



Creative Writing

from forensic and prison mental health services

This Summer, for the first time ever the Quality Networks for Forensic and Prison Mental Health Services launched a creative writing competition for patients.

We received some wonderful 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 2020

1st place

INADEQUATE

It has been a lonely day, here comes the night again.
But day or night I will always have to hide away
The mask that I wear is not one you can see
But it enables me to hide from the cruel truth of reality.

Life is meant to be a gift
But to some of us it is a torture
We have no choice but to endure.

Just when you feel you are getting close to where you want to
be

Someone, or just life itself, manages to pull you down.

It is like climbing the tree of life
As you nearly reach the top the wind begins to blow
and you are left feeling exposed and ashamed.
People will always find it easy to call you weak
But they never take the time to ask why.

I wish they could see I have not got a problem
finding my own faults
But if someone can help me find
The strength and courage to deal with them
Please speak now.

2nd place

GOLD IN THE ATTIC

BY JDu.

The Dixon family were clearing out their loft, there was nothing in there of any value or interest - or so Mr Dixon thought. He spotted a briefcase, it was a dusty old thing, he cleaned it up and had plans to pass this down to his grandchildren. The Dixon family were very poor, they had no idea what treasures were inside.

The problem was that they had no key to open it, they spotted a letter dated '1804' on the shelf, it read;

"To open this trunk you must find a fleece covered in gold, when you find this fleece it will give you another clue."

So baffled Mr Dixon got a team of gold diggers to help him, as they were driving passed a paint factory - that was spraying out unwanted paint into the drains, they found, to their amazement a sheeps fleece covered in gold spray! Attached to the fleece was another clue - it was a riddle. The riddle read;

"What do people make wishes in - there are hundreds in the country?"

ANSWER

2nd place

It took the team some time to find the answer and then one of the team said "has somebody trumped?" And then Mr Dixon said "I know what rhymes with Smell! - a wishing well!"

Attached to the clue were directions to the well, another riddle was also there, the riddle read;

"Whats made of wood (normally), keeps animals and people out?"

ANSWER

They didn't need to solve the riddle, and to their utter delight there was a golden key hanging from the fence. Just then they saw a strange craft hovering over the well, it was the size of a car and was surrounded by flashing lights. Then a small entity appeared from the craft, the whole team were terrified - apart from Mr Dixon. The alien said "where have you stolen our key from?" Then Mr Dixon explained everything that had happened - finding the case, and so on. So they just went home, all the family went up to the attic to get the trunk and to their amazement the trunk was full of £18 million! When Mr Dixon was interviewed on TV he never explained any of the events or how he got the money. And the Dixons and the gold diggers lived very happily ever after.

The End.

3rd place



Counting the pennies every day, even in
the month of May.

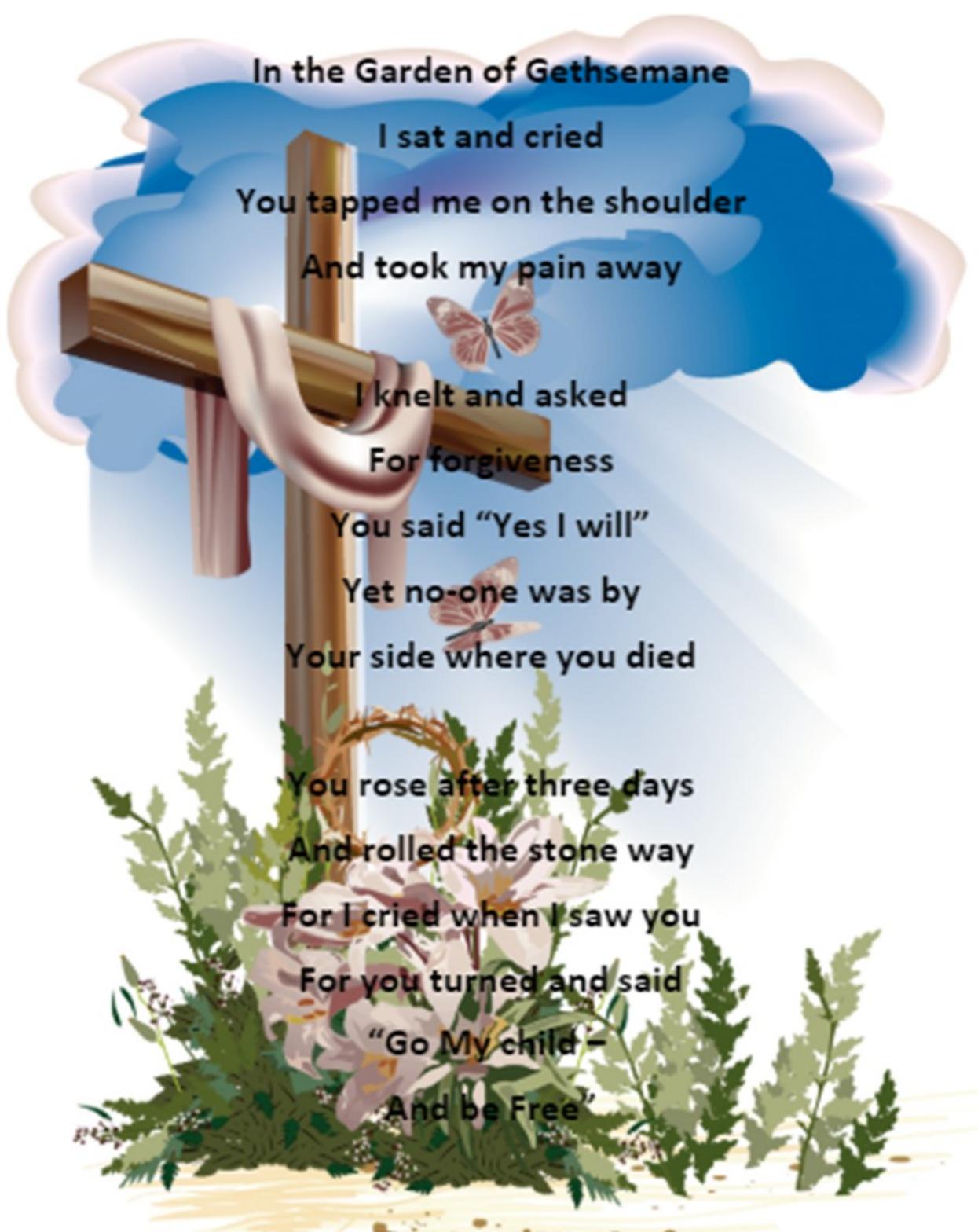
Look after the pennies you know the
rhyme, but nothing ever seems so fine.

