fool, Ned.”

“I’m a fool?” Ned waved his manacled hands in front of the priest. “You’re the fool to believe in superstitious shit just because you fear dying. In the future, when we live forever, and there is no fear of dying, what do you think will happen to your stupid religion?”

“We will never live forever, laddie.”

“We will slug eater.”

“Don’t you want God to forgive you for all your foul crimes? For your murders...”

“I quite enjoyed killing them.”

“Frig, he’s killed people. Pigsarse might be in mortal danger,” Jolson said.

There goes the space-time continuum. But Control still existed, and none of its staff had vanished, so whatever Pigsarse had done so far had not affected the future. Maybe it was just as well that Bush’s Missile Defence Shield had malfunctioned and caused the death of 99.9 per cent of the earth’s population. Obviously, none of the descendants of the victims of Pigsarse’s rampage had made it past 2040.

“I especially enjoyed killing Sergeant Kennedy; you could feel his terror as he waited tied to the tree, especially after we made it clear that we were going to kill him. When Joe shot him in the testicles, his screams were just, just excruciatingly pleasurable.” Kelly’s eyes glazed over like he was reliving the moment. “I could feel his agony and his terror as he realised we were going to leave him there to slowly bleed out. The sensation was awesome, something I wish everyone could experience, watching someone die in agony.”

The priest had paled.

“That’s why I went to Glenrowan. To shoot more people in the testicles.”

The priest shook his head in disgust. “Perhaps hell is the only suitable place for one like you.”

“Oh, I’m not going there. Firstly, because there is no such place, and secondly, when you kill this body that I currently inhabit, that will end my mind trip, and I will return to Utopia.”

“There is no hope for you then.” The priest stood up.

“Will it hurt?”

“Will what hurt?”

“When they hang me.”

“Not if they do it right. It will break your neck instantly.”

“Oh, and if they do it wrong?”

“Then, unfortunately, it may take a few minutes.”

“Of pain?”

“Yes.”

“Father, who must I speak to to ensure it’s painful?”

The priest’s brows furrowed. “You may indeed be insane, but I don’t think we can stop your hanging now.”

“Don’t even attempt to stop it,” Pigsarse yelled.

“Sir, according to the computer, Ned Kelly was hung in November 1880,” Number One bravely interrupted.

“Guards,” the priest called.

“So Pigsarse will soon be back with us.” Jolson smiled.

The cell door squealed open.

“Father, why the glum face?” Ned asked as the priest moved towards the door.

“Ned, I implore you to use the next hour to seek redemption.”

“An hour, will it be that long? How am I going to fill in the time? I can’t wait to feel that rope go around my neck.”

“He’ll be back in an hour,” Jolson said almost cheerfully.

The priest shook his head as he exited.

“It seems that Gorgeous won’t have to reveal himself to snatch Pigsarse back. Cut the link to the remote viewer,” Jolson ordered.

Six complied, screens went blue, and earplugs were automatically removed from the other sub-humans.

“Well done, everyone. We will soon have Mister Pigsarse back to face the ultimate punishment.”

Pigsarse would be sentenced to an eternity in a self-contained bubble floating in space. He better enjoy the sensation of hanging, as he would not be feeling much when his sentence was carried out.

“Before I forget,” Jolson continued, “Number Six has breached the rules twice.”

What? Six's mind ground to a halt, clanked, and then the gears raced as he tried to think where he had gone wrong.

"Can anyone tell me when?"

Number One put her hand up.

"Yes, Number One."

"He broke rule 621 twice. When you asked him who Ned was talking to, he assumed you wanted him to turn the audio on."

Six's shoulders slumped.

"And a second time when you asked him who Ned was talking to, he assumed you wanted him to reposition the remote viewer."

"Well picked up Number One. You deserve your promotion. Congratulations on becoming human. Number Six, you are demoted 40 positions for each offence."

Number Eighty-Six hung his head in shame.