



Creative Writing

from forensic and prison mental health services

Last summer, the Quality Networks for Forensic and Prison Mental Health Services launched the first creative writing competition for patients! Due to the amazing response and wonderful entries, both Quality Networks brought the creative writing entries back for Summer 2021!

We received some more fantastic entries, which we have showcased in this dedicated booklet. The winners for both projects are displayed first in each section.

We would like to thank all the entrants that submitted their work. We hope that you enjoy reading these entries as much as we did!

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#QNPMHS

#QNFMHS

July 2021

Winner

The Wizened Chief

By

GB

Walking along a country path that followed the length of a field, I could see a copse of trees which gave the patchwork of allotments in front of them a soft frame. In one of the allotment patches I could see a lone figure which loomed even larger as I began to approach. I could see as I got closer it was a man, stooped and resting on a spade.

"Digging gets harder every year", he gasped, and his breathing was hard. The sun was in my eyes so I moved to the edge of his plot to see him at a little closer distance. His oval face was wizened and like the bark of a maple tree his complexion was dark and weathered by the sun. His eyebrows hung over his eyes like the overhang of broom on a cliff edge and were protecting his bright grey eyes from the mid-day sun. Centred in this kind face was a perfect triangular nose and as he spoke again telling me how hard the dig had been today, his heroic broad chin that seemed too big for his thinned lips; supported them breaking into a large smile.

As he smiled my eyes were guided to his outer cheek and high cheek bones guiding me to his wide unpinned ears which were now wiggling as he chuckled. His full head of hair was grey but cut in a military crew cut style and as he talked and chatted about his day, his demeanour hinted a haunted history: like that of a stately North American chief.

His head now straight was resting on his broad muscular frame as we talked about the area, although this body was now a little sinew, you could imagine his athleticism in more youthful days. As we chatted the chief told me that Wolfville Eastern Canada was his home but part of his heart would always still be on the beaches in Normandy on D-DAY when he saw many of his fellow Canadians killed.

The chief said he was now in his late 70's and often shuddered at the thoughts of his 18 year old self that day in June. Looking for a diversion from the conversation he began to proudly point out his allotment plot and talked me through a trail of runner beans, sweetcorn and pumpkins. "It's been a good year", he cooed melodically and suggested it would be a bumper harvest come September.

We both continued to marvel at his labours and the beauty of the day for a few moments more before I bid him farewell and good health. He grunted an appreciative laugh and cheekily added he had a few many more seasons left in him yet and to prove his point resumed his digging.

As I walked back the way I came, I turned at the top of the field to view once more the wizened chief, digging on his patchwork plot, in the distance and under a coppice of trees.

GB

Winner

The Corona Attack

The Corona came to town and people had to stay
around,

The people lost the meaning of time and found
ways to get by.

They learned new skills and how to say how do,
Cause of the Corona there was not a lot to do.

The people learned how to face time as they try to
show all is well.

They tried not to smell,

We showed ourselves getting along.

And now the change as you all just go you can't do this
or go that,

And the people try not to get fat!

The NHS and online are the new soldiers of our time,

As the rest get the real army as you know,

Turned to public service to get by.

The people cry "when will this end!"

And the Prime Minister says it will extend until it ends.

Winner

Heavy Is The Crown

As I sit in the realm with my Earthly King
We drink, we dance, we gorge, we sing
The servitude of many become the servant to one
We conquered as family, I ruled as his son
Till that hour one night, when fate reaches hold
I gathered his cloth, I raked in his gold
When my kings last breath, did leave without fuss
I thumped his regal ground, the gods I did cuss
One solitary crown, does sit on his soil
I dream of monarchy, and life without toil
I place on the crown, but somethings not right
This piece is too heavy, and gold is so light
But never the less, the head it must go
I get dizzy and sick, from head to my toe
Near to death, I curse my fellow kings
I'll leave the spoils of war, all the jewels and the rings
The line stops here, for soon I'll be dead
Heavy is the crown, the crown made of led

Winner

To My Mum and Dad.

I'm just a guy without so much,
Few electricals, clothes and such.
But these items I possess come nowhere near,
To two people I hold so dear.

Let's start with my mum, my wonderful kind and caring
mother,

You'll look for eternity to find another.

She's my comforter in times of pain,
My second pair of hands when I feel life's strain.

She's thoughtful, generous, loving and wise,
Whose arms I rest in when I have to cry.

I'll leave it that so one day you'll discover,
The wonderful person that is my mother.

Never leaving my father out – he's my number one guy,
With a heart of gold, you can't deny.

When I have struggled with money, or just with life,
He's always been there to help me with my strife.

I made a decision to never let him go,
That is a fact that is unbreakable of which I'm sure.

He loves his music, his sport and his wife.

My mum and his kids are his entire life.

I feel honoured to call you my Dad,

Winner

Forensic Quality Network For Forensic Mental Health Services CCQI
Creative Writing Competition Submission

I come from stardust,
Early gases and early gravity
Never resist
Dying stars create elements
Like earth and rock;
I come from Stardust.

I come from a dictionary
And books that inform and entertain.
I come from calligraphy
A skill I learned.

Voices bring fog into my head
Tearing down, never building,
I come from voices.

I come from stardust
Etymology is my life dictionary
Words, words, words.
I come from stardust.

GB

Winner

Forensic Quality Network For Forensic Mental Health Services CCQI
Creative Writing Competition Submission

I change with togetherness,
Got the rhythm, got the base
I am locked up in air.
Nowadays I don't go anywhere
Music sends me to a wonderful place.

Together we live
Together we strive
Together we can make things right.
Together is cool and together is fine
Together makes me feel alive.

I love togetherness in every way
I hope these feelings are here to stay,
Growing together old and grey
Our future will shine like; sun-light-rays.

