



■ WE'LL ALWAYS HAVE PARIS: Humphrey Bogart as Rick Blaine and Ingrid Bergman as Isla Lund in one of the closing scene of *Casablanca*

Break-up of long-term relationship on cards

AFTER years of angst and threatened separations, this week I'm officially announcing our break-up – we've finally reached splitsville. We have a classic co-dependent relationship so I've never managed to follow through in the past. But I'm confident that this way, crass as it might seem, if I have it written down, publicly stated, there won't be any getting out of dumping you.

We first met, oh, about 20 years ago. You just turned up at my door, slim and petite. You were simply so – and please don't take this the wrong way – easy. To be honest with you, I was utterly flattered. Silly, isn't it? Looking back, I feel like an old fool.

I remember, in the early days, how we used to go for dinner in Froggies on Bradbury Place. You inducted me into world of French onion soup – and that was just for starters.

Before long we were up the Lisburn Road, spending our Saturday nights in one trendy restaurant after another. You made me feel as if leafy south Belfast was where I belonged.

Oh, credit card, we had some times, all right, you and I. Our first weekend in Paris? You covered those flights and many more besides down the years and for that – don't get me wrong – I'm grateful. Not to mention hotels for which, as you know, I have a particular weak spot. Who doesn't? Italy, Spain, New York, Templepatrick. So much giggling tipsily down hushed carpeted corridors. So many white fluffy towels. So thanks for the memories – I honestly don't think I could have lived without you. Well, I could but you know what I mean. It wouldn't have been as convenient.

Fergal Hallahan



And then there were the dumbbells, the wetsuits, the kayaking equipment. You have my number when it comes to fads all right. And, boy, do I have yours. Maybe I'd have remembered Mother's Day last year if I didn't have those 16 digits stamped on my

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consciousness, taking up valuable space along with all those other Pin numbers and passwords my brain is burdened with these days.

Let's see – 16 digits plus your expiry and valid-from dates and the three-digit security number on your back makes 27 fewer numbers to obsess over. What's 27 digits in brain bytes? Reason enough in itself to take the scissors to you, I reckon. Anyway lately what have you been good for? I only keep you out of a weird, sentimental

sense of loyalty to a southern bank which, it's turned out, knows as much about finance as I do about – well, as I do. That and the warped logic that goes something like 'If I pay for this CD with my debit card then I'll have less money in my bank account and if I pay for it with my credit card then I won't have to pay for it until next month'.

And that's it. That's the logic. Therein lies the reasoning that underpins the shock at the end of every month when I open the bill and realise that, whaddya know, a CD here and a second-hand book there add up to quite a bit more than the few quid each of them cost and that they must now all be paid for out of the bank account from which they could have been paid for in the first place.

But the thing is, there wouldn't have been enough money in the bank account to pay for them due to last month's credit-card payment having come out of it so I wouldn't have bought them and would have been denied the little pleasures they give. And God knows you need such little pleasures. Then there's train sets, dolls and the like for the child. A balance bike – those ones that teach kids to ride without stabilisers. Might as well get a balance mat for myself while I'm on – apparently they strengthen your muscles if you stand one-legged on them while watching television.

Come to think of it, because I only remembered Mother's Day on Mother's Day, I would have been pretty stuck had I not been able to call a florist in the other jurisdiction and give her those 16 digits for a last-minute bouquet.

Ah, credit card – where does that leave us? By the way, I have to say you look particularly good in that wallet.

The Irish News

ON THIS DAY March 9 1943

Nationalist protest as Catholic ex-soldier rejected

DESPITE the fact that he was qualified to take the position and that the local branch of the British Legion urged the appointment of an ex-serviceman, Omagh Urban Council yesterday, by the casting vote of its (Unionist) chairman, turned down the appointment of a Catholic ex-serviceman for the position of clerk. The job went to a Unionist.

Lively exchanges followed the result and, eventually, the Nationalist members walked out of the council chamber in a body as a protest.

The Unionist members of the Council decided that the appointment would be temporary so as to give the position after the war to an ex-army man. At the outset, Mr A E Donnelly, MP (Nationalist) proposed the appointment of Mr Hugh Flanagan (Omagh) who, he said, had excellent testimonials.

He was an ex-serviceman whose father had been a member of the RIC. After the outbreak of war, Mr Flanagan volunteered for service in the Royal Air Force and spent 11 months in the force until he was invalided home. One of his brothers was at present serving in the Navy, another in the Army, and a third in the RUC. The Council had always advocated that such appointments would be given to ex-servicemen, said Mr Donnelly. Mr T McClay (Unionist) proposed the appointment of Mr Stuart Moorehead and Mr R K Henderson seconded.

Mr Starrs (Nationalist) said if the Unionists were sincere about their talk in support of King and Country, they would support the man who volunteered for service. If Mr Flanagan was not appointed, then they could assume that this talk was only a sham. Mr H McGale (Nationalist) said it would be a terrible reflection on the Unionist members of the Council if they turned down this applicant.

A poll was taken when nine Nationalists voted for Flanagan and nine Unionists for Moorehead. The chairman, having given his casting vote, declared Mr Moorehead appointed.

Mr Starrs said the reason why Mr Flanagan had been turned down was because he was a Catholic. It would not matter if he had won the war, he would not get this little job because of his religious faith.

Mr RH O'Connor, solicitor, speaking amidst interruptions, said the best qualified man in every way had been turned down.

Mr Rountree (Unionist) said the matter had now been decided and they did not want "propaganda talk".

Mr Hunter said the Unionists had done a disgraceful job. They were, he said, "a pack of hypocrites and bigots" and added: "Why didn't you put in the advertisement, 'No Catholic need apply'?"

French resistance attack on Germans
THE Fighting French Headquarters last night announced that 23 German officers have been killed by guerrilla fighters at Lille where they attacked the Casino with hand-grenades. The attackers withdrew without loss.

While the Gestapo and Vichy police have embarked on the greatest manhunt in history in an effort to fulfil Laval's promise to Hitler to deport 400,000 young Frenchmen, a sharp increase in guerrilla activity is indicated.

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