

PETER CHYKOWSKI AND THE QUEEN'S GREEN DRESS

By Kathy Cawsey

During the coronavirus crisis, the Queen, for only the fifth time during her reign, gave a non-Christmas address to the nation. She wore a green dress. Royal watchers said it was the same colour as hospital scrubs, in honour of health workers.

But Dal English and Creative Writing (MA, BA) grad Peter Chykowski noted that the colour was the same as something else: a television greenscreen.

HE SAW AN OPPORTUNITY to create laughter and joy during the lockdown, and photoshopped a picture of a spacey cat onto her dress, with the caption, "I, for one, would like to thank the Queen for making her royal address and providing the nation with something it sorely needs right now... The perfect Photoshop bait..."

It rapidly went viral, garnering 28.5K retweets and 111.3K likes. Imitations quickly followed, everything from Queen Elizabeth sporting a Star Trek uniform to wearing the iconic World War II propaganda poster of a female machinist. The best were tongue-in-cheek: the Queen wearing Queen (the Bohemian Rhapsody

headshots); Queen Elizabeth II wearing Queen Elizabeth I; the queen wearing a playing card queen. One had a mise en abyme of the queen wearing herself wearing herself wearing herself...

Chykowski's joke made its way to more traditional media as well, reaching the notice of BuzzFeed, Yahoo News, and even John Oliver's show.

In response to people claiming he was being disrespectful to the queen, Chykowski apologized, saying they were right: "The queen is definitely a corgi over cats lady."

(He also included a link to the Queen's charities.)

Chykowski isn't a stranger to the internet, or to going viral, though this is his biggest feat yet. In 2016, he launched the Twitter account @dadjokehansolo, which got a response from geek favourite George Takei.

Dad Joke Han Solo told some real groaners:

Ben: I'm trying to read, you're in my light

Me: Because I am a Solo eclipse!

Ben: Dad I swear to-

Me: I am blocking the light of the son!"

"Ben you should call yourself 'Pound Ren' not 'Kilo Ren'; if you like the Imperial system so much!"

"Ben said 'I'm being torn apart, I want to be free of this pain'

So I said NICE TO MEET YOU 'BEING TORN APART' I'M DAD

Did not go over well"

More than one of the responses said that it is clear now why Kylo Ren went over to the dark side.

Recently – stuck inside during the pandemic – Chykowski revived the Dad Joke Han Solo account to make coronavirus-themed jokes:

"Leia and I are not divorced We are 'social distancing' For the next 10-20 years"

"If we are being honest I spent the first week of the pandemic under the misapprehension that COVID-19 was the name of a droid"

Chykowski isn't just about laughs, however. Dad Joke Han Solo recently has echoed some of the politics of Chykowski's long-running online comic, *Rock Paper Cynic*. In response to the racial violence in the US, Dad Joke Han Solo has posted comments such as,

"You must have been looking for the other Han Solo, from the pro-fascist *Star Wars*. I'm the one who married a terrorist general and dismantled an authoritarian galactic regime But yeah, your movie sounds cool too"

"The Rebellion famously succeeded because we asked very nicely and when the Empire said 'no,' we said 'oh well, guess we tried.' Haha, just kidding! We suited up, fought injustice, mobilized to protect the vulnerable, and didn't go home until we secured freedom & dignity for all"



Peter Chykowski
@rockpapercynic

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The perfect Photoshop bait...



He has also posted links to donate to charities against racial violence. And he couldn't resist when Kelly Ann Conway recently wore a green shirt.

During the lockdown, Chiykowski recently made his crowd-funded game, "The story engine," available free for parents to download, to keep their kids occupied, creative, and off screens. The

game features cards that can serve as inspirations for stories, that people are then to write or tell. (Unfortunately, someone soon stole the templates and posted them online. If you want to support Peter's enterprise, you can pre-order the game here: <https://storyenginedeck.myshopify.com/>)

After the green-screen-queen

explosion, one of his tweets said wryly, "This is not the job I thought I'd have when I graduated..."

Peter won the Paul MacIsaac Memorial prize in his third year at Dal for an "enquiring and original mind." You may not have foreseen it, Peter. But we did.



