

**it's the
inside
that
matters**

life stories and visual poetry

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Preface

These are stories given by extraordinary, ordinary people. They are stories of living through times of challenge and pain, in childhood and adulthood. They are stories of hope, of coming through, of wanting to share the possibility of surviving it all with other people. Take heart and take hope is what they tell us.

The art work is 'visual poetry'. Each piece tells a story, each piece has something to say about the life, struggles, fears, loves, tears, triumphs and joys of the person who created it. You might not see everything that went into the work, you might only catch a glimpse; the work is layered, as our lives are. Sometimes the image you see is the mask; sometimes it is the raw feeling. Some people have both a story and art work in this book, some have just their story, some just their art work.





By misterie

I was in a relationship for 12 years and I won't go into detail about what happened, but I think the easiest thing to say is, that I had to leave. If I hadn't, I might have died. Luckily, I had a couple of friends who took me. I had hoped I could stay with them and find a job in the area because they lived in a wonderful place. But my partner at the time found out where I was. So they had to take me to a refuge. It's one of those things that you hear happens to other people and you see on TV and you think, that's never going to be me. And then all of a sudden, it is. And I remember standing on the pavement, waiting for the lady to come and pick me up and my friends reversing away in the car. I stood there with the one bag which I'd left home with and it was just such a shock. When you've had a home. You think, this is my partner, this is my life. Then, all of a sudden, that's gone.

I was stood there, with the clothes I was wearing and one small bag and I must admit, I cried and cried the first week that I was there. I didn't really take in what had happened. I was grieving. We were each assigned a counsellor in the refuge. I had wanted to go to University when I'd been with my partner, but he was controlling and he wouldn't let me. The refuge staff were really supportive and they helped me organize my UCAS application. I couldn't believe it really. They found out that I had an interest in art and the lady there, who'd done gentle art workshops had some unused art sup-



plies. And she gave some to me. I built up a portfolio to take with me and I think this kept me sane really. I had a goal then, something to do. I went and did some voluntary work as well.

So, I started to form a life, I knew it was a temporary life but it gave me some structure and a form of hope. I got to know some of the other girls as well and formed temporary friendships for a time.

Even though I'd lost a life of some sort, this was a chance for me to have a new one now. I realised there were so many doors opening and I was still going through the stages of grieving for my lost life, but a bigger part of me was saying, "You can choose where you want to move in your life now, you've been given a new chance". It was wonderful to pick my University and start planning things and finding books. Because I'd been working full-time and saved a little, I had a bit of money to get books and things.

And as time went on, I started to feel less sad about the old life and it felt like I was planning towards a new one. My counsellor at the refuge told me that I was the first woman they'd had there in the all the years at the refuge who had wanted to go to University. So she said they'd do everything they could to support me.

I went to University and the first year was quite difficult because I was in Halls with young students who have a reputation of staying







up until the early hours which sadly is very true. It got a bit unbearable so in the end I found somewhere else, in a house with a family.

I had a bit of a shock in the first year. All of a sudden one night as I was sat reading I had this terrible pain. I thought it was just a stomach bug or something. It gradually got worse and worse and I ended up crying on the floor. Luckily there was another female student in the room, across the corridor from me. Her partner was with her that evening and he came out and asked me where the pain was. He said, "I think you've got appendicitis and we should get the ambulance." They did and took me in and they put me into the ward. Then gave me an injection of something for the pain and I fell asleep.

The Doctor said that they'd have to do some blood tests and scans. They came back and said that "you have a mass on one side of your pelvis and we don't know what it is. The blood tests suggest it could be two things. One, it could be this condition, or it could be cancer." I sat in the hospital bed thinking, "oh my God, I've come through this, to get to University, to then have someone stand and say to me, you may be dying". It was very hard to deal with because I have no parents alive. So I had no family that I could really say to "please come and be here with me".

I'd made a friend at University, luckily, and she came in, bless her heart and she'd stay with me and bring me treats. After surgery,

my surgeon came up and even though he was a bit foggy, I could see him smiling and he said, "good news, it's not cancer." "But you have severe endometriosis". He tried to explain to me what it was but I didn't really take it in. The next day, the nurse sat with me and drew the curtains round and tried to explain about the surgery I had, had. And she told me I could try IVF. She held me while I cried.

There are only several ways to manage it, this condition that is incurable; surgery, pain medication and a hormone treatment which suppresses it for a while. The thought of having this condition until I reached the menopause was terrifying and not having just that, but the fact that I was a 36 year old woman who may never have a child. It was such a shock to have to come to terms with that, really.

It's only just recently that I've been diagnosed with a very early pre-menopause and it seems now, at the age of 42 that I'm never going to be able to have a child. And I don't think I've actually come to terms with it ever since they told me that day in the hospital. I was so relieved it wasn't cancer, but it's almost like a part of me died that day. I guess it's a sacrifice in one way. The lack of possibility for having a child gives me a better quality of life.

From that moment on I had to move on quite a bit really because I had exams coming up. I got my friend and my tutor to bring in



books so I could read them. Doing my Degree seemed to be the only thing that was holding me in a structure of any kind. I needed something to keep me sane.

I got half way through the second year and I was struggling with language and my tutor said, "I think you may have Dyslexia." They sent me to see someone on campus for a "Bangor" test. I took that and she said, "yes you have Dyslexia and mild Dyspraxia."

I thought, "where does this end?" "It just seems like one thing after another." It was such a relief though because I'd struggled so much at school with maths and spelling and language. In fact, then, you'd have a ruler struck across your knuckles, told you were thick and didn't pay enough attention and called stupid child. And you started to believe that. I said it was such a relief for someone to give a name to this and for someone to say, it's Dyslexia. I sat and cried and I thought, at least I know what it is now and people here want to help me.

The next two years were slightly sad in some ways and wonderful in others. I felt I could cope now, I knew where I was going. I actually came out with a high 2:1 degree. When graduation day came even though I had no parents there, my friends, who I'd met and grew to have great fondness for over the years, came to see me. They were