A Golden Heron

The Heron standing on the riverbank,
Gazing out at the golden sunset.
A sight so beautiful, giving desire to flank,
To be able to share and a partner met.

A kind of magic of the world,
Delight to behold,
Yet sadness in its futility and inevitable ending unfurled.
A truthful emptiness of fantasy and dreams leaving existence cold.

*As the Spirit stands alone
In the Stormy Wasteland,
Nowhere to call home..
The journey isn't planned,
Face the end,
The teachings and companionship of your life is a Godsend.*

People go by in their daily lives.
A mixture of contented and happy to strain and strife,
Trying to bring a purpose and meaning.
Almost a time well spent, seeming.

In a form of life so bleak and confusing,
The universe - endless and limitless.
Reality of an impossible God, amusing..
To confess lack of reason, creating absolute distress.

*As the Spirit stands alone
In the Stormy Wasteland,
Nowhere to call home..
The journey isn't planned,
Face the end,
The teachings and companionship of your life is a Godsend.*

The Heron looks past as he catches his fish,
Seeking only to eat, sleep and procreate.
Not any other thought or desire he wishes,

Other than to be simple and join a mate.

Because with a life on Earth, that's all that's really possible...
A time spent for others is the way to spend forever.
So if you can, if you're able...
Give freely, live well and be together.

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William, Fromeside Unit

Keeping it Together

Jack was an expert handyman, anything that needed constructing, You Name It!

From toys and games to computers and furniture,
Jack had absolute confidence in himself and his ability to assemble.

However... Jack needed money and knowing the obvious, he decided to get himself out there and apply for a number of jobs for different professional companies as a call-out servicer as recently Jack had been struggling to make ends meet as the big Businesses had been taking all the work, leaving him, consequently, with none.

Sitting in the waiting area outside the office of the interviewer, the person whose opinion would determine whether or not he got the job, Jack realised that he was feeling a different complex emotion than usual... fear!

Usually Jack could handle himself around his potential employers because they would just tend to leave him alone, aside from the occasional cup of tea!
But here was a situation where Jack would have to handle himself rather differently, professionally and with care. Care in being able to work with rules and regulation, care in being able to not only land or to acquire but to keep as well!

And it Dawned on Jack that in literally a whole new meaning, he would have to keep it together... and not as he usually meant it, but of his confidence and skill.

As he heard his name called "Mr Hammer, Mr Jack Hammer" he composed himself and went forward. Bracing himself to be able to impress who might end up being his new boss, he sat down and with the usual exchanged greetings and pleasantries, got down to business.

And as time went on, Jack was able to recall to himself how well he felt he had done. The Woman "Ms Weatherstone" taking control of the interview had seemed pleased with his performance and had discreetly expressed so.

He wondered if she actually would call him back and after some time, roughly 3 months, Jack received a phone-call from the same Ms Weatherstone!

"Hello, this is Ms Weatherstone, is there a Mr Jack Hammer present? I'm just calling to say Congratulations and that the Job is yours!" talking to each-other the cold informality waned slightly and expressing gratitude, Ms Weatherstone replied "it

is a stroke of luck having you with us, as you see, looking at your previous employment, you were a self-employed handyman... Having you come to us is quite reassuring because we were losing out to skilled workers such as yourself, and you coming to us would imply that our Company still has some life left in her yet!"

After having ended the conversation, Jack was surprised and amused, "And here I was thinking that It was me losing out" Laughing Voraciously, Jack turning his mind aside from these events was just glad of one thing... having kept his nerve and successfully following through with the application of a potentially more secure job, Jack triumphed in that he had... kept it together!

William, Fromeside Unit

The Time of My Life

Back where it all Started
It's ended where it began

Having Lost you is a fate worse than Death
More than I can Stand

My life has lost all meaning
You're all I want and Need

Yet nothing could make it happen
Pointless Wishes, Feelings and Deeds

Lost in Time you carry on
Nothing will make this better, the Years continue empty and Long

Unable to reach you, though once we were together
Reciprocation is in the too far distance,
However I will Love and remember you Forever

William, Fromeside Unit

Loves Nightmare

I can't contain this pain I feel inside
I wished you were dead and not just gone
I longed for your embrace, was love-deprived
I hope and pray that you hear this song
I think of you and this fire inside burns
I so long for your touch, my saving grace
My guts wrench, I feel sick and my heart yearns
My pillow I'm left to clutch to save face
As I fall deeper, my heart races faster
While I battle with REM this flame ignites
I wake from my sleep just before disaster
My eyes open as beauty sets in sight
I wake from my sleep and my nightmare ends
I am at one with you my lover, my friend.

James Hall, Rathbone LSU

Running Home!

Waking up! Waking up! Waking up!
the darkness I shall beat! O, O,
Getting up! Getting up! Getting up!
I'm up now on my feet!

I'll fly on the wings of a beautiful dove!
Soaring above forevermore!
Up in the sky, O, O, so ever so high!
Together as one for evermore!

Warming up! Warming up! Warming up!
my heart will I stretch! O, O,
Running fast! Running fast! Running fast!
I no longer am a wretch!

Running home! Running home! Running home!
I'll never be alone! O, O,
Coming home! Coming home! Coming home!
I shall no longer roam!

You're at home! You're at home! You're at home!
Waiting for me now! O, O,
I'll be there! I'll be there! I'll be there!
You've killed the fatted cow!

Flying high! Flying high! Flying high!
High above the clouds! O,
Your Son I see! Your Son I see! Your Son I see!
I hear him clear and loud!

Burning hot! Burning hot! Burning hot!
Your fire's in me now! O, O,
Lots of fuel! Lots of fuel! Lots of fuel!
You'll never let me down!