Reflectively it's been change, change,
change, so this is how I rearrange male
to female my evolutionary self, but
there's a doubt about my mental health.

Although I say I've always been a girl, I'm
sure that time will only tell.

Poem by Diana Spencer 2020

The Garden



In the Garden of Gethsemane

I sat and cried

You tapped me on the shoulder

And took my pain away

I knelt and asked

For forgiveness

You said "Yes I will"

Yet no-one was by

Your side where you died

You rose after three days

And rolled the stone way

For I cried when I saw you

For you turned and said

"Go My child -

And be Free"

Music gratification and alien invasion

Music is a gracious mystical, mysterious container, cube, vibration and thing sometimes played on string. Maybe on the harp, maybe on the flute. Getting out your treasure chest and counting your loot. Pirates and their ships, lemonade and apple pips. Solar eclipse. Saturn and the sun, Venus and Mars. When you think something becomes ours. A soul on a journey, a maiden voyage. The age of coinage and destruction. Some people quake with fear sometimes affects the inner ear. Assumptions are made, a renegade. Someone has a master plan. Yohan and a van. Playing twister at night. The sun, the day and the night. The Sun shines brightly in the sky. People stop and ask why. The saucer lands, peoples minds open and expands. The starts look with a frown whilst wearing a night gown. Some people run with fear, some people offer a beer. A quaint, little voice shouts from the crowd "Are we allowed?" One alien stands up in the haste and says "Can we join the human race?" The crowd says "Yes, lets go one a quest".

The Dragons Lair

A holy wrap, a bacon bap, a bar of gold, let the story be told. Legs eleven goes to heaven. The window frame, are you to blame. The connoisseur, mentor. The beach ball, hanging on the wall. Comb your hair, do not despair. A light quaff, a sudden wiff. The primate and the anti-climax. The nibblings and the filo-fax. The dungeons and dragons, the go-carts and the wagons. The sky raining fire, the electric wire A loose string, goes ding, dong, sing a song, you mong. Monks at the alter, fetch fresh spring water in Majorca. In France the monks of twelves get visited by the elves. Stoned immaculate, winters creep, one step forward, take a leap. Into the unknown, the sacred stone. A talisman worn by merry men, people loitering around in their den. The land of plenty, carnivorous and empty. A stumbling black occurs sometimes, with these rhymes. Hayley's comet, a shooting star, there you are. A mouth and wand and a newt in the pond. Sleepless nights, many frights. The freight train rolls on, singing that cho-cho song. A centipede, race and creed. An endurance type, filled with hype. What's the score, a crumble, a lure. Policy is wide, don't let them take you for a ride. A dragons lair, be aware, we all have a cross to bare. We all have a soul and end up in a hole. Many pitfalls lie ahead. Beware you don't end up dead. To infinity and beyond. Sing that happy song.

In this place

In this place my heart wants to be free, and the grounds
gates on match days I hear

the roar. At these times the football does not feel the same
but remember what times we did have when singing of the
chants high and low through the stands. At this time of our
lives

gets more and more stange, rember the NHS are saving lives.

And clap like you would
on the sunny says home and away for the team you love and
support.

Life in Lockdown

I'm a 25 year old guy with autism and mild learning disability. I'm in a rehab ward for people with LD and autism who have got themselves into problems in the past and need some help to go back to the community. I'm hoping to be discharged this year.

Thank God isolation was only two weeks. It's better now I'm out, I've got that choice. I feel better now, I feel good, now I know we've got that choice I can come out, talk to staff and the other patients, watch TV in the lounge.

Before we were isolated, we were told we couldn't come out—I was about to come out of my room, and I felt like I didn't have a choice. Now I have a choice, I can go out to my room and listen to music or play my PlayStation.

But back then, I didn't have a choice. I like to roam around, not just be in one place. Basically I want to tell everyone how its like to be isolating in your room in hospital for 14 days and in lockdown.

My isolation day

08.00 I cant go and get my meds and say good morning to the staff, I can't have that freedom. I don't really have breakfast normally but I was bored, it's something to do, staff brought it for me. I feel like I've lost my independence. When will it be lifted? When we can we see family?

09.00 Medication time– staff still bring my tablets to my door.

If my discharge is going to be slowed down it's going to get me thinking 'when am I going to get out' because you can't go nowhere until the virus goes away—because I don't want it and to become ill.

10.00 I have a shower every day even though I can't come onto the ward—I couldn't put on clean clothes without a shower. Then I put on clean clothes because it makes me feel good. How am I supposed to keep myself busy? The lockdown of the Covid-19 is affecting my autism when I am in my room and when staff said I cannot come out I felt lonely and I just felt like I wanted to

socialise with others and to talk and play cards, pool and go to football.

11.00 Playing with my PS and listening to music. OT gave me some quizzes to do—I found it quite fun—'name that logo'.

12.00 Lunchtime. I liked having room service . I missed eating in the dining room and not being able to talk to staff, instead of eating on your own like a horse in a stable—I felt like an animal, kept away, cooped up and kept away. The lockdown stops me from going on my community leave to the town with staff and going on my unescorted grounds leave and working towards unescorted shop leave—it frustrates me so much.

13.00 I don't know what to do with myself. I'm in my room—it's hard work. I feel cut off, lonely. Claustrophobic. Scared I'm going to get ill. They said we'd have to have another week in isolation if someone gets ill, I'm a bit nervous and anxious about that.