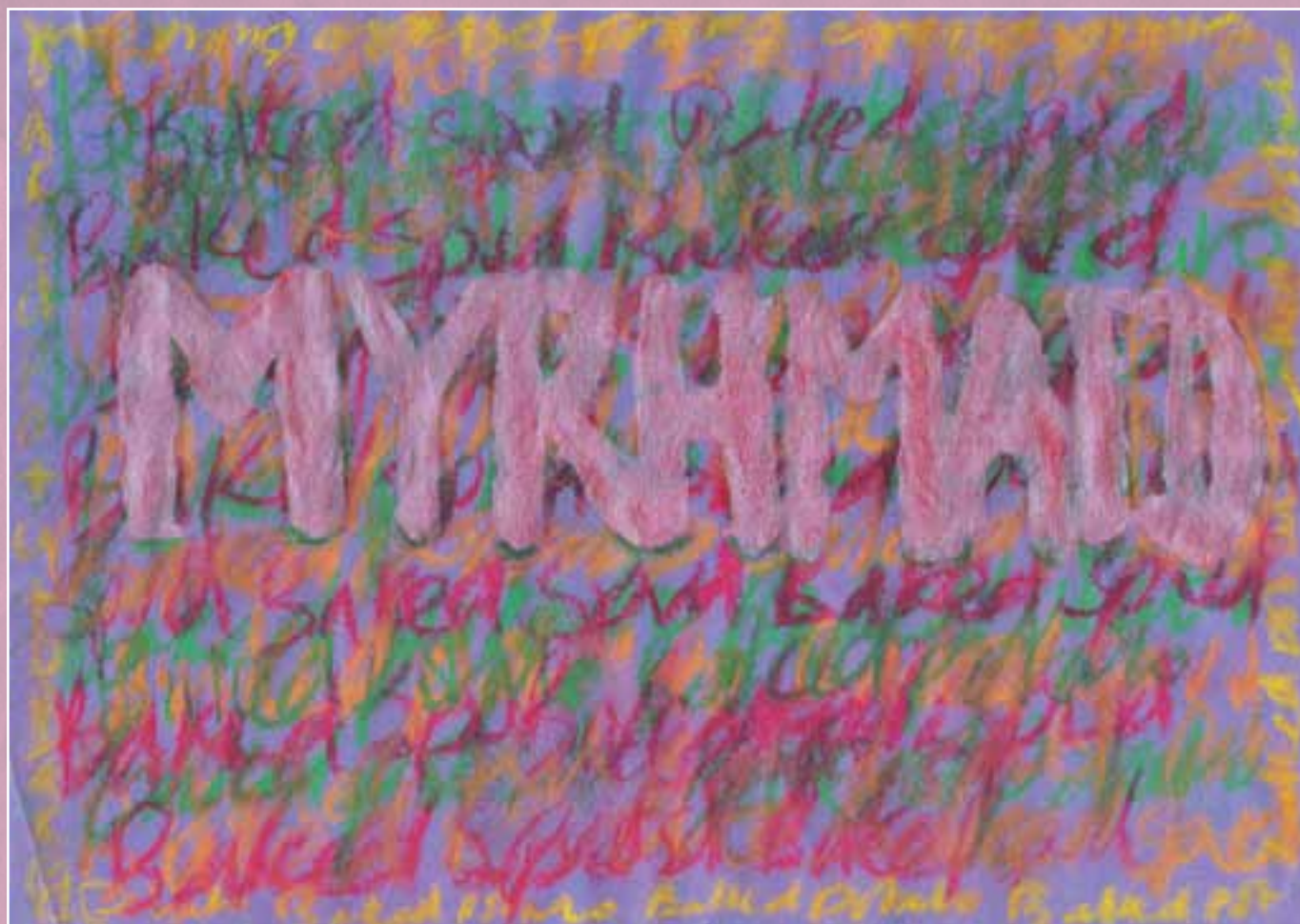


so proud of me. I had several jobs while I was doing my degree as well; working for the University part-time and with children.

I loved that so much that I stayed on an extra year to get my “Teaching Assistant” qualification which I never thought I’d be able to do. I also decided to start my own business; designing things for children; specifically for children who have special needs like me.



[illegible]



Mermaid 2 by Jax



Mermaid -

She returns from
myth-transmuted,
upon the dolphin -
Under the gleam of
the undakelly of the sea -

Old man of the ocean
looks on,
tender arms
afloat,
With mica hair,

Herself the object of her search,
He - a rainbow spun from grey cloud,
Dined in grain-sparking furrows...
in the land of endless summers,
She feels like being haunted

Jim



Mermaid 4 by Jax

Anonymous

I can't remember a lot of my very young days at all. I remember once I started getting into my teens that I never quite felt right. I always felt outside to so-called mates. I used to play football with them which wasn't too bad while I was on the field, but as soon as the match had finished they'd all go for a few sandwiches then I used to feel really on my own again and anxious and stressed. As time went on I just kept feeling more and more like that, and because I was always in a way desperate to have friends, I thought the way to get friends would be the opposite to how I felt I was.

So I started to become sort of louder and try to be cocky, sort of feeling that if I did that they'd all like me. My so-called mates they would all draw straws to see who was going to beat me up. I can remember staying in the house for 3 or 4 months crying all the time and really in a bad state. I did say to myself at that time I'm going to try and be more myself, but it's easier to say that you're going to do all of these things, actually putting them into practice is a different thing.

I used to get really upset because why could I never get a girl-friend? I can always remember going to this disco and I asked about 6 or 7 girls to dance at the end with the smoochies, and they all said 'no', it just destroyed my confidence. So whenever I used to go to discos or anything I used to get drunk as quick as I could, I either was in the toilet being ill or going home early, just to avoid

that moment. It wouldn't have been a matter of me picking a girl that I liked; it could have been anybody, anybody that would have shown an interest in me.

Eventually I met my son's mum. She showed an interest in me and I was glad to be in a relationship. We were together for 10 years but looking back I wasn't really happy. I probably never loved my wife in what I think love should be, I think it was just easy to have somebody there to help you deal with your problems. She was so different but I thought I did love her. You convince yourself you do don't you? But then we had problems and split up.

And then all of a sudden I started having panic attacks, bad panic attacks; at the time I didn't know what they were because I'd never had them before and I really thought I was dying. I couldn't work out why suddenly I'd started having them, and talking to the counsellor we came up with the reason it had suddenly happened was because it had taken me 6 to 7 months to come to acknowledge and accept the end of my marriage.

My dad was the old sort that everything I ever did it could have been better, it was if you took 10 photographs it'd be every one he would find a fault with 'oh that would have been better if you were closer' 'that would have been better if you would have moved to the side'. So everything could have been better. I grew up thinking

I'm actually not good at anything. Even today I don't drive because the first time I ever went into a car with him I crunched his gears...

I've learnt now people either like you for what you are or don't like you, you have to be yourself and let people make their own mind up and then if they don't like you then that's their loss as I look at it now.

I worked in the Reliant car factory for about three years and I can honestly say I never went in any day not feeling stressed or anxious. Most of my life I was too frightened to be happy because I thought as soon as I become happy then something will happen again. If you're not happy... then it can't get worse. I know it sounds silly but it was... if you are happy there's only one thing then you can feel and that's pain. It's easier to feel pain than feel love if love can lead to pain again.

I avoided doing everything; if a neighbour was having a barbeque if I was too anxious to go I'd be in bed. Even though you were in bed you still had a peep on who was at the barbeque, and listen to things that were said. I used to hear things like 'Oh where is he, why is he always in bed?'

The more you think people are getting this perception of you the harder it is to fight the anxiety. So you withdraw even more. I went

through a stage where I was frightened for years in a car because I thought around every corner there was going to be something in the middle of the road. The counsellor said "Right, how many corners have you been round in a car? Thousands and thousands yeah? How many times has there been something in the middle of the road? Never." And straight away it just makes you think, it's just thinking logically isn't it?

A lot of problems you're just over analysing stuff all the time. I'd have a conversation with mum & dad, I'd go home and I'd be analysing that for the next 2 weeks and throwing questions at my partner; 'what do you think they meant by that?' 'What about this?'

My brother was an addict from a young age – a gambler. I'll never speak to him again. All mum and dad's energy or love, or whatever you want to call it went to him. Me and my sister we felt really we were actually forgotten about. It's as if he completely took over everything within my mother's life. It's really sad to think that he sort of... even my dad, my dad went from... I remember my dad when I was growing up and he was the sort that if you asked for £1 he'd actually write it down, when you gave him the £1 back he'd cross it out and put 'paid'. Because of my brother my dad lost all his morals and his beliefs and everything was actually crushed. It was amazing that one person could actually destroy a whole family. The whole of their life revolved around him.