Nearly there! Nearly there! Nearly there!
the race is almost won! O, O,
Now I'm home! Now I'm home! Now I'm home!
I have become your son!
I am your son! I am your son! I am your son! forevermore!

Forensic Quality Network For Forensic Mental Health Services CCQI

Creative Writing Competition Submission

Anchored Tersets inspired by the Northern Poetry Library branding were created by Lisa Matthews to help inspire people to engage in creating their own anchored terset for National Poetry Day 2016.

Using the concept as an idea I created mine. Enjoy!

•
Nine

Pelicans

Listen

•

Nice

People

Lisp

•

Non-fat

Puppy-fat

Love handles

•

GB

Seperate The Mind

Joshua Glasson

If I could have the same moment
again, I'm sure, it'd be different,
So I know it - the past can't be changed,
Not easy to change full stop,
Either way, theres one possibility

Choose the way,

Okay,

I don't know how to shape it,
But I do know how to make it,
From nothing,
Out of it
To something
Belonging

And so be it, albeit well, proud to tell,
confessed evaded hell,
He forgiven me for my lies,
I can tell you,
Made anew
What forgotten, what fell through,

To climb now at a pace that never
stops.

Not too fast, not too slow,
Just in balance.

Of what was to come,
And what had been done,

Out of respect.

And Growth therefore...

Come what may.



My Role Model

Thank you, mum, for all the beauty you helped me to see in life,
Within this big wide world when I first opened my baby blue eyes,
The colour of the sky,
You have a warm loving heart of gold,
You wrapped me in your warm embrace,
I felt safe,
You taught me not to hate but only to love,
I am so blessed to be loved by you,
You pulled me out of my drowning misery and darkness in my mental health
Into the light,
I knew then a rainbow in light,
A diamond in night was not out of reach,
Your smile and laughter lit up the whole room with love,
You are the brightest sunshine high up in the sky,
As always mum you radiate happiness,
I am blinded by your sentimental grace and beauty,
You taught me to love and be kind to myself,
Your beauty shines within and shines through to the outside of you,
Your faith is strong
In the brightest and darkest hours,
Forgiveness is divine,
In life you held our hands always,
In death you forever hold our hearts,
Your pink lips have been kissed by death,
I know you are at peace,
I can feel your presence,
You are my angel sitting on top of the rainbow shining upon me,
I am grateful to have you as my mum. Thank you, mum.
I look at the photos of you. You are always smiling ever so beautiful at me.
Your eyes follow me left to right in the room from the photo of you on my window.
I feel calm, happy because your laugh wrinkles from your nose to the corners of your mouth,
Your pink lips smiling at me with an inviting smile,
Cute big bouncy brown curls upon your shoulders,
At 53 years of age,
You are full of grace,
You aged gracefully as you got older,
No one compares to you mum,
A mother,
A daughter,
A nanna,
A sister,
A wife,
My mum is full of life, love, forgiveness, joy, hope and peace.
Beautiful! Yes, she is.

Marlon Brando, drainage engineer and snake catcher extraordinaire, looked up at the tree outside the diesel depot. There was a black mamba crawling around up there somewhere, according to the monk who had stopped to fill up his SUV and buy a pack of cheesy wotsits. Brando was scared, black mambas were highly venomous and notoriously difficult to capture. He took his tongs out of the jeep and readied his big hessian sack. Suddenly he saw movement: the snake was out of the tree and advancing on him, fangs bared! He swore and pulled on his anti bite gloves. The snake and he locked eye contact. He began to feel calm and woozy as he stared into its eyes. Its movements mesmerised him. Suddenly the snake struck, darting forwards and biting on his glove. He snapped out of it and grabbed, blindly. He had it! It was pissed off and tried to bite him again, but he got it in the bag. The monk, watching, applauded.

Lucky tin wheedle, the Vietnamese monk and militant peace activist, arose from his meditation and picked up his rocket launcher from the armaments rack. He was in room 3b of the heavily fortified 5th dan peace temple. Outside he could hear Chinese government fighter jets screaming through the sky. The door opened and an initiate walked in. 'Master Wheedle,' he said, gracefully accepting the monks offer of chai, 'why are we fighting violence with ever greater violence?' Wheedle sipped and thought hard on the answer. A distant explosion and some screaming indicated the perimeter wall had been breached. 'This all moves in accordance with the great magnet,' he said presently. 'Reality is just one big fractal. Man fights over green pieces of paper. I am a lemon.' the door was kicked in and some ninjas burst into the room. Wheedle offered them tea, which they refused. Then he pronounced peace and went mental.

Alice stood by the gate to the tea party and smoothed her frock. The march hare was going completely bonkers at the table, spilling tea everywhere and ranting about ravens. The Dormouse was sleeping through it. The hatter was eating a scone and taking notes. 'but I don't want to go among mad people!' protested Alice to the world at large. Suddenly a large grin appeared. 'we're all mad here,' came a voice. Alice made her way through the gate and sat down. A teacup scuttled up to her, full of blackberry tea. 'Jam? Oh, I forgot all about the jam!' the hatter was saying, and the hare was acting like he was on cocaine. Alice sipped her tea and tried to be polite, but the other tea party guests were clearly out of their trees. 'very, very very rude indeed,' said the dormouse upon waking. Alice made her excuses and stood up to leave. The hare didn't notice and the hatter picked up a teacake.

Mustupha Phag had finished his jalfrezi and was trying to get the camel working. It was a difficult bugger, and a smelly one, too. He wanted the camel to travel north, but it only wanted to point south. He had tried putting camel treats to the north, and tapping it on the flank with a stick, but it refused to budge. "look," he found himself saying, "We've been friends a long time. We've been through thick and thin. I need to get to Istanbul in time for the owl market. Come on, buddy." the camel was irresolute. Angrily he pushed it, hard. The camel paused what it was chewing, thought a second, then weed on Phag's left sandal. Cursing the camel, he took out his phone and dialled his cousin, Mustupha nosejob, to borrow the car.

"Dangerous" Dave Macfly, the elite motorbike stunt double, contemplated the sheer ski slope in front of him and revved the engine. They were filming 'mission impossible 8: ghost dragon incident' and Tom Cruise was watching on a monitor at the bottom of the slope with the director, James Cameron. Macfly knew he was going to die. The stunt was totally impossible to execute on skis, let alone a motorbike, and the crocodile pit he had to avoid at the bottom was full of hungry animals who hadn't been fed in weeks. That wouldn't be a problem for Dave normally, but getting the bike past the dense electrified razor wire seemed beyond even his skill. Over the speaker system, he heard the insane director shout 'action!'. He broke out into a cold sweat. He should never have agreed to this. He put the bike in first gear and was about to pull the throttle. Suddenly he heard 'cut!'. There had been a rewrite.

Instead of running the bike down the ski slope, they wanted Dave, who was dressed exactly like Tom Cruise, to drive the bike out of a helicopter and execute a 360 whilst doing a hand stand on the handle bars, before diving head first into the resorts nearby lion enclosure. Dave read the script and approached Cameron, taking off his hat. "this is madness! You're trying to get me killed in the name of block buster art! I quit!" he yelled. Cameron looked offended. Tom cruise, who was sitting there sucking on a push pop, took a brief look at the situation before turning his attention to his own reflection in a pocket mirror. Dave stormed off the set and went and had a prawn salad at the bar. The crocs and lions went hungry. The end.

The Black Rooster, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust

Cluck sighed a deep sigh. He hated waste management. He had been demoted after failing to spot the missing cat in the office spot the difference competition. Looking back, he had been a fool. It was blindingly obvious the cat was in the tree next to the escaping suspects. He shovelled another spade load of poop out of the office cesspit, reflecting that, god, had it come to this. Suddenly, his pager went off. It was his aunt Flora, an elderly chicken, saying she had won the postcode lottery and needed help spending a hundred and fifty grand. Cluck grimaced and threw down his shovel, before checking the prices of flights to Bermuda on his portable phone. Within five hours he was on a plane and popping the champagne. Then, when they had landed, things got really weird. The locals were all speaking backwards and there was a big machine in the sky. Cluck tried to dance but was bow-legged. He woke up. A dream.

Cluck took a swig of coffee and contemplated his laptop. He was writing an existentialist treatise on the most serious use of the word 'badger' in the modern novel. He was bored. Suddenly there was a power cut and the room was plunged into darkness. Cluck reached for the matches, but couldn't find them. Banging his shin on the table, he made his way to the cupboard under the stairs and retrieved the flashlight. The batteries were dead. He swore. A noise came from upstairs, and a shiver went down his neck. He felt his way to the stairs and pulled out his .357 magnum. He made his way upstairs, his eyes adjusting to the darkness. A noise came from the Bedroom, 'show yourself!' he shouted, booting the door open. Something moved within. 'Come out of the shadows, taffer!' he cried, unloading his magnum with a blast of muzzle flare. Just then the lights came back on. The cat was there, looking puzzled.

The end.

Lambda Calculus

(A poem by dibaddja)

What is the nature of truth?
 Why am I so aloof?
 What is the purpose of life?
 It has yet to be revealed to these eyes
 And maybe it never will
 Unless this verse sorts the gold from the swill
 Love is a mad genuflection on the altar of forgiveness
 Sent like a boon from above to bless
 What's the point in good and bad luck
 Were we born with it or is fatalism outgrown
 Fuck
 At school they told us poems didn't have to rhyme
 Of course they do, some of the time, for the atom smasher of metaphor to ring true!
 The distance between two points is a straight line
 Maths is just a hobby of mine
 A bit of lambda calculus makes your brain bleed out of your ears
 Quantum theology is just another term for fear
 That we have no purpose and no god is near
 When I rhyme I speak true says
 It's necessarily the only way
 Repetitive beats pound in my ears
 It's easy to be frightened when truth is near
 Maybe its a symptom of an illness that has my sanity robbed
 Or maybe mine is a mind touched by god
 Nobody will ever know, least of all me
 You can tie yourself in knots trying to be free
 The dark badger baiter
 Creator and mutilator
 Jester guesser impatient inpatient
 Alchemical brewer of thoughts complacent
 Digger for fools gold
 Comforter of friends souls
 Master of the obvious fact
 Laser focus never to distract
 Spitter of rhyme that emerges imperfect
 Quadratic curves in the y axis reflect
 Invert the metaphor if you're into that
 You'll spike your tea with the mad hatters hat
 This is all just a game to place me in the here and now
 And to ask myself not only why but how
 And to sense a solution to the lambda calculus, to figure out a way to win
 Hey, look at it this way, its sink or swim
 In this life everyone is caning the spice, religiously
 They are defeated by the badgers epic simile
 In the sky satellites transmit mans learning to alpha centauri

So aliens can listen to Darren Styles and go, hey, this is groovy!
 My brain has been in first gear for a number of years
 And I make no apology for this
 It was necessary to undo a lot of the twists
 Acceleration towards the future is the only solution now
 Even if it means crazy battles and rows
 The badger is an unstoppable force on a frictionless plane
 He's been labelled mad, bad, predatory and insane
 But he laughs at the doctors who don't understand
 And the madness he stars in that threatens to get out of hand
 He tried compliance, it got him nowhere
 He tried fighting his own shadow, it disappeared into thin air
 In the end he nailed his workings to the wall
 Backed himself up against the clock in the hall
 Told them to mark it, he wasn't scared any more
 What was the worst that could happen? At least he wouldn't be bored. End

So there I was. In the middle of Kirsty Mckracken's animal theme carnival on boxing day in a badger suit. Things seemed to be going ok, I had an ice cream in one hand, a toy sword in the other and a loaded reefer in my wallet. Suddenly this kid, a boy of 11, comes tugging at my tail asking me if i want to play him at chess. I am able to beat the computer on level 12 (semi pro) so I agree, thinking this will be some sport. He massacres me within about 15 moves. My queen and bishops, my favorite tactical pieces, get annihilated. Soon its check mate. I go off to the llama enclosure in a huff.

I am trying to light my reefer behind the llama feeding tent when the tannoy announces all entertainment personnel to the front gate to start the procession. I hastily stub the joint out on the nearest thing, which happens to be a llama. It is not impressed, and rears up, drenches me in spit and kicks me with its hind

Legs. I go flying past the fortune tellers tent into the mud. I pick myself up and scrape the worst of the llama crap off me. When I get to the main gate, the procession is already under way. I grab my 'end animal testing now' placard and slide in between a gopher and some squirrels. I am stoned off the super ccess and careering all over the place, covered in shit and spit and ice cream. I collide with a man in a pigeon suit (I don't know him) and he angrily shouts "what are you doing?" to which I have no reply.

Eventually we get to the soft drinks tent, and i am super thirsty, so i pull off the badger head piece and gulp down a sprite. I realise that the kid is there, watching me and telling his mum how he beat me at chess. I hastily put the head back on and head back to the staff exits. That's the last time I ever did corporate hospitality for the world wildlife fund.

Rinse master badger blazer, top rated MC in five counties, picked up the mic and surveyed the crowd. Thousands of people were dancing in front of him. A crowd of llamas were frantically losing it. Some squirrels were grooving kung fu style near the sound stage. In front of one of the forty kilowatt speakers, a turtle in a Hawaiian shirt appeared to be praying. Behind Rinse master, DJ chemical echo was spinning a vinyl set of the finest nu skool hardcore. As Rinse master was about to begin chattin, a naked flamingo climbed onto the stage and began striking poses with the spare mic stand, like a pole dancer. As he listened to the relentless thud of the bass bins, Rinse master reflected how far he had come, out of the dark woods, through the trials of the UK legal system, across the abandoned plains of insanity, and finally he was here, at the UK's loudest and happiest gathering. He began to speak....

It was dark. Fred the ninja squirrel scurried over the fence to the pringles factory. He was very hungry. A rottweiler stood in his path. He whipped out one of his shurikens and threw it. There was a yelp of pain and the dog scurried away with its tail between its legs. He approached the packing area and pulled out his foldaway Tesco's bag. He began to load up on tubes of sour cream and chive and barbeque. Suddenly his pager went off. It was the ninja conglomerate. They wanted him to drop what he was doing and return to the squirrel temple for yoga and kung fu practice. He swore under his breath and loaded a final tube of salt and vinegar. If he hurried he could drop them off at his drey before dawn. He retraced his steps. Suddenly floodlights came on from everywhere and a shot rang out. "freeze! D. E. A!" came a voice. Fred sprinted for the fence, just making it out of sight. He skipped yoga practice. End

Fizzle Mctingefoot, a hedgehog, sipped his espresso and took a look at the fox news channel. Brexit, badger cull, invention of a new kind of sausage, nothing really interesting. Suddenly the screen went blank. He reached for the remote but it did nothing. He put on his spectacles and took up his walking stick and banged it on top of the tv. Nothing happened. Cursing, he picked up the phone and dialled Martin Chuzzlewit, the weasel who was his landlord. "tv on the blink again," he said curtly. "I'm just smoking a hookah," announced Chuzzlewit, "I'll be right there." when the landlord arrived the dial up internet had gone down and there was a strumming noise coming from behind the fridge. The landlord pulled the appliance aside, to reveal a small mariachi band composed of hacker shrews. "There's your problem," he explained, "illegal immigrants." he led them out. The tv came back on a few moments later. End.

Fantastic Mr fox pulled on his thermal socks and sat by the fire. His friend, merlin the all powerful wizard, was dealing out hands of gin rummy. They were both drinking a fruity cider. Suddenly there was a knock at the door. It was Mrs Crumblebottom, who had lost her cat. Fox and Merlin put on winter woollies and went out into the snow. They followed the cats paw prints and came to a tree. The cat was up the tree. Fox took off his greatcoat and held it out. Merlin sent a sonic boom up into the tree, scaring the crap out of the cat and causing it to let go and fall into foxes coat. They returned the cat and went home, where they opened a fine warming brandy and played canasta till dawn. The end.

Steve the weasel popped out of his hole one bright winter morning and took stock of the situation. It was very cold and he had run out of his supply of alligator jerky. He sniffed the air, and could detect nearby traffic. He headed for the road and stuck his thumb out. Many passing cars ignored him, but an Irish long distance lorry driver called Fred took pity on the cold, shabby looking weasel and stopped to pick him up. "I heard on the wireless that hitch hikers might be convicts escaping from the local asylum but I don't believe a word of it," said Fred. "Thank you!" said weasel gratefully. "right," said Fred, "I'm going as far as Bracknell". They rode on. Suddenly a hedgehog stepped into the road in front of the lorry. "feck!" said Fred, and slammed on the brakes. Weasel was thrown forwards onto some cheese and onion crisp packets on the dash, which cushioned the impact. The hedgehog was unharmed.

"Its a rum thing mister mate, the galleon sails but she's got no crew. And on the sea south westerly you can hear the moaning of drowned souls. It shakes my bones and no mistake."

Twas a bright starry night with a bit of moon. We were sailing the Indian Ocean, terror incognitar, when a great storm broke. We battened down the hatches but the mainmast split asunder. We thought we were doomed, when we heard a call through the thunder and rain. "Ahoy!" the kings navy! We were saved and charged with piracy. In the brig on the ss invincible were many miscreants harvested from the seven seas.

Next door was doctor figgins zoology samples, including many tortoises from the Galapagos and the rare latex zebra of the outer hebrides. We looked on in amazement as it contorted and knotted itself. Doctor Figgins was a peculiar man, and, after treating our scurvy, invited us to try some of his wife's pickled eggs. We respectfully declined apart from slightly balding pirate, who ate one and turned green. We set sail for London, where we were to be tried in the high court for crimes of looting, extortion, boat jacking and all manner of skullduggery. But before we arrived we had to go around the treacherous cape of good hope, and that is where things got even stranger.....

We were sailing the cape when we heard from amidships a great cacophony of shouting, followed by the blast of cannon to port, and answering shots from above.

This continued for some time: the latex zebra twisted its neck nervously. Doctor Figgins busts in with the keys, shouting about the league of the damned and how its every soul for themselves, before unlocking us and fleeing with a tortoise under each arm. The league of the damned! We had only heard myths from old, drunken sailors in port, but they struck terror into our hearts- undead, zombie pirates from beyond davy jones' locker! The ship was being overrun- all was chaos, and the massive zombie pirate cruiser had pulled up alongside the invincible and made it look like a puny puppy. We tried to flee in the dinghies but we were netted and dragged aboard the pirate vessel to meet bluebeard, the zombie captain. He smelt of whelks.

As the kings navy men were made to walk the plank, into the boiling whirlpool of doom, bluebeard turned to us and asked us why he should spare our miserable lives.

We answered that we had in our possession a map to the legendary treasure of the Sierra Madre, as well as a rare latex zebra. The zombie pirate scratched his rotting beard. He seemed impressed. We brought the frantically knotted zebra aboard. It would sell for a kings ransom in Antigua. The zombie king asked for our treasure map. Artistically leaning pirate had mocked it up in the meantime with some wax crayons and symbols copied out of his memory of reading old manuscripts at art college. We handed it over and bluebeard agreed to let us go free, pirates honour, with the invincible. As we set sail, we couldn't believe our luck, and a new upgraded ship to boot! But it would only be a matter of time before our trick was discovered. We fled fast.

Cluck sat down at his typewriter again and took a pull at a stiff coffee. His novel, 'and what withering times were these', was coming along spectacularly badly. It was about a chicken in a plotless universe, trying to rationalise his own existence. He contemplated his life: every day was the same, he was stuck in the same place and nothing he did mattered much. He sighed and was about to open the scotch when he heard a banging noise from the kitchen. He got up and went to investigate. The washing machine was going mental, vibrating all over the place and half way across the floor! He panicked and tried to turn it off at the wall but couldn't reach. He went downstairs to the fuse box and pulled the main trip switch. The noises didn't cease, and he heard a barking from the dog and a ringing that sounded like an alarm clock. He woke to find himself in bed. The typewriter stared at him from the desk. The end.

He had finished by 6pm. He went into the kitchen and turned on the oven. Nothing was happening. Mrs. Hamstring looked on, unimpressed. "maybe it needs turning up?" he said, twisting a dial. A whining noise came from the garage. Ernesto turned the dial to gas mark 11. Suddenly there came a massive explosion from the garage. They rushed outside and something brown and sticky fell from the sky and stuck to his glasses. It was raining pig shit and the garage was on fire. Mrs. Hamstring calmly dialled the fire brigade. No pigs were injured, but Ernesto resolved to pay the gas bill the next day.

Ernesto Blomkvist Hamstring the third set aside the plans for the mouse powered particle accelerator he was building in his shed and turned his attention to the gas man. "see, guv," the man was saying, "you haven't paid your bill in over two years. That's why we have to cut your gas off". Ernesto tried to explain that he had been running experiments with extracting sunlight from turnips and that required a lot of gas, but the man only took out his torque wrench and delved inside the gas meter with his hands. "how will Mrs. Hamstring cook the roast hog on Sunday?"

Implored Ernesto. The gas man muttered something under his breath about bloody Tories and picked up his tools and left. Ernesto was left with no gas. Suddenly he had a bright idea. He could rewire the pig shit powered electricity generator to run the oven! Smiling, he headed to the garage. Inside, he found a screwdriver and went to work.....

Chiman the flying lotus took a sip of his green tea and a pull on his apple flavour hookah. The deed in front of him was from a client, afro the grasshopper, demanding the return of his art collection from the Louvre. If Chiman signed it, it would become a legal document and the French government would risk a major diplomatic incident if they failed to return baby grasshoppers paintings of sugar cubes and ladybirds done in the grasshoppers stately home. Chiman sighed. Suddenly the door flew off its hinges and a squad of armored rhinos charged in. 'Drug squad!' yelled one of them, 'this is a bust. Give us all your drugs!' Chiman protested that he only smoked apple tobacco. The head rhino was having none of it. 'I'm a lawyer and I'll do you for harassment,' threatened Chiman, 'what's your badge number?' the rhino covered up his badge and began poking around the office. Other rhinos began to unplug the computer and hookah. Chiman took out his super jeejah and began filming. The chief rhino turned to him, brandishing a small bag of green leaves. 'What's this? Skunk? Ultraskunk?' 'that's my tea,' explained Chiman patiently, 'I drink it'. The rhino snorted. By this time most of the office had been packed up into evidence bags and was being carted outside into the rhinos SUV. Chiman protested, pointlessly. When his wife came home she found him sipping water in an empty office, writing a letter in biro to the prime minister. He was very annoyed. He attached a stamp and stood up. 'darling, what happened to the fridge?' asked his wife. 'they thought the bottles of apple juice were ketamine oil so they took the whole thing.' Chiman posted the letter and went to his zumba class. The "evidence" was returned the following week with a profuse apology from the police chief. The end.

In the asylum, I took a long draft of that naughty bean they call coffee and contemplated the situation. It was not good. The zombies were running the place and no mistake. One, fat, droned on endlessly about Doctor Turnips performance enhancing elixir, Dyanabol. He liked to listen to most offensive grime music, which offends all the fayre folk's ears. Another, alpha male zombie, likes to embiggen himself by talking of many jousts and feates of strength he has accomplished at tourney, and the size of his member and howe all the asylum attendants and fine maidens of court desire it. The zombies lurch towards the attendants as if to feast on their flesh and are tranquilised by the bnf approved concoctions. A priest, sallye, pale, visits by appointment. She does the devils work, feeding false hope of salvation and mercy. It is a saddening state of affairs. More tea.

Nigel the Wookie took a long look at the plate of sushi in front of him. He would swear that bits of it were still moving. He motioned to the head waiter, who was called Mr Wong. 'what the fuck is this?' asked Nigel politely in Vietnamese. 'Finest flavour,' said Mr Wong, 'very minty.' Nigel picked up his chopsticks gingerly. 'finest flavour,' repeated Mr Wong, as Nigel took a mouthful. It was revolting. He spat it out, and grabbed the head waiter by the shirt. 'are you fucking with me over this sushi?!' he demanded angrily. Mr Wong turned purple. The chef and the maitre d sidled over, talking into radios concealed in their cufflinks. Suddenly the Wookie stood up and coughed. He was choking! Mr Wong grabbed him around the waist and squeezed. A small crayfish came flying out of Nigel's mouth, bounced off the chef and scuttled away under the table to join an animal rights group. The Wookie left without paying

Cluck regarded the goon through his horn-rimmed spectacles. He looked pathetic. After five years in the can, lucky Nicky had got out and tried to shake down the local jewellers for some bent ice. He had been fingered by the shop owner and was now wearing bracelets in the back of the cop shop. Cluck lit a smoke and asked him: "Nicky, who sent you to the jewellers on ninth?" Nicky's moll was sobbing outside. A real Sheba, she had met cluck at the station in floods. What was a smouldering bearcat like her doing with a no hope dewdropper like Nicky? It didn't add up. Nicky was shtum. cluck sighed and motioned for the cells. The heavies led Nicky out. The moll, Bethany, flew to cluck and began protesting Nicky's innocence. "He was stitched up by the chopper squad!" she cried. Cluck asked her who they were, but all she knew were voices on the phone. Cluck went to the car and headed downtown to look for leads...

Arriving at the jewellers, cluck got out of his car and lit another smoke. The jewellers on ninth moved a lot of ice- wedding rings, engagement bracelets, the whole shebang. The owner, a cod called shaky, greeted him cordially. "you ever see this girl?" asked cluck, waving a polaroid of Bethany. Shaky denied it, but cluck could see in his eyes that he was lying. "mind if I look around?" he asked, and went into the back room. He saw safes and crates. He took a crowbar and opened one of them, shaky protesting, and his beak hit the floor. The crates were stuffed with bean shooters, Smith and Western by the look of them. Then, he felt a sharp pain and everything went black.

When he came to, he was tied to a chair in a room with a single bulb. An ostrich was standing over him, grinning. "officer cluck, the famous gumshoe, we meet at last," he said. "I am Alek Szahala, an original g kingpin." cluck frowned.....

"you have already met my moll, Bethany," continued the ostrich, as Beth stepped from the shadows. "she aint really with Nicky, its just smoke to blow you off the trail." "What do you want?" asked cluck. "We want to send you to the bottom of the east river in the cement overcoat," growled a bulldog who had just appeared. "this is my right hand man, Tyler Stadius," said Szahala, still grinning. "You'll never get away with this!" shouted cluck, as Tyler grabbed him and his chair. Just then there was a burst of gunfire and the sound of breaking glass as the skylight caved in. "Shit, coppers! Scram!" yelled the ostrich, his grin disappearing. Octopus descended from the roof waving an Uzi on a zip wire as the gangsters split. "Thank god for my tracking device," said cluck as octopus untied him. They went back to the station and drank lemonade. The gangsters were never caught. Nicky is still in jail. The end.

So, Tatiana was a minor royal and got them tickets for the England games. However, she was friends with a peasant girl from a rural village called Tanya (the girl, not the village). They were at the Belgium game last night and gill saw them kissing. She found out later over vodka that they have been having passionate relations for some weeks. Tatiana said that Gill was the one for her and she was only having a fling with Tanya, but Gill hates being second choice in any scenario. So she left and has flown back here. She is nursing a rum and coke and smoking a Marlboro. She is pretty pissed off with having to miss the next round but I am glad to see her again.

And so we prepare to the castle for the military parade. Doctor Johnson is very drunk and starts hurling insults at the soldiers. The lance corporal takes offence and offers to skewer him on a pike. Johnson runs and hides in the gents. I find him cowering in one of the stalls, singing a song about goblins. I drag him out and we repair to the battlements. There, Johnson pukes his wassaik over the assembled peasantry below. In the confusion we escape to the coffee house, where Johnson sobers up and starts talking on and on about dictionaries...

And so to the tavern, where we have fun with ye kitchen staff. Mrs. Crumblebottom prepares a fine crusty loaf whilst telling me about her husband. Apparently she came home one day to find him sweating profusely and arguing with the cat Milton. He was seen by the physician, and the priest reverend Badfoot, and has been found to be touched. He has been transferred to a private sanitarium where they use dunking, leeches and the like under the direction of Dr Frederick Oppenheimer, the owner of the largest leech farm in Europe. It is hoped he will improve with time. Ms Dearheart makes a tray of Chelsea buns whilst regaling us with tales of her many men, saying they are all alike, wanting her treasure but unwilling to meet her father Butcher Dearheart, for fear he may come at them with an axe. And so onwards to the palace... - Samuel Pepys

As we delve deeper into the valley of the sausages we are forced to confront the truth: BBQ is better than grilled, relish beats salsa and the square of the hippopotamus is equal to the sum of the square of the remaining hides.

Winner

Cracked Up – Understanding mental Health

Despite numerous attempts to call for medical help for me, even though I was on the verge of taking an opiate overdose, or even worse, pumping my head full of 'lead' from a 12 gauge shotgun, I was simply thrown into the prison system, starved of my medication for days on end and being treated like a 'monster', a low life criminal.

Nobody would listen to me or my family, they just didn't realise how severe mental health can be. I had good days where I was practically a normal person, but I had dark days where I was a raving 'lunatic', a danger to myself and potentially others around me, especially those close to me, those who loved me.

I couldn't face the public, I was a prisoner to my own home. Going out would cause severe panic attacks that would result in me running out of shops, petrified, and locking myself in my car.

Getting out of bed was impossible, giving attention to my children was irritable, and getting intimate with my wife was out of the question.

I avoided my friends and made excuses for everything, especially if it meant meeting new people, or even somebody I hadn't seen in a while.

To this day, stress still 'triggers' my anxiety, and drugs amplify the psychosis, but I can cope with it now, it's difficult, but my medication keeps me stable, and I have strong support from my family and friends, and also the mental health team.

There is still a lack of understanding, care and support from professionals, the prison and police.

I have done my time for the crime, but was it what I deserved?

Did I actually commit a crime, or was it a cry for help?

Mental health defines a vast number of symptoms all very different from each other.

In my case I suffer from manic depressive disorder and psychotic disorder and very recently also diagnosed with adult ADHD.

On a bad day I can see things and hear voices that are not there. It really is very scary because one example is that when I'm in busy public places, I have panic attacks and psychosis where I think that people are looking at me and talking about me, there to rob me or hurt me, and even kill me.

My medication really helps me though, it regulates the imbalance of chemicals in the brain. The Sertraline stops the depression and the Aripiprazole stops the psychosis. I've often thought how long will I be relying on medication for? What do people think of me knowing that I take it?

The important thing is that the medication really does work for me.

It makes me feel better, it makes me feel normal, why stop taking it? Why feel embarrassed?

Winner

It's hard to explain mental health to somebody who has never experienced it before. It's easy for them to say

"Just brush it off"

"Look at the glass half full, not half empty"

"Pick yourself up"

And worse yet "Man-Up"!

The only way I can help explain it, is that imagine there minute you open your eyes, you just want to go back to sleep, there isn't anything worth getting up for.

That horrible 'black cloud' is still raining on your head and it follows your everywhere you go.

You don't even have the energy to go and take a shower, personal hygiene goes out of the window, the thought of anybody seeing you, especially to talk to, is terrifying and going out in public is truly scary!

You don't want to answer the phone to anyone and it's a scary thought to listen to your voicemail. It's just better to turn your phone off.

It feels like your head is being squeezed in a vice, and when you try and have a normal conversation it's hectic and you struggle to concentrate, just like somebody else talking over you in your ear.

It's exhausting, the best thing to do is sleep. Close your eyes and never wake up, but then that's selfish to your children, family and friends.

Suicide came into my head on many occasions and the way I was going to do it was in the most painless and enjoyable way, to take large amounts of cocaine, drink bottles of vodka with orange juice and then swallow every oxycontin, tramadol, buprenorphine and any other opiate lying around, this way I would fall asleep and never wake up due to respiratory failure from the opiate overdose, failing that a 12 gauge shotgun was at hand to finish the job properly.

I have been on remand for nearly one year now and I'm waiting to be sentenced in June 2021 for possession of a shotgun without certificate.

I hope there is some justice, after all, I was Cracked Up, and now I'm on the road to recovery.

A chapter from my book, Cracked Up! – Coming soon!

By Timothy White, HMP Wandsworth

H-M-P STRANGWAYS!

BEST PLACE I EVER BEEN!

- (1) Free Bed, BREAKFAST, DINNER Evening Meal, GREAT COOKING.
- (2) You get selection each week for MENU, food off Computer.
- (3) Free clothing, when arrive in PRISON (GREY TOPS, JOGGERS).
- (4) You get a Nice Cell, where you can share with your friend.
- (5) Free Television, don't pay for Television licence.
- (6) You get a nice nurse giving you Medication twice a day.
- (7) You get Exercise, go for a walk in yard once in a while.
- (8) You get a good job inside laundry or printing press & get paid a good wage.
- (9) You don't have to open doors or gates you get a guard to open them for you.
- (10) You even get a guard to take you to visits, legal probation.
- (11) You get a good selection of Books, & taken to library once a week.
- (12) You get nice guard dogs to watch over you all night. (Alsatians).
- (13) You go to over 50's club once a week in church.
- (14) You get Free pool, foot Ball game, Table Tennis, on wing.
- (15) Taken to gym 2 a week, where you keep fit.

Hotel Strangways, all this can be yours for nothing!

You just arrive when you get sentence of Judge!
10 mins from Manchester Piccadilly, Picadilly gardens.
Victoria Train Station, 5 min walk Central Manchester.

I give this a 3* Hotel, Better than Butlins.
Needs Karaoke daily, Bingo 2 a week, Archery, Darts, Crazy golf.
Bus outings outside once a Month, Black pool, Scotland, Chester Zoo.

Hotel Strange don't miss it, it welcomes every one.
Good Queen Eliza Beth & the Judge who sends you on holiday!

A.W. Beeks

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