14.00 Watching some TV. Some days I am bored, I was hanging around in my doorway and staff asked me to go to my room. I was frustrated and angry—losing it with staff—I felt guilty—felt like I need to say sorry, it's not fair on me though, it feels like staff are on the ward...I just want to get out. Kept on asking questions. I was pushing boundaries, Kept coming out of my room, I wouldn't listen to staff, felt like no one was listening to me. The consultants come on to the ward the first week is up, they said "you have to do another week" - that's when I thought "I can't do this, it's too long, it's not the government rule, you're making your own rules up". Obviously I don't know if that's true but it's what it feels like. Honestly I think they did it because they wanted to keep us safe and maybe it came from the manager and above him. But it is so awful. Felt like it was pointless—me coming out of m room, asking all those questions, I wanted to see if they would back down. I didn't expect them to because it's a serious situation, I know it's a serious situation.

15.00 More TV—sometimes right up until 9pm on weekdays. I'm thinking staff must be having a whale of a time. We are all human, we are all in our rooms, they're out—having an easy time but they could catch it too. On the other hand they have to look after us—but why are they allowed off the ward and we are not? They can catch it too. Many people have had it and died, including

nurses and support workers. In a way I worry about staff—will there be enough staff to make sure the ward is safe, help us to get meals and do our laundry and all that, and my medication?

17.00 Dinner in my room, it wasn't the same as being on the ward and talking with other people on your table or in the dining room (not talking with your mouth full, obviously).

18.00 Ring my mum. It feels good to hear her voice from the other side of the phone. I tried Skype but it wouldn't work because of the connection but it feels good to ring her every night at 6 and tell what I've been up to day to day. It's so difficult for me because I can't see her and before Covid-19 lockdown I had that routine of seeing her every Monday and going to the shopping centre or coffee shop for a drink.

19.00 Watching my soaps—feels like I have something to do. It's well boring on Sundays when they aren't on. On Saturdays I like Britains Got Talent and Ninja Warrior UK.

21.00 Wait for the night staff to come on. They come round and say hello and ask what you want for supper. I miss that—when I'm isolating you don't know who's on until they come to you and you can't expect them to come to you all the time. Feels like I want to push boundaries by coming out of my room because I don't know who's on and I want to say hello.

There's new staff, because some of them are off sick. They've been going to the shop for us, that's why they're ill. Thank God I'm the lucky one. Trying to lower that risk. I just want to come out and see who's on, what's happening.

23.00 When I was sleeping it went quickly. If I was up it would have went slow. I just want the lockdown to be lifted and to go back to reality so I can do the things I like to do and see my family again.

Suzie's Poem

There was a lady called Sazie
She was really rather snazzy
She was a fantastic primary nurse
And she really like my purse
She had a great dress sense
She very rarely tense
I am going to miss her very much
I am going to miss her bossy touch
And I love her very much.

Manic

Oh no here I go again, am I going high or am I going low
The truth be know I don't think I really want to know
I ask myself am I crazy or am I bad
Society find it easy to label me mad
But if people took the time to look a little deep
I am sure they would begin to weep

Since I have become this way
None of my friends want to come out to play
They all find it easy to turn and walk away
As for my mind is racing, my heart is pacing,
But am I ready to come down and hide
Behind that mixed up lonely frown.
I feel like the man who has done the time
But not the crime,
But depending on who is fit to judge me
I may have done them both

I began to think the answers to all my questions were in a bottle,
Sadly the only result was my already mixed up brain become very wet
Now as I look at my life,
I ask are all these confusing situations true
Or is it just the voices in my head trying to get through

Here I am again facing that big question
My life, do I suffer it, do I end it,
Let's hope one day I will be able to enjoy it.
I feel the answers to my questions will probably never be found
Unless society opens its eyes to this illness that is all around.

Suffering but incredible

To the ones who see the light in us when it's dark inside,
To the ones who remind us that we are not broken and can heal,
Thank you for giving us a reason to hold on and fight through,
Thank you for trying to understand our pain even if you haven't
experienced it.

If only you knew how many times you have saved us an how
many times you have saved us and how
Many times you bought us back to life. Thank you for being our
Light and giving us your torch to light ourselves up again when
we need it.

Thank you for recognising that it is about time that we were
recognised as people : not as symptoms, fears, room numbers
etc. Okay we may
Have lost irreplaceable times to illness but that does not define
us, we
May be suffering.

Suffering but incredible.

Crazy Face

My life is wasting, my body is shaking
I ask myself am I coming or am I going?
Or perhaps I have already been
One thing for certain
I don't believe I will ever win

I can't see what I want
And I don't believe I want to see what I can
I have no grace and have been no real place
Perhaps I am what the public calls
Another crazy face.

The further I go the harder I come down
Will I ever land with both feet on the ground?
I go forward I come back
It seems it's me again, been no place
Just another crazy face in a very lonely place
Called Our World

I start to ask myself, is this world we want?
Or is it just what we make it
The most frightening thought
Is that it may have already been made for us
Its back to me again a lonely crazy face
Still looking for an unknown place
I ask myself will I ever find a way forward?
Or is my destiny backward?

Our life, Our destiny,
Some of us breeze. Some of us almost fly
But for a few of us
We can only sit and cry.

Lonely, Crazy, Desperate—That's me

1st place

Kindness – finding the lock and key inside ourselves – Michael Surman May 2020

“He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how” F Neitzche (1870's)

How can we maintain the will to live in the face of extreme difficulties and suffering when that life is stripped back to basics?

Where does that 'why to live' comes from? How do we find it “and get it?”

For me, it begins with huge and difficult CHOICES/DECISIONS.

Firstly, to ACCEPT OUR CIRCUMSTANCES with.....kindness

Secondly to WORK HARD to find MEANING in our suffering with an inner positive disposition.

These are CHOICES that require enormous COURAGE

But they swung me like a compass needles towards the future (not my past) where there is so much more to DO (not less), more to achieve and celebrate, and embrace.

It seemed that I began to look kindly at my current life at that point, and COOPERATED with it (not competed with what I formerly had). IT GAVE ME MEANING TO MY PRISON LIFE.

The Holocaust survivor, Victor Frankl wrote 'If there is to be a meaning of life. There must be a meaning in suffering'.

So, kindness has to start within us, then to understand what it is, and how it is recognized and then accepted. To believe IN ITS POWER to ground us, make us healthier and stronger mentally. To help us to be less judgmental, more empathic.

Kindness is CONTAGIOUS and will spill over to help not just ourselves , but fellow residents, family & friends, (and officers!).

Those who have a WHY TO LIVE **CAN** bear with almost anything and give meaning to their lives. CHOOSE to find the lock and the key inside yourself.

TRUST KINDNESS!

2nd place

A Thousand Tries

I live the alcoholic life of a thousand tries
When I drink, I sleep, I lie down and die
I awake, I get up and once again I try
My one go at life has seen beauty.

Sometimes it just turned so frightening
At the tip of a coin; on calm storm free days
I saw life turn like lightning with lightning
With thunder rumbling, you find ways.

Of saying to yourself; is it worth it?
Half of the sound of the beat of my heart
Alternates with the heady sound of silence
I sleep, I lie down and die, I awake, I try...

3rd place

Mindsight

Do you hear the words
I don't write down
Are they clear like water
Do you feel you could drown
Are they just in my head
Does anyone hear
Do thy flow like a river
Or hide in a tear
Are they even there
Are they even real
Do they cause me pain
Or help me heal
These are just words
They're not part of me
Do you hear the ones

NHS NOW HERE TO STAY

They care for us by doing what ever it takes
See us as their own in the best way
Even through these times while your causing misery –
In doing what ever it takes,
Enduring isolation night and day
Then on the front line where it is not safe
Brave souls who don't rest deserving a fair wage
Fear not an option to social distancing,
Out NHS is here to stay
2020, a year that coronavirus became a plague

A Kusow, HMP Isle of Wight

Can't cheat death

Mr. White got up to answer the door bell, it was the Grim Reaper (mr Death), he said to mw white, "you are next on my list". Mr white started begging, he said "please mr. death give me some more time". "I think you should come in and have a cup of tea with me". Mr death agreed, so he gave mr death a very sweet cup of tea and put him in his very comfortable recliner. Mr death was so comfortable that he fell asleep.

While he was asleep, mr. white took his list and cross out his name from next and put it all the way at the bottom of the list and replace the list in the original plan. A few hours later, mr. death woke up and said, "oh! That was great! You have been so kind to me and because of that, I will start my killing from the bottom of the list."

D Clarke, HMP Isle of Wight

This world

What wonder this world in which we live
What beauty what splendour what sprawling
Majesty set among the stars.

What omnipotent hands has fashioned this green,
Blue and multicoloured land.
Though we try to understand the blue-prints
Of its master plan with some men
Believing that they can, but to live then die.

This consummate perfection, this
Perpetual motion of ambiguous
Dichotomy, the ying and yang of life, we are
The cosmetics of the cosmos, we make it all
Look just right, when confronted do we
Stand and fight or do we flight.

How incredulous we are how incomparable
Next to none we are the fullness of our
Sum total yet incomplete, what a feat
Without being conceit, never accept
Defeat.

So as the universe unfolds we search
To understand our souls, what a wonderful
World this is what a wonder most
Indeed.

B. A. Fritz, HMP Belmarsh

Your voice

There is nothing I can think of which is more
Pleasing to my ear and soul than when you
Speak to me gently.

A sonnet or a dreamy adagio may come close
But even these I would gladly exchange
For the soothing sound of your meloncoly
Voice.

But dare I suffer your displeasure, this no
Part of my endeavour, the crashing sound
Of your cresende, the thundering boom that
Heralds the light of your lighting strike is
Far from delight.

So each day I carefully pause to
Consider each thought before I say
Each word as your tongue though soft
Can cut like a sword that cuts so
Deep emotions then to seep as tears
From deep within that weep and so for
Now I do but sleep as I listen to the
Sound of your soothing voice.

I cried myself to sleep last night
Gazing at your picture by the glow
Of the moon light listening to the
Radio to the words of a sad
Song longing to hear your voice
Once again by my side where you Belong.

B. A. Fritz, HMP Belmarsh

Serenity

Oh wondering memories engulf my mind
Revealing sadness once left behind
And though I wish to Remember not
Those lonely days of depravation
That to this day to me return to haunt me in my salutation.
And yet through the open window
I stare and seeing children playing in the square.
It makes me wonder how happy it must be to be a butterfly
Flying high int eh sky.
Never wondering why must I someday die
And as the days go rushing by
And though I wish not to hide
The nakedness of my shame and pride.
It is with compassion that I do beg
Let me Rest my weary head.
It is bes now that I Rest, feeling all my strength Renewed here in
my
Fortress solitude. I feel Sereni

B. A. Fritz, HMP Belmarsh

Your protector

I will not abstain from my obligation to you
Nor will I subjugate to those who oppose you

I will forever be your nemesis against anyone
Who would perpetrate or plan anything
That would cause you harm

I will continue to envelop you with all
My love, I am your cocoon your cohort
Against unfriendly foe

I will fortify your mortal coil that
None may you or to spoil the beauty
Of your perfection, we are forever
In conjunction,

I am your father you are my child

B. A. Fritz, HMP Belmarsh

Secrete behind the eyes

I would like to give you an
Insight in to the struggle of
And in the life I live
And the emotional pain and
The psychological torture on a
Daily basis that I live with

One of my first memories is
Hearing voices in and around
My head
They have a number of
Different accents and many
Things to say worst saying
My family are dead

Some things they said have
Been true so whats wrong
And whats right
The only time I don't hear
Them is when I'm knockout
At night

For years I hid it away
But I spoke to a doctor
And now I'm on medication
It slows them down but
Does not stop there
Everbearing determination

S Clayton, HMP Channings Wood

Hustle & motivate

They were lyin' when they sent me to HMP
In reality,
It's a mental asylum with a mind-numbing regime
Prioritizing dehumanization & institutionalization over rehabilitation
To get away I wrote a poem
Screws doin my nut in, under no scrutiny, gunna trigger a mutiny
Power trippin' off opening & lockin doors
PDOs (Professional Door Openers) enforcing broken laws
Behind are portals to spice houses
Not everyones bubblin' tuna curries in their kettles
Cats on the wing clickin', itchin' for their fixin'
White knuckles, filthy claws & swinging zombies
The barely walkin' dead
Overrun with rats due to nuttiers smoking the poison in the tropes
Justifying it as bird-killer to make their time fly
Risking their hives to get high
And I know I'll go on to contradict myself
None of us are perfect, we all have flaws
They talk about rehabilitation
But this is all the therapy I've got wen they bang me behind those steel doors

Too easy to let the past life get the best of us
Movin' careless,
This paths been tretcharous
Taking no days off, wrapped up in a life of constant paper chasin'
Making those around me envious
One pocket stuffed with Lizzie, the other with mace in
Shiftin' party supplies year after year on Stokes Croft
Countless Dads Cabs, reloads, hand-in-hand transactions, pickin up shoe boxes

Toppin' up my burner, more money on the lyca

So you know its bound to be hot
Took me from a ryder on the frontline
To rydin' bang-up I the slammer

Caught trapped in a cycle of never looking back
Too much time with my nose in a wrap
Growin z's in council flats in Hartcliffe

Converting student houses to Bandes in Horefield
Surrounding myself with copious drugs has been my downfall

Known locally as a walkin pharmacy

From valis, kannys, pounds of Coli, special K flown from Deli, kane & Liquid LSD

Nitrous oxide from the NHS, ristol crystal MDMA, base, drone & DMT

On my Jack, shiftin' Jills, smoking forbidden fuit & tangie dream puffin purple
trees

High up on purple hills Minchin Hawaian Golden Caps & slurpin' THC syrup over
pancake stocks

No slim shady but even my mom calls me Sketchy B

Inhaling spice at 14 lead me to lose the meaning of life

Trippin' on my insecurities

Similar to lovin' motor skills after havin' a bottle of double strength aid absorb
them my thigh

But as days go by,

I'm beginning to think & see clearly

In here, control your smiles & cries

That along with your actions & word is all you got & cant be taken off you

So keep busy & preoccupied,

Try appreciate the small victories & positives

The water & airs fresh & clean

Benefits of livin' near the Devon coast

Proud to say 5 months sober so similar to the inside of my nose

No affiliation to a krew or religion but I got beliefs & a moral code
Finally fresh & always like the Godfather said
Too long livin' in a mental prison while on the road
Toxic thoughts like a virus in my head, first it was ebola now corona
Which come eazy when I remember I got 3 years for 4 bags of MD

Hard not to be pissed with my lawyer
Just have to accept this is part of my journey
Hindsights a bitch & the systems shit, full of hipocracies
My mama raised 2 souljas & I wont disappoint her
The war is long & im only competing with myself
Keep active, constantly learning & lookin after my mental health
Stay loyal to family, turn to friends & away from the leechs & snakes

Circle tightening,
Information & knowledge of self is tru power
Particularly in a world filled with corruption, injustice & lies from the top down
With wealth inequality & greed to blame
Out of touch politicians using austerity & privatization to fuck up the NHS
Lies built on lies, written on the side of a red bus
The planet & societies bein exploited & raped, now existence is on the cusp
Stand up for what you believe in is a merit
The industrial prison complex epitimining the fundamental sustemic failures on
the poor

A broken system
Causing a shit storm with revolving door
Damaging society like a cyclone
Breedin' a new generation of psychos with no role models
Lil was getting chaffed on the roadside & getting ostriched off in jail
Mums & dads gettin to know their lads via Royal Mail
Ironically isolation quickly leads to disassociation & intoxication
You can still get strung when your buzzed & numb

And that hole in your soul aint gettin fixed with your next fix
Tryin' to suppress the pain floodin' your brain
To eager to seek the eazy option to fill the emptiness
To dilate the truth
No use dwelling, better off accepting
Don't feel sorry for me
Instead have a party for me
Canny wait to be front left,
Next to a stonkin' rig blasting dirty riddeness
Craving warmth, comfort & connection with the peeps I hold close
Who I can now only communicate with on a bugged blue phone or via the post

Another victim of the street games, lost in the maze
A desire to be in a better position
Real life snakes & ladders, a man on a mission
Need to stop treatin this chess match like a game of checkers
Time to start acting strategically & productively cos ive got big plans
Pushed by my passion & ambition
Rather than greed its succeed
Constant persistence
Remember progressions not instant
Integrity, innovation, ingenuity & havin' a vision' critical
A balance of being humble whilst keepin' a level of self-respect goes a long way
Proof taught me 'a positive anything is better than a negative nothing'
Especially if you want to find meaning & make something out of this trip they call
life
Take calculated risks,
Don't be afraid to roll the dice
So strap in & enjoy the ride

O Baldwin, HMP Channings Wod

Locked up during lockdown

There's so many ways I could start a poem
I could think of freedom as the winds blowing,
Think of a time when I was roaming free,
Now I'm behind a door inside of HMP.

But it's not all bad, don't let the stories
Deceive, I've had more hemp in here than what I
Thought I'd ever receive

So many thanks to all the services especially
Mental health, because you saved me from going to a
Place known as heaven or even hell.

Because of your faith to me past the demon's
Inside of me, although I'm locked behind a door
I finally feel free.

Mr T Burns, HMP Durham

Golgotha

Come on Kev, just a little further for me, please.” Donna smiled at him and he did his best to follow her instructions. Pair echoed every step, how could it be so difficult to walk a couple of feet? When he turned twenty-nine shortly after his graduation from a sports science degree, he’d run the equivalent of twenty three marathons back to back. Alex had been into extreme sports. We’d been good at them; picked up the odd medal, brushing aside his trainer’s congratulations reflected (?) his off the cuff remarks:

“it’s just a matter of focus. Anyone could do what I do; given enough time and effort”.

He’d really believed that to be true. Now he knew it wasn’t. now he knew that fate lay in the hands of some feckless deity. At the same time he’d had an involuntary shudder as he touched his pocket. The deity who decides who would wins and who would choose.

“Ok Alex, hold it there a minute”. Donna’s voice was low and soothing.

“I can do this.” Two more steps to prove himself wrong and he was sprawling.

He wasn’t sure which was worse, the pain or the humiliation. Donna came and sat beside him but did not say anything at all. For that he was thankful. She was the only person who had not given up on him.

Not that his trainer and his mum had given up on him but he had barred them coming to the hospital. Likewise, his girlfriend Charlie, was away on a Christmas conference for women, she wanted to stay but she insisted she go.

He felt his pocket again for the small card given him by his mum; thankfully no little cards from Charlie among them.

He rolled onto his side and forced himself to smile at her, if he didn’t, he would cry.

What’s the music you are playing? Very trite, even for you, ain’t it? Now it’s crystal clear I’m falling for you and this isn’t getting easier.

She consulted a clipboard. It’s gospel music, actually. Okay on the third of June you couldn’t stand on the twentieth you stand for ten seconds.

“At this rate I’ll reach the climbing wall some time around next summer”.

“then that will be progress”. She gave him a half-smile.

“It will be easier when you get the new prosthesis”.

“Something to look forward to”.

She ignored his sarcasm, “how are things with you fiancé Kev?”.

“Exfiance”.

“Don’t be ridiculous. You’re getting married in six weeks.”

“I thought I’d give her a break and call the whole thing off”.

“Self-pity does not suit you”. She left him sitting on the floor, it took him five minutes to get up and another five to get to his wheelchair as she looked on, if she wasn’t so tough, he’d have barred her from coming near him too.

He remembered his mum and reading the card, reflected on the off quoted verse buried in his subconscious became clear in his mind:

Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the skull.

Anonymous, HMP Frankland

HMP Garth

To all the staff who have kept Garth running,
The work your doing is absolutely stunning.
Healthcare, admin and officers too,
Governors, kitchens and the works crew.
Its all appreciated the effort you make,
All this bangup is a welcomed brake.
Every day you risk your own health,
Because covid 19 moves in stealth.
I seen in the latest newsletter the food is bland,
I've done 10 jails in 14 years the food is grand.
Your selfless acts I can't comprehend,
I don't want this lockdown to end.
You're at my door smiling every morning,
Me bleary eyes tired and yawning.
Shower and exercise is offered to me,
A smiling face so wonderful to see.
For all the staff who go out there way,
To help us men get through the day.
Your amazing people and I doff my hat,
Keep up the good work and never forget that.
I appreciate all that your doing to keep us protected,
Trying to stop each and every one of us from being infected
All of you stand tall and stand proud,
At 8 oclock tonight you'll hear me bang loud,
THANK YOU I thank you in writing,
With staff like you Garth will keep on fighting.
Were a nation of brothers and sisters
Standing united nothing can resist us!

A Bennett, HMP Garth

COVID 19!

In all my years have I never seen,
A thing so lethal as Covid nineteen.
Death and despair left in its wake,
Many a life it did take.
Its brought the planet to a stand still,
How many more will this thing kill?
Its affected every country every nation
Social distancing and social isolation.
Some say its been made by man,
Others think its mother natures plan.
Could this be the devils curse?
Sisters and brothers in the back of a hearse...
So many of us are at risk stuck at home,
My brothers and sisters are dying alone...
Keyworkers moving the rest locked down,
Every city village and town.
Stuck at home while loved ones die,
Not been able to say goodbye.
So many dead tens of thousands of lifes,
Aunties, uncles, husbands and wives.
Funerals been held with nobody there,
This nasty things I don't know how it dare...
A big shout out to captain Tom Moore,
For walking yourself into the floor.
The money you've raised will go a long way,
You fought world war two and still fighting today.
A massive thank you to OUR N-H-S,
Under resourced, still fighting this mess.
The rest of you key workers, you've done your part,
And I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.
I don't think the world will ever be the same
This Corona virus is not a game!

A Bennett, HMP Garth

When I wake up

Verse 1

When I come home, all alone
Remember the way, we use to be
The way you kissed me, the way you miss me
When I'd come home late, and you had to wait

Chorus 1 (x2)

When I wake up in the morning
Wanna hear my name
When you start calling

Verse 2

When I first saw you I knew it was true
That you were the one, without you my heart is gone
I new from the start, without you I'll lose my heart
Don't wanna say goodbye, be with you until I die

Chorus 2 (x2)

When I wake up in the morning
Wanna hear my name
When you start calling

Verse 3

I miss the way you use to look at me
Sat on the sofa, whilst I'm watching TV
When I glanced over, with the sparkle in your eyes
It made me warm inside, and made me feel alive

Chorus 3 (x2)

When I wake up in the morning
Wanna hear my name
When you start calling

Verse 4

Cos I never Imagined life without you
Everyday beside you, can't believe that it is true
It feels like a dream, every minute of everyday
Cos your perfect in everyway, listen to what I gotta say

Chorus 4 (x2)

When I wake up in the morning
Wanna hear my name
When you start calling

Kindness

As a Buddhist, kindness is at the heart of everything we do. When asked, the Dalai Lama said that Buddhism is a belief in kindness.

Some important words to Buddhists are:

Metta – meaning loving kindness.

Sati – meaning mindfulness.

Karma – meaning action.

Buddhism teaches us to be mindful, that is, to think about, our thoughts and actions, not least of which are acts of Metta or kindness.

We are taught about Karma and the consequences of our actions. Good thoughts and acts, including kindness to ourselves and others, promote positive Karma.

Bad thoughts and acts promote negative Karma.

In simple terms, good actions will bring good future consequences, while bad actions bring bad future consequences. We reap what we sow and so it is in our interest to act in a good kind manner.

Kindness is clearly a positive experience for the person receiving the act, whether you believe in Karma or not, kindness is also positive for the person giving the kindness being kind makes you feel good about yourself and you may find that your own acts of kindness are reciprocated by others.

This is also true for negative behaviour. If I behave with kindness towards you, you are more likely to be kind towards me. If I am rude, selfish or aggressive towards you, you are more likely to be rude, selfish or aggressive towards me.

It really isn't rocket science. So, if you want to feel happy and good about yourself, try to be mindful (Sati) about your actions (Karma) and show each other a little kindness (Metta).

I. Mc Dowall, HMP Isle of Wight

A Fathers Love

You held my heart, the day we first met

This is a moment, I shall never forget.

I prayed for an angel, my prayers were heard

Blessed by your love, and spoken word.

With a beautiful smile, and loving embrace

It gave such joy, when blessed by your grace.

I held your hand, I watched how you grew

How lucky I am, to be loved by you.

Entrusted with delight, on how you have grown

Such a beautiful soul, who'd ever have known.

How proud I feel, to call you my own

Remember my darling, your never alone.

When your feeling sad, and wrapped up in your fears

Imagine my hand upon your face, to wipe away those tears.

When not there to hold your hand, we'll never be apart

Seek comfort knowing, I live inside your heart.

Wherever you are, whatever you do

Know this my darling, I'll always love you

For you should know, of an unwritten law

With each day that passes, I love you even more.

D Hilton, HMP Isle of Wight

I can't believe

Verse 1

They locked me up
And trashed away the key.
Took me from my friends and family
They even searched me batty
All for her majesty.

Chorus

I can't believe
No I really can't believe
What they done to me
What they done to me

Verse 2

The bed is harder than the floor
Me neck and me back is sore
Worse still me cell mate an sore
I called the doctor but
There's no cure

Chorus

I can't believe

Verse 3

I want basic necessities

Flat screen TV

Freeview easy

Why did you take E4 from me
How can I watch Big Bang Theory.

Chorus

I can't believe

Verse 4

When you ask for toilet paper
The gov's say see me later
They want to see brown stains

Around ya

And kill people with laughter.

Chorus

I can't believe

END

This song was written by Richee + New York as part of the
2019 Black History month celebration.

Richee and New York, HMP Isle of Wight

Cracks will appear

The question we all ask our selves when coming into prison. Well one of many questions is will our partners, wives and the one we call our significant other will still be there when we get out? I feel there is no doubt at the start we all will hear the immortal words 'I love you' and 'I will still be here waiting for you when you get out' and we can not forget 'I will always stand by you'.

These words are of great comfort and fills us with the warmth you can only get from our loved ones knowing we have their love and support throughout our time inside. We can chat on the phones for 10 to 20 minutes limited only to the amount of credit we can afford to put on our pin. Just to hear their voices brings comfort getting to know how their day has been, where they have been, who have they seen. Even all the boring bits which now are as important as our own heartbeats.

We get visits where we can embrace each other and feel normal for a while. We write pages and pages of our feelings and even meaningless rubbish, which makes us smile, we keep the letters to send over again when we feel down. Then the letters bail off it becomes a one way thing. We send letters and card with no reply, we are assured they have replied but none appear.

We write down our deepest thoughts and feeling which go unanswered. The steep slide to a solitary life begins, we are often blinded to this or refuse to believe it but it's real and we must get used to it fast. They say the pen is mightier than the sword but who ever wrote 'it's better to have loved and lost than never loved at all' has not lost their love or was drunk at the time.

Give me the cold steel of a sword anyday. The cracks have started to appear. We call but the calls become less reliable they are unanswered for hours. When we get through it's 'sorry my phone was on silent' or 'I did not have it with me'. We talk but it's clear we are broken we are bold everything is fine it's a lie. The sucker punch come with a post on social media "in a relationship with", it's not you.

Your world has fell down, a deep sickening feeling overtakes you. Gone has the day od the curse of friends reunited replaced with FACEBOOK. No wonder the Kyle show failed, we desperately ask is this true 'no it's not' denying it all the time until we no longer talk. It's now over for real but with no closure with out reason or rhyme. If only our eyes where more like windows we could see whats behind them and avoid all the hurt.

D Redfern, HMP Isle of Wight

The Foreigner Within The Foreign Land

Came to this country & thought it'd be better,

But now in this cell, I'm writing this letter...

It was only like yesterday,

My first day on the inside.

A couple of days before...

I thought that I'd have my bride,

Since then one year has passed

And...only God knows...

"there?!"

Five years more bird,

Before I'll go anywhere!

Always I believed,

I won't be in this place,

But now...all I can do...

Is just to clean my mess!

It's all so dirty & scary too...!

My family lives 2000 miles away,

They can't visit me

On any visit day...

All I can do, is call them now...and then,

I hope this won't make me,

Less of a man!

Today I got all my foreign credit,

Just 3 pounds 24!

So I run to the phone box,

When they open my door.

Got down on ones...

There is a massive queue...

It's just a normal day, what more can I do...?
I wait...
And wait...
And wait...
Four phones \$ one hundred & twenty guys...
Its all so noisy, it's not human enough!
Just when there's a spare phone...
Screws shout for movement,
Or bang up behind door!
The walls are so grey...
Around...zombies, scratchers & hangers...
You see them every day!
They're all so spiced...
After the system, got them all life(d)...!
Five years left to do...
Mum, soon I'll be next to you,
I promise!
By the time of my release,
My daughter will be ten...
All, please pray for me to be
At least alive by then!
For now I endure what life has to throw,
And hopefully I'll be victorious
At the end of this heinous show!
It's hard to be positive in any place like this...
Its hard just to survive...
A foreigner's injustice,
In a system already stained...
What more can we do...let's cover it in "paint"!

E Gruia, HMP Isle of Wight

Man and Sin

When I get released,
My time may be served,
Walking through Foyle house,
Wondering was it deserved.

I may await a lift,
I may get the train,
One thing is for certain,
It will be a life more plain.
All the men I have met,
We come all the same,
Some big, some small,
But none clinically insane.

Normality for me,
It's making mistakes,
For a man's life is flawed,
Not one can retake.
When our lord made us,
He did so with sin,
If he did not,
We would all be so dim.

Trial and error
It's in our make-up,
From me to my brothers
I say keep the head up.
St Peter, he knows whom to let in,
Just remember my brothers
Each man is built with sin.

I read my poems, I write my words
I ponder my time here, was it really deserved.

J.B, HMP Maghaberry

My Given Berry

We are all in the same game,
Just different levels.
We are all in the same hell,
Just different devils.

Devine interventions we may obtain,
In God we seek.
The bars and locked doors at night,
Monday, another week.

Bell and torches in the morning,
Permission for soap.
Climbing the walls of the wreck-room,
Maybe a silly dope.

We will watch the day's pass,
And do our time.
We will wait on our release,
Dream'er to dine.

S.McC, HMP Maghaberry

Window to Happiness

Living in a den trying to make a dent in my detention
Looking through a keyhole filled with depression
Looking out this window with tears in my eyes
In a split second my whole life changed forever

Life has left e with a massive void in my heart
Trying to retreat and beat my demons
Cracks started to show and tunnel through my mind
Through it all, I kept my faith that I would be happy

An endless pit of loss and grief
Thoughts and feelings locked away in my chamber
Life sliced like a knife right through my heart and soul
Knocked down many times, but **NEVER** stayed down

I fought hard all my days to overcome the challenges
Now, 25 years later, it payed off and I found my soulmate
Now my life can really begin and take off into outer space
My Love and happiness now holds no limits.

C Morgan, HMP Magilligan

Santa's Springs

Christ it had been snowing all night. The majestic all-encompassing shroud of antiseptic white-out covered everything. The only images I could see other than the snow was the house windows with various coloured curtains, because of the purity of the blank canvas the outer scene magnified the intense beauty of the mundane; trees looked just amazing, ears, of which there were a few, looked bulky and beautiful, the light reflecting off the glass. Everything in the vista took on a magical aura.

I woke up, that crispy sharp morning, to a clear chill in the room which was my brothers and my bedroom. The brightness from the daylight permeated around the bedroom and drew me to reach through the curtains and then the net-curtains. The room was lit up to a brilliant angelic whiteness such as I never remembered seeing before. For a second I looked outside the house, rubbed my eyes to get used to this brilliant light. That was the start of what deep down I know was going to be a magical day ahead and I shivered with excitement.

I jumped down from my bed and bounded across the room to where my younger brother Edward slept quite comfortably unaware of what was happening outside, and more importantly, what he was going to see when I woke him up, I had become the messenger of such electrifying news. He and I would get washed, dressed and quickly get some breakfast into our hungry bellies, although the nervous excitement was making my stomach churn.

Edward had just turned two years old yesterday on the twenty-second of December. The previous day he'd had his birthday, today he had for his first time in his short life, snow, plus in two days' time Santa would be on his rounds. What more could he want for? He was to me a lucky boy and if I could help it, it would be a memorable run up to Christmas time. Edward had only ever seen snow on the television and in book comics and in the stories I told him.

P Morrin HMP Magilligan

Crack

Oh! So you have heard
About me?
With my white mystical
And addictive personality

Your adventurous
And living dangerous
Maybe you don't
Understand me,
Well you better
Ask somebody
About the
Substance family

My cousin herion!
I won't even
Being to tell
You about her doctrines
The nightmare
And chaos
She brings

Try me,
I dear you,
To you, you
And you

I maybe new

But I urge

You ask

A few

Believe me

It's true

Your life gets lost

Your morals

And values

Will go

Rehabs!

You think your

That motivated?

Nahh..!

I wont let you

Be that deducated,

So about me

It's best

You get educated

My friends!

My friends are;

Addiction, paranoia,

Prostitution,

Mental institution

Prisons, war

Crime and violence

And my cycle!

My cycle

Continues

Until you meet

My best friend

D E A T H

Ah(x6)

Sooo!

Do you think you

Will like me?

Come on

And try me

On (x6)

Your comforting

The devil

And believe me

I'll take you to

Another level

Ah (x4)

Crack attack

Anonymous, HMP Huntercombe

Rehab for Bacchus

“What the f*** are you on?”

Besides the spectrum? A roll, I think.

Behold! Bad dance champion;

Tall glass of concentrated camp and champers,

Ready to mingle, aided by chemical tingle.

Cheesy, but I go down well with wine –

If one's palette is cleansed with turpentine.

Life it seems, is all angles;

Sharp corners, no curves.

I throw shapes, they don't come back

And the disappointment winds me. Ugh!

I fight only when fought,

Brave as a terrier, brogues up the derriere,

Wind whistling through keys and windmills akimbo

- Dodgy bones, though.

Head choca with space operas,

Spaghetti westerns and Kung Fu flicks;

Kicking all the ass, stink of Lynx and molasses,

In grainy orange black widescreen eyes strain –

But it's the next frame; all friends again.

King of Karaoke, Jack & Coke, dad jokes.

Two sets of swollen pupils scan askance

And lock at last across the dark rainbow:

Lioness stalking, red now hanging open

In that unblinding gold I see her in you...

Or you in her. Eye of the disco maelstrom,

We bump hips, swap electrons. My heart explodes.

Already it's too late: saw something enough,
It rings less and less true – even your own name.
“Hello”, he lied – and even he believed it tonight.
The gents room mirror did not, of course.
God, I was charming, Christ, was I punching.
I'm just a girl who can't say “not tonight, dear-
I've a dreadful headache and also you're f*** ugly”.
Instead we choose the ease of familiar wretchedness
Over uncertain happiness every time.

Every thought, word, deed – each micron of our petty pace
We paraphrase the ancients; bunch of idiots,
Judging by me.
Through scratched cloudy Perspex windows,
Street lamps link amber arms in an argon prayer circle.
Lipstick and glitter in my spit,
Greasepaint alabaster tan.
I am man. I am woman.
I am non-stick frying pan;
Sole tenant of this gallows humour branch
From who's lofty perch on high
I lob pearls at swine, wondering why
They don't appreciate my tortured genius.

The genii and I compare candlesticks
At the piss-trough taxi rank, fresh cakes,
Swordfights, furtive glance;
Bumps and lines from questionable sources
Off questionable surfaces.
Jiring and latching in three-piece and patchy beard-
Snappy dresser, maths professor, or
Sweaty sex offender? Tune in tomorrow
When we ask the author what he misses more:
Pills, or the use of his lower jaw?

(Part Two)

Thank Christ for prison,
Else I'd have done something useful in life,
What a mess. I'm told I'm making progress
But it feels like rehab for Bacchus –
Bunch of shellshocked blokes from one or two laws ago
Sat in a horseshoe, painfully sober
And (apparently) guilty.

Thought, it occurs to me, is like water: shapeless
Without a cage to give it context.
Now I fill my days reaching for meaning
In a tongue too ironic, too self-aware
To sustain anything like truth or beauty.
I'm too late to the game, et je nais parlez pas
Now the age of intellectuals is done.
The walking cults of fey, literate dismay
Have shriveled into their turtlenecks
And died in a gorgeous orgy
Of masturbatory beatnik suicide.

Mugs like me remain to offer gems like:
"Planned Dynamic Obsolescence". Google it.
It's why Olympus envies us. All is precious to us
Because not only are we not built to last,
But we are built not to last.
The manufacturer extorts our outgrowth
Of playing in mud-parts, mileage,
Pumping our young with drugs, to save time.

But life has no vaccine.
Antibodies come with exposure
Not a dulling diet of graphic sex and violence,

A Bradley, HMP Parkhurst