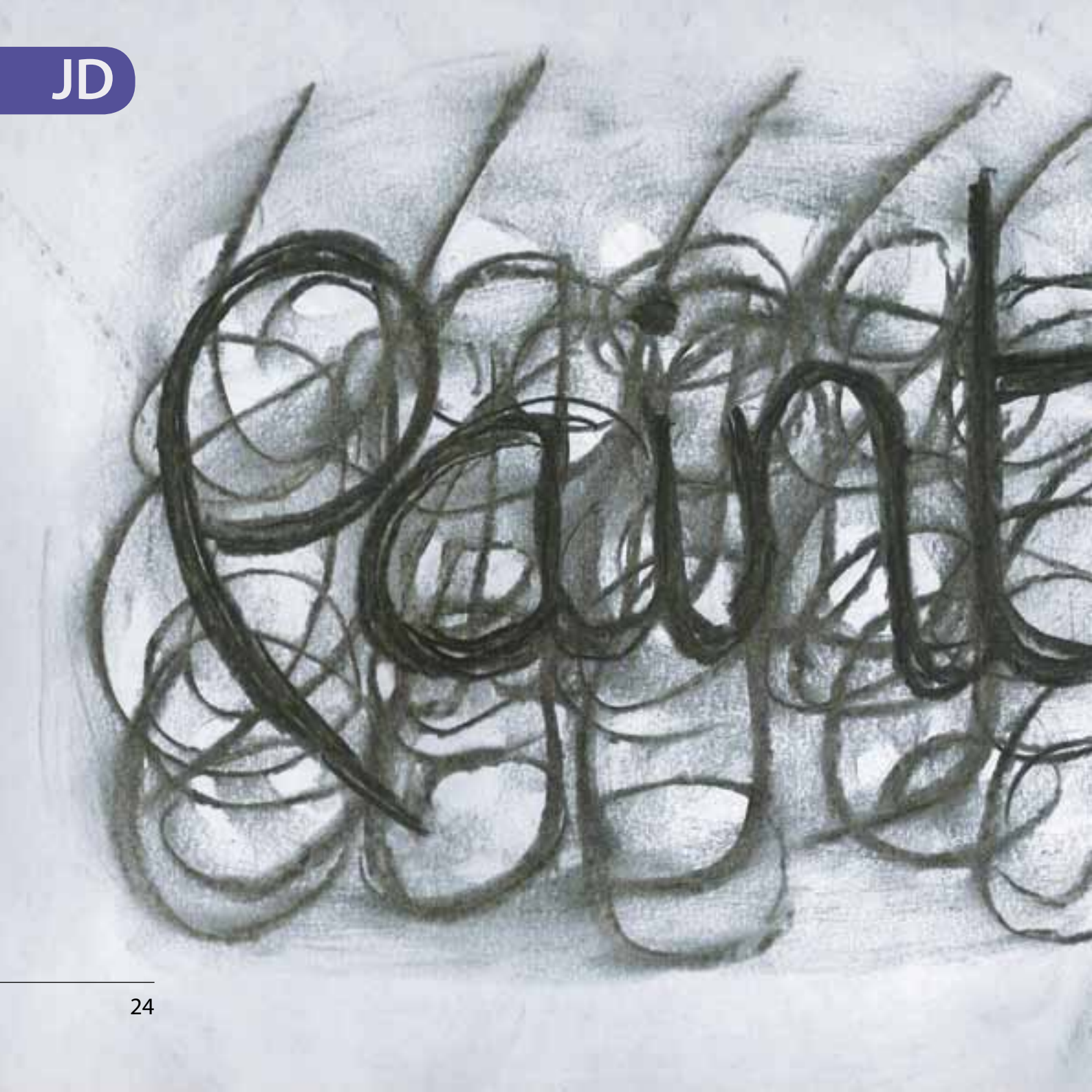
About 5 years ago I realised that I had a step sister, my mum had had her before she was married. It made me understand that her life had probably been unhappy, she felt her mum didn't love her. Her mum put her in boarding school, so she felt that she was got out of the way. I've never met my step sister; she's been better off being out of our family! My mum told me that, because she'd put her first child up for adoption she stepped back when I was born, after all these years, you suddenly have a reason for not being loved. I think you can forgive a lot then.

About 13 years ago I met my partner and we had some good times; our relationship muddled along and she'd tell me she loved me every day. Anyway about 8 or 9 years into the relationship things with my family had really kicked off with my brother and it took over my life. Then one day I came back and there was a note on my computer 'I can't do this anymore, I've gone'. My partner had walked out and my world did come down then big time. Then about 6 months later we started talking a bit, we had a walk over the park and I said 'you know when you used to go away for a time and then come back and I wasn't bothered, I was bothered really'. Whenever she went away I used to miss her like mad and the day she was coming back I was so excited I was like a dog with a bone; but as soon as that car pulled up outside I'd suddenly have my head down looking at my paper or computer, she'd come in and I'd go 'alright babe' and that would be it. It was just a protection

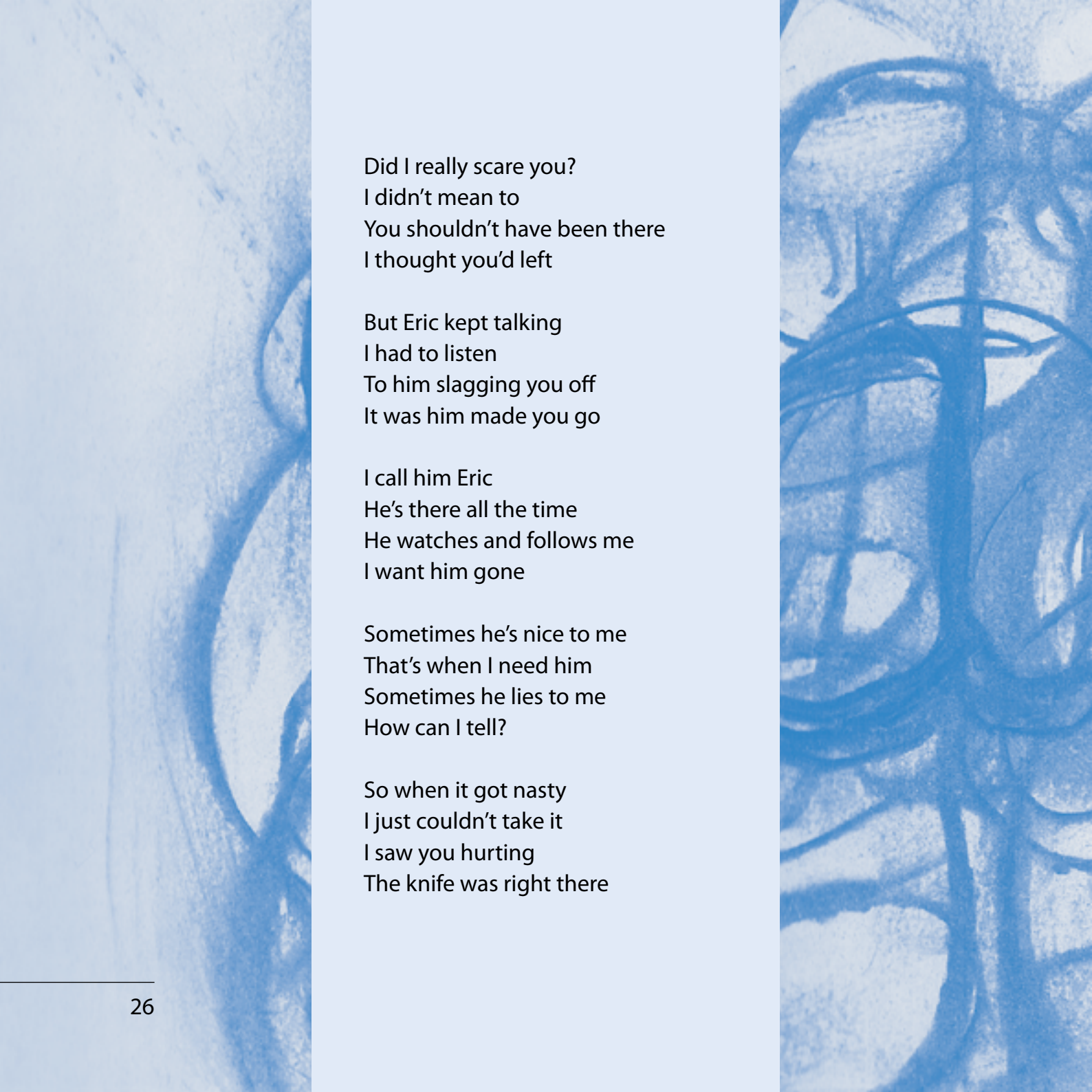
because I was so frightened... she could have just said something like 'Good God I didn't have time to miss you' and that would have been a rejection. So to stop rejection what do you do? You don't make yourself vulnerable do you? We are back together now.

I went on the Depression Busting Course and I met Tim from DIY Futures, and with his support and help I'm now in a Peer Group. I was in a Steering Group, I helped to organise and take part in a conference and I'm here today telling my story. I feel for the first time in my life I'm actually on the road to recovery. I'm sure this doesn't just apply to me, we have to go through a lot of bad before we can actually find some good.

I use that bad experience of my partner leaving me as probably one of the most positive experiences I've got, because now I think my partner looks at me now and she sees a different man, she doesn't realise it's the same man. All I can say to anybody out there is keep trying and don't always feel bad experiences have to be negative. Not necessarily at that time but in the future some of those experiences help you to form better relationships, help you become more comfortable to be able to participate in other things.







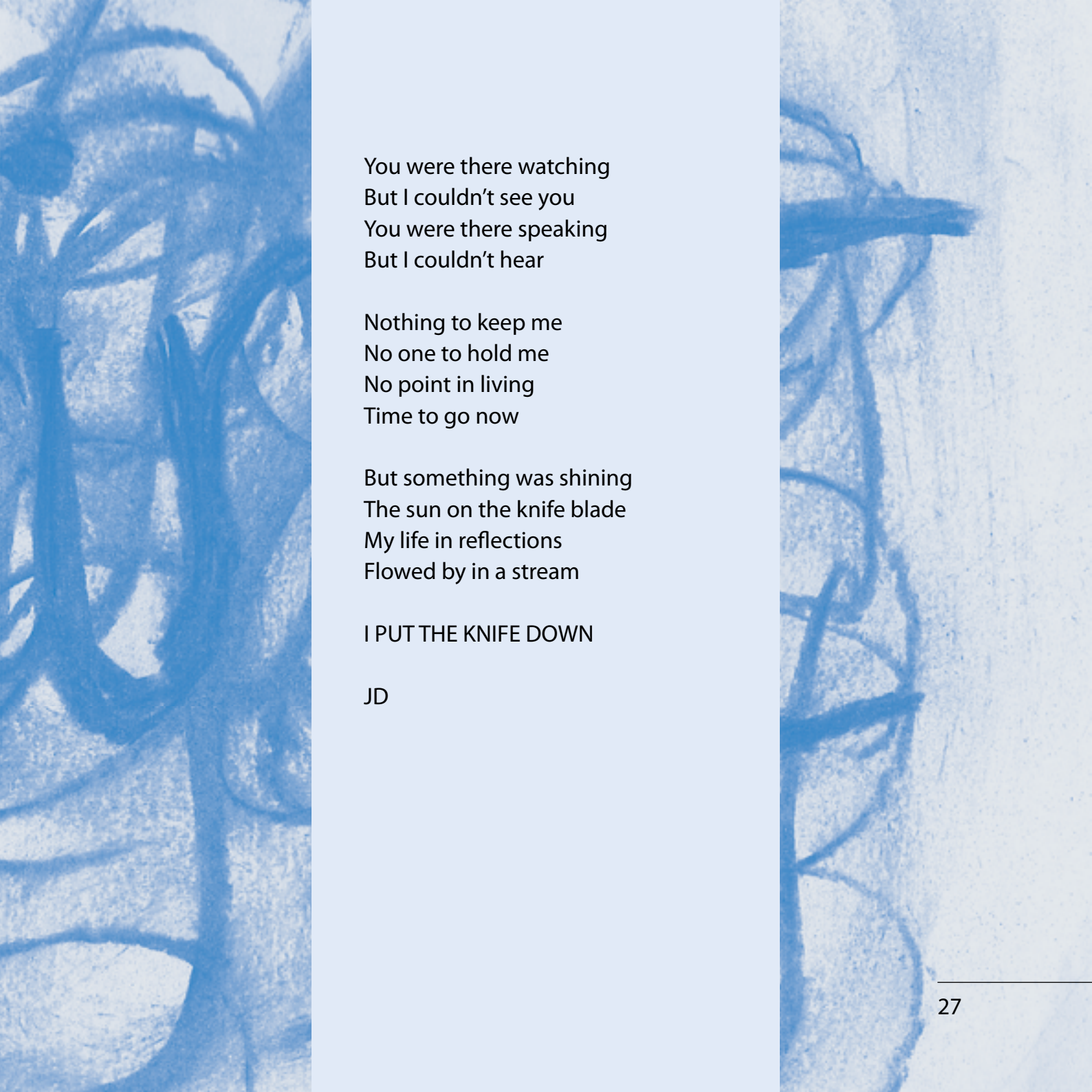
Did I really scare you?
I didn't mean to
You shouldn't have been there
I thought you'd left

But Eric kept talking
I had to listen
To him slagging you off
It was him made you go

I call him Eric
He's there all the time
He watches and follows me
I want him gone

Sometimes he's nice to me
That's when I need him
Sometimes he lies to me
How can I tell?

So when it got nasty
I just couldn't take it
I saw you hurting
The knife was right there



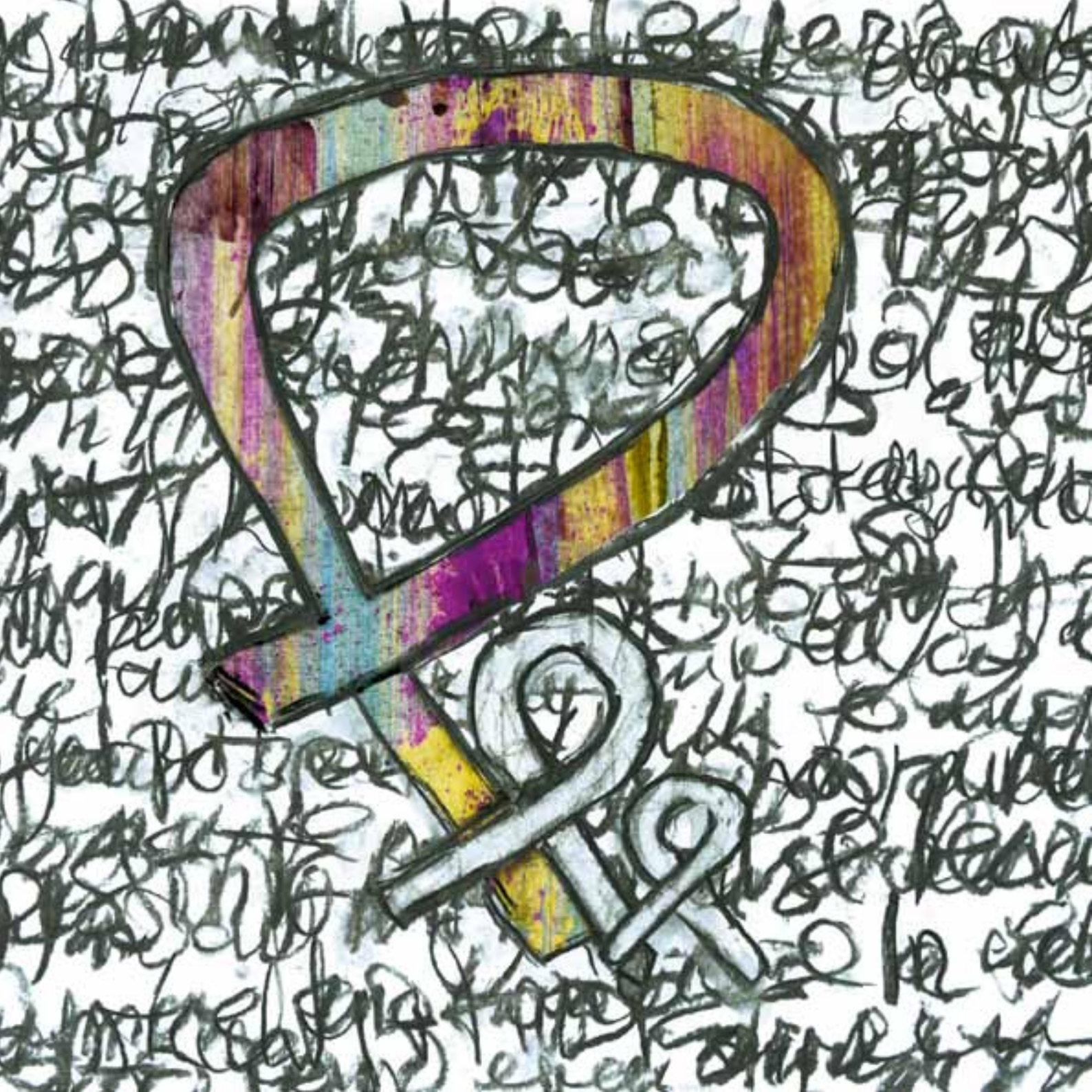
You were there watching
But I couldn't see you
You were there speaking
But I couldn't hear

Nothing to keep me
No one to hold me
No point in living
Time to go now

But something was shining
The sun on the knife blade
My life in reflections
Flowed by in a stream

I PUT THE KNIFE DOWN

JD





footsteps







My Story

lobster scare
monkey love
dog's rescue
big house and garden
walked to school
first bike, no brakes
solid wheels
traded for a dance ticket
tomboy, tree climber
all summer chickenpox
down-under age nine, seasick
travelled and camped
car crash, lost first love
taken away, wanted to stay
live to fight another day
fights and friendship
abusive teachers, aborigine smiles
boys n girls, walked for miles
music teacher cared
back to Britain
art at school



second bike, Dad's sent gift
fell in love – unrequited
first job art shop, tinting prints
Saturday flower girl
sailing Europe, yacht rape
wild horses and vineyards
picking grapes, France
floristry, Kent, flower rape
flowers, film stars, and royalty
family affair, South America
suicidal, no-one to turn to
children to care for, sister ill
nanny to nieces
second love killed on motorbike
sent home Mum's heart attack
cooked n cleaned, shopping, no Dad?
part time hotel job, stars and signatures
reconciliation
Dad home
boyfriend, then fiancé
manager and manageress
kitchen design outlet, key holder
Chelmsford, Brentwood



HEALTH

DECEASE
EFFICIENT

BANKING

The DESOLATION of
"LESS WISE MORE"

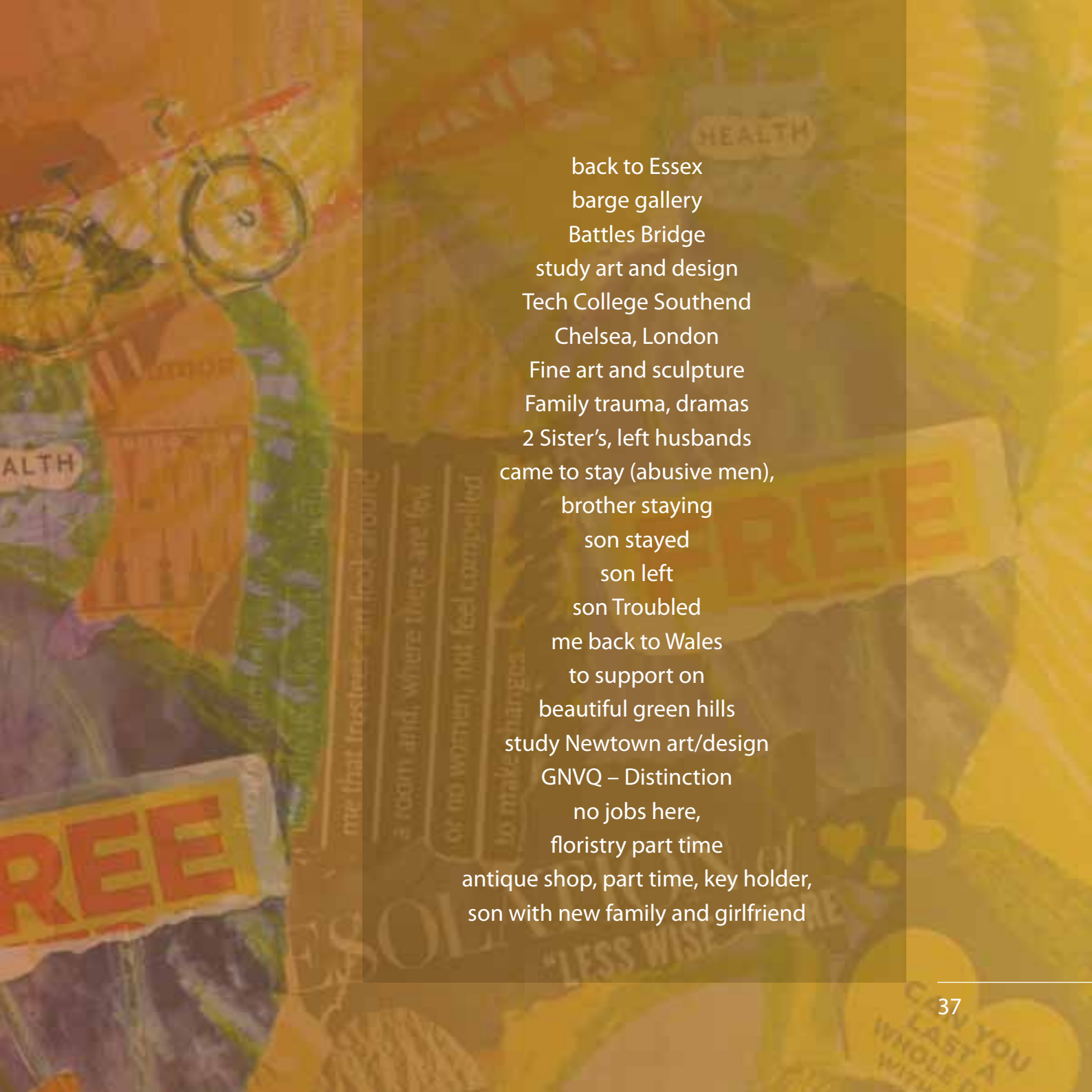
THE HEART
AND

CAN YOU
LAST A
WHOLE
WITH

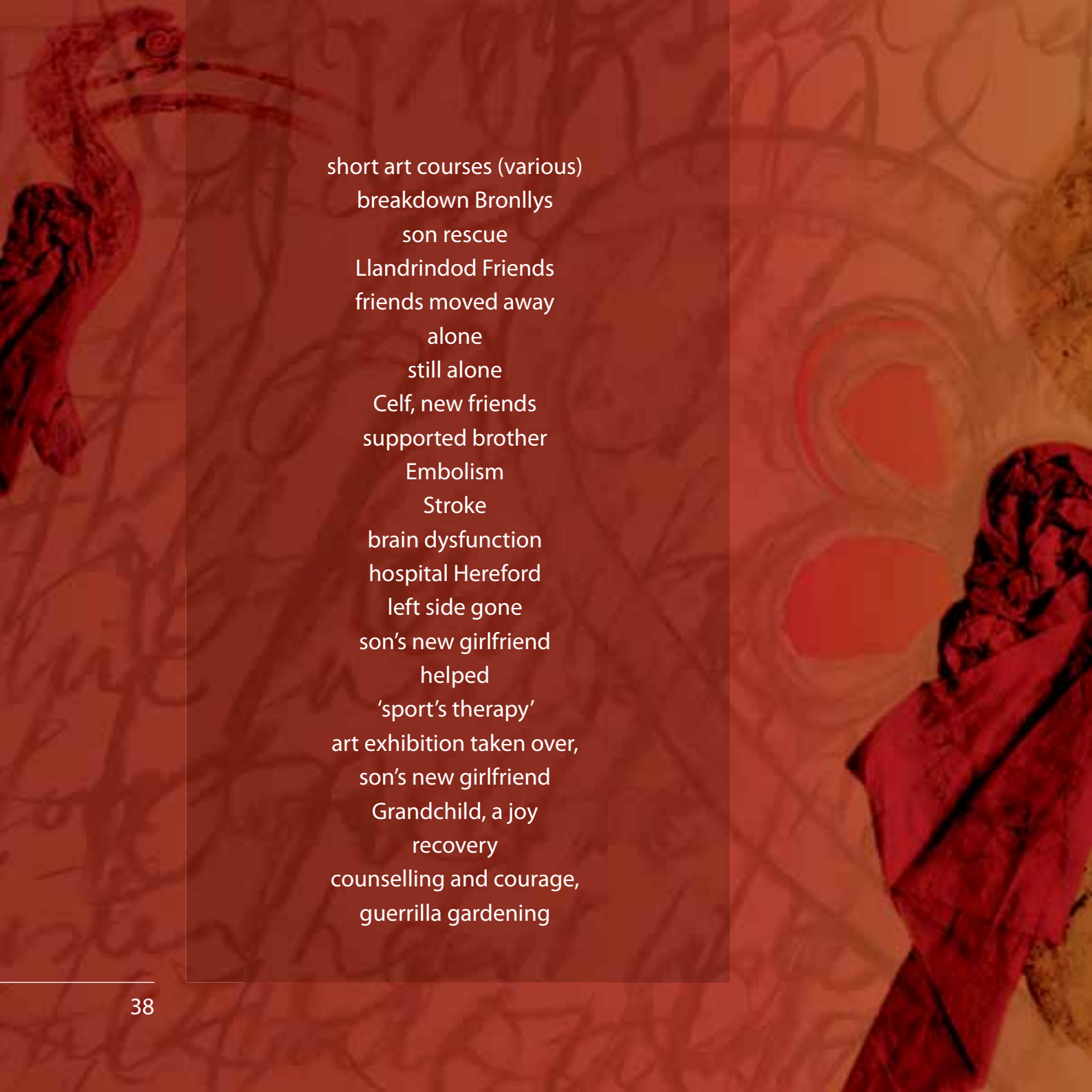




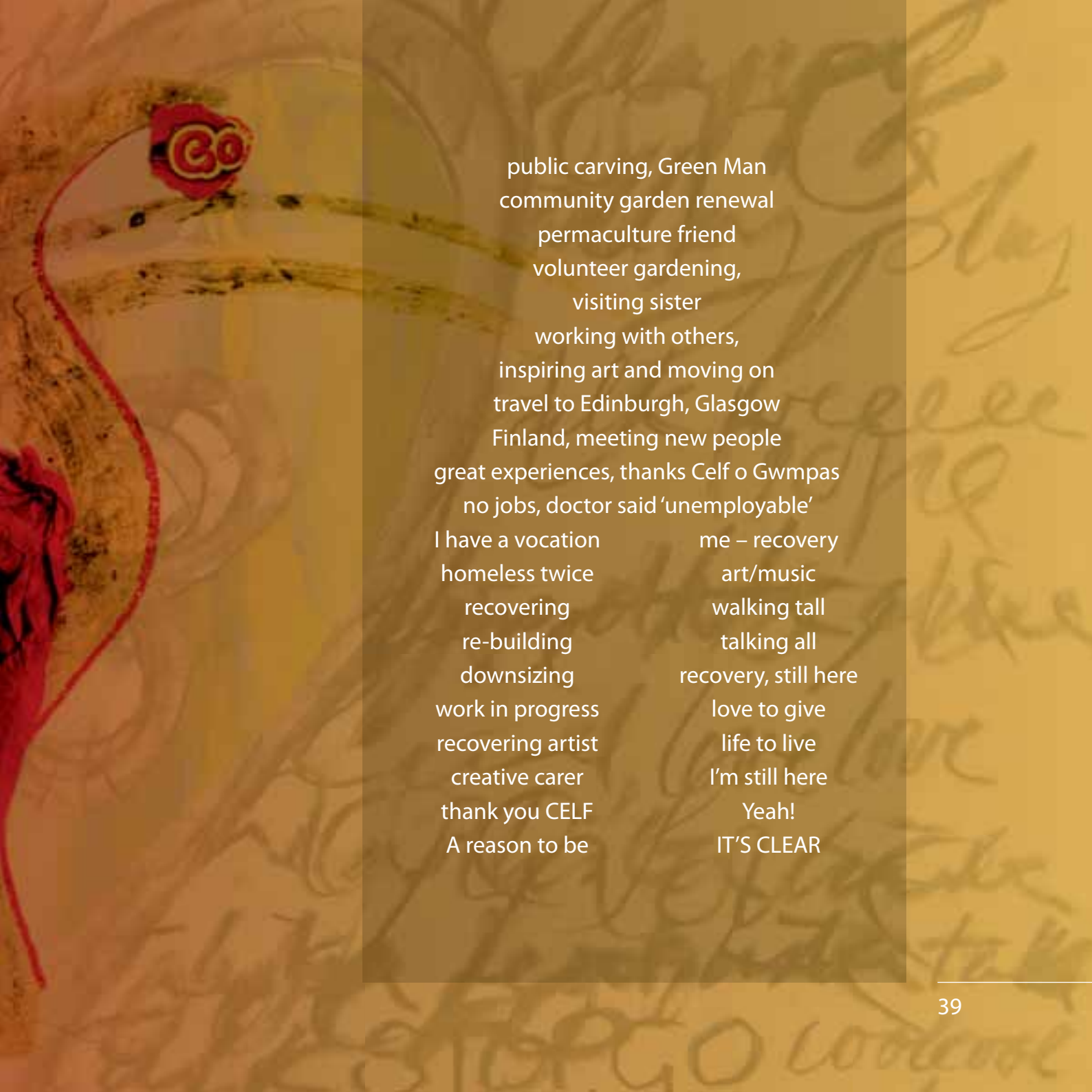
driving lessons, car, accident
breakdown, nine year relationship
ended, lost all confidence
Mistley, Parents
paralysis, doctor overprescribed drugs
drugs stopped – Coma – brother's rescue
Somerset painting elves and fairies
taking care of children
dumped in Essex, met old friend
his Dad had cancer, moved in
helped his Mum and Dad
his Dad died, me expecting a child
his Mum depressed but pleased about
new arrival, my parents, No! Breakdown
a son, a joy to me
puerperal psychosis, very ill, screaming hormones!
twelve years, music, mayhem, tears and laughter
mind games and magic, manipulative men
watching son grow, Wales and workshops
fun making children's masks
folk festival, art and angst!
brother's return
Cardiff, garden gallery



back to Essex
barge gallery
Battles Bridge
study art and design
Tech College Southend
Chelsea, London
Fine art and sculpture
Family trauma, dramas
2 Sister's, left husbands
came to stay (abusive men),
brother staying
son stayed
son left
son Troubled
me back to Wales
to support on
beautiful green hills
study Newtown art/design
GNVQ – Distinction
no jobs here,
floristry part time
antique shop, part time, key holder,
son with new family and girlfriend



short art courses (various)
breakdown Bronllys
son rescue
Llandrindod Friends
friends moved away
alone
still alone
Celf, new friends
supported brother
Embolism
Stroke
brain dysfunction
hospital Hereford
left side gone
son's new girlfriend
helped
'sport's therapy'
art exhibition taken over,
son's new girlfriend
Grandchild, a joy
recovery
counselling and courage,
guerrilla gardening



public carving, Green Man
community garden renewal
permaculture friend
volunteer gardening,
visiting sister
working with others,
inspiring art and moving on
travel to Edinburgh, Glasgow
Finland, meeting new people
great experiences, thanks Celf o Gwmpas
no jobs, doctor said 'unemployable'
I have a vocation me – recovery
homeless twice art/music
recovering walking tall
re-building talking all
downsizing recovery, still here
work in progress love to give
recovering artist life to live
creative carer I'm still here
thank you CELF Yeah!
A reason to be IT'S CLEAR

To My Nine Year Old Self

Taken to a different world
On wings of cardboard
Climbing trees scuffed knees
Held dog close, storms shivered her
Walked away when trouble slayed
Alone in woods quivering trees
Taken to a different world

Arms full of bluebells
Netting newts in slimy ponds
Fairy gardens, moss and mushrooms
Umbrella jumps
Take to a different world

I miss you, but you're still here,
Somewhere?
Deep inside, brave and strong
Walking, walking all along
Bush roads, away from school
Abusive teachers as a rule!
Caring for Mum when will,
Cooking for family
Learning a skill
Spotting orchids growing high
Family fighting made me cry
Taken to a different world

Hold my hand,
We'll run in wild flower meadows
Along the sand
Sorry, get so serious and sad

I missed my dad
Didn't want to grow up
'They' kept telling me to
'They' still do?!

Cried my eyes out
Told not to dream
Dreamers keep imagination awake
Taken to a different world

Brave star,
Beauty booty,
Scuff kneed scruffster
Car crash, first love died
Tight plaits, white sox
Shaken loose, fitting in
Lizard pet gloves,
Green drainpipes
Red cardi, tartan pumps
Kangaroo cuddles,
Koala hugs
Taken to a different world

Best Friends now
I and Me
Jump and leap, splash in the Sea
Into a different world, swim and
Fly Child,
Fly Free
Fly Free





Anonymous

My Early Life

I think my childhood was happy until I was about eight years old when we lived in a house about a mile from the farm. And then, my grandparents who lived on the farm, moved to the village.

So we left our very comfortable, happy house where, okay, we didn't see much of my Father, but when we moved to the farm it became his everything.

I was eight years old we moved to the farm. I had an older brother who was like my Father, mad on the farm, who wanted to help and they were always together, a lovely unit, and then I had two sisters after me and I think, well, I'm sure that my Mother was finding it very difficult. Not only did we move to this farmhouse which was too much for my Mother and us, but then my Mother had another child, the fifth, a younger brother.

So, she had five children and just before my younger brother was born, we were sent to a childless Aunt to stay and it seemed like we were there for months, we even went to school from there. And looking back, it seemed like my Mother, well she had the baby and we would have wanted to see the baby but we didn't see the baby until the baby was some weeks old. I remember my Mother, looking very tired and sorry for herself, with her Mother there and then,

I felt pushed out. That's when it started. I thought it had been when I was older but it was then.

When I was 10 my best friend's father died suddenly. This was a terrible shock – the first time I had experienced death. Before this happened she would come to play for the weekend at the farm to me 'The Country Mouse' and I would spend the weekend with her in the town. She was 'The Town Mouse'. Those were happy times. That all changed. My best friend's mother went back to her beloved Wales and soon re-married a widower with 5 children. My poor friend and her brother felt like outcasts. She often used to write to tell me all this. I never remember writing to her about my predicament.

Anyway, things started to move on and then my Grandfather, they'd only been in the house in the village for a few years, died in the night and my Mother came into my bedroom the morning after and she said "Oh, your Grandfather has died in the night and your Father has said, you will go and stay with your Gran. And I said "yes, of course I will". And so I went and that was the start of it. I was 11 years old!

I began living with my Grandmother and I never really went back to my house. I left the family as the eldest girl, I'd looked after them all (so I thought) and then they sent me to my Grandmother's



to look after her because she was frightened to live on her own because she'd had a burglary and I was sent like a dog to keep her company. And I actually slept in the place where my Grandfather had just died, and I was there for years, even at the weekends. I went to school from there and I hated it, but I never said anything to anybody, I just did it because my Father had wanted me to do it and it was wrong. I was 11 years old!

I used to go down to the farm on a Saturday morning and I used to try and find my sisters and my brothers and I couldn't find them, I didn't know where they were, I'd left the family. But I had a little case, I've still got it. My Mother used to pack this case every Sunday afternoon and she used to put a little packet of sweets in to last me the week. I never had a drawer in Grandmother's house or a cupboard to hang my stuff, I lived out of a little suitcase and slept in a bed with a bolster down the middle with my Grandmother, who was a big woman...oh, I don't know. I suppose I was helping Mother out because it was one less mouth to feed. I never felt like I was part of my family after that. I have blotted out how many years I was there but I was definitely there in the bad Winter of 1963 when I would have been 14 and a half because I remember the milkman in the village wearing socks over his shoes to grip because the pavements were so thick with ice. That makes it over 3 years! I asked my Mother why she let me go and she said it would have been divorce for her and Dad if I hadn't – GREAT!

People used to say how lucky I was to live on a farm and ask me things about the farm, expecting me to know. To this day they still do. I never understood why I didn't know.

When I start looking back on my life, when I was young and in school and there were so many signs of something wrong and nobody picked them up. I was bullied at school. I was very unhappy in school, I was very quiet. I can remember always feeling car sick on the school bus on the way to school. I 'went into a shell'. I did not do very well in school leaving with very few exams.

I went into nursing – the caring profession and I really enjoyed it. I made lots of friends and had a whale of a time.

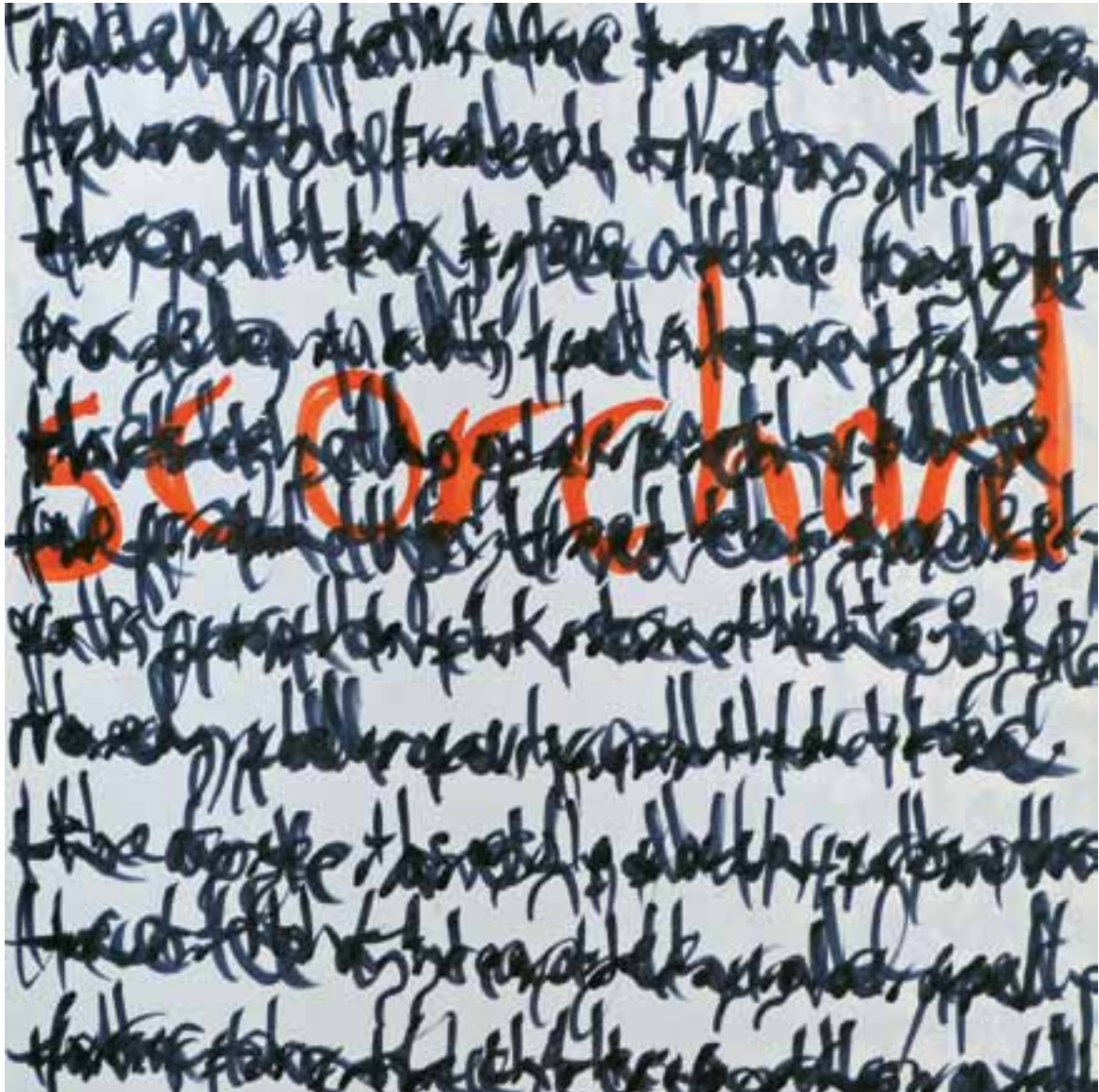
I became a staff nurse on a medical ward when I qualified. Here I met a wonderful Doctor who became a really good friend. He told me on our first date that he was dying of Leukaemia. This was so hard to believe. We had some wonderful times together and were very close until he became too ill. Soon after we met I told him I was unhappy working on a medical ward with so many of the patients dying and he said he thought I would make a good midwife. I doubted this but to have someone believe in me and to encourage me I applied and was accepted. In one of my first midwifery examinations I came top. I was over the moon. For the first time in my life it seemed I was praised. I will always remember

that. I have so much to thank my Doctor friend for. I could not face his funeral something I regret to this day. I was only 22. I would still like to try and find his mother to tell her what a fantastic person her son was!

My Husband is not very supportive, because he's got his own problems from his childhood. He never, ever, talks about his Mother or his Father. I said, really, you should talk to your children about them otherwise they'll never know what they were like. I didn't really know his Mother much but I did know his Father. His Mother was a very bad alcoholic and when I met her, she was quite damaged. I can understand the way he behaves is because of that and he is forever...., he won't ever say he's sorry, he's always got another angle on whatever has happened because he's always had to find excuses for his Mother. She would always promise to give up the drink but she never did. He has been very hurt by his mother.

I found the local mental health resource centre through a friend and I started going there. I do find I get a lot of comfort in talking with people and listening to them and I feel I would like to help them, because although my life, well, it was abuse, it's a horrible word really, perhaps if I can help other people, that would be very good.

sean burn

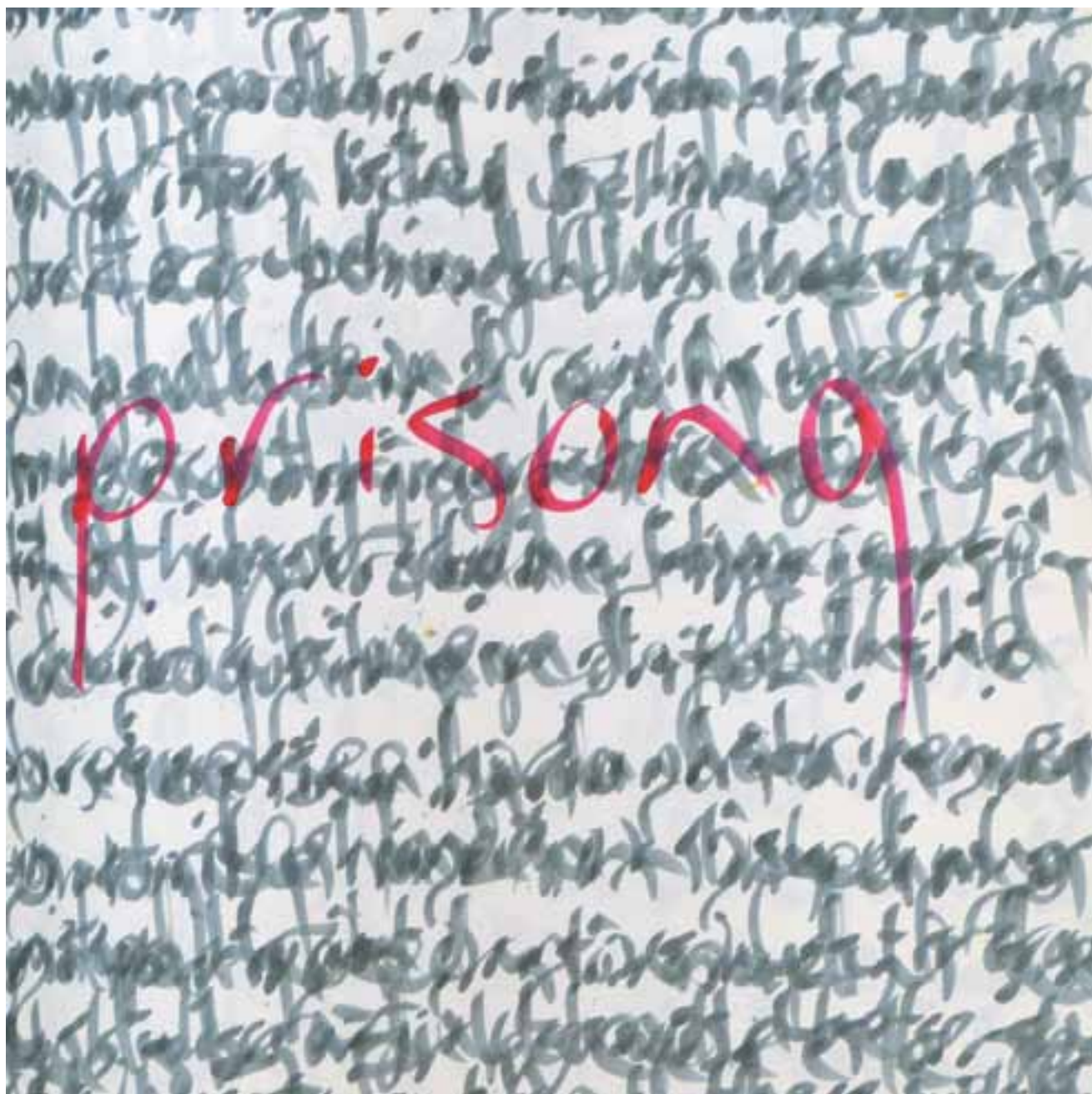


scorchard by sean burn

madvert by sean burn →

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prison by sean burn

← *searson* by sean burn

Reminiscing on the Past

When Nanna used to fetch us, when the sirens went off, Nanna used to fetch us down and put us underneath the kitchen table and I can remember that about the war. My Nanna was lovely, but me Dad was horrible. He used to hit me Mom, hit me Nan and us children, every day.

Well, where we lived on Pleck Road, the gasworks was at the back of us. We used to have to queue for coke on a Saturday morning. But there used to be a queue a mile long, all the way up Pleck road, right down Prince Street to the gasworks and on a Saturday morning, if you paid a few coppers, they'd give you the clinkered coke and then you could use it on your fire. Everybody else was in the same boat, they hadn't got much. But then, a bomb dropped on the gasworks and we were all evacuated, up to the farm, which is three streets back 'cause there was no buses or cars or nothing like that, in them days, you had to carry your children. They couldn't walk and everybody else had to run. But it didn't explode, but it was in the basin, in the canal at the back of our garden.

We had pigs, we had Bessy and Bessy had 16 little piglets. At that particular time, I think it was about '47, the government took 'em off ya, you couldn't keep the piglets. When they were a certain size, the government bought them and they killed Bessy and hung her

up on the yard, over the drain, The abattoir man came and killed her, oh, we cried our eyes out. We used to ride her, we used to have a ride on Bessy's back, and she was lovely, our Bessy was.

On the weekend, we used to swim in the canal, that was our Sunday treat. After lunch, Sunday, me Dad would put me Mom's knickers on, honestly, and we'd all swim nude like you know, but me Dad'd put the knickers on and we'd swim in the canal.

Well, one Christmas, I must have been six years old and I was close to Nanna, we lived in Nanna's house, it was me Nanna's house and we lived with Nanna. That's me Dad's Mum. She was only 4'11", but she was lovely, me Nanna was. And she used to shield us and me Mom always shielded us when me Dad hit us and it was half past three and we were still waiting for our Christmas dinner, me Dad had killed a fowl in the yard, because we had a fowl as well and he was at the pub and Nanna said, "come with me", so I had to be the one that went with her. We went to the pub, me Nanna went in and told me Dad he'd got to come, we were waiting for our dinner, I live it now, you know, it's so vivid, and he wouldn't come. So, we went back home and Nanna said to me Mum "I don't know what we're going to do, but he won't come". Me Mom was frightened and said, "we can't have our dinner until he comes". Anyway, he come at half past four, threw the dinner up to the animals and belted me Mom, punched her terrible.

We'd be sitting on the settee and having a little laugh and joke, you know how giggling the girls get, and he banged our heads together, oh it was cruel. It wouldn't be allowed today. He'd come upstairs and he'd belted us, three in a bed, belted us. I had the worst, because I was nearest the door and the bed broke. I can't ever remember having a day when we weren't having a clout up the head, a punch, oh, it was horrible. He was worst to the lads though. The lads really suffered. He was worse to the lads.

But there again, I can remember while sitting around the table and me Mom would bring in the big square meat tins full of pickled herrings and we'd sit around, we'd all have that. Sunday, we'd all have whatever meat was available and vegetables and we'd all sit and have our dinner and she used to make big rice puddings, roly pollys wrapped in the cloth to steam them, me Mom was lovely, but me Dad were cruel. But me Mom was, she was the only daughter with two brothers, 'course me Dad had got, there were seven of them, Nanna was left with seven when Grandad died. She actually had to go to the Workhouse for help, I can remember me Nanna telling me this. Me Nanna always said to me, whenever we walked past the Workhouse, me Nanna used to say, "I went there for help and didn't get any".

We used to have a wireless and they used to call the batteries accumulators, we used to have to take our accumulator to get it topped

up and you'd bring it back and stick it in the wireless and it'd go. If he couldn't get it to go it went out the window.

I loved school. I can remember school. I was quite clever at school. Well actually, I did pass me 11+, but I couldn't go because no uniform, no nothing so I've always resented this actually. My place was given to another girl, you know. Even now, that's told you, you can't go, so the other girl can go. Things like that, stick in your mind don't they. When I was 14 years old, me Dad made me stay away from school 'cause me Mom was pregnant again. So I never actually left school when I was 15 years old, I left before. I never had the school party or anything like that.

Mind you, the neighbours used to help us, you know them that hadn't got much. They always used to help each other. But nobody never took we out. We never went to a party, there was parties going on further down. Their girls had parties. The sons had parties. We were never invited to any of them.

And he went to jail. Me Dad went to jail. He hit the Bailiff with the fender off the hearth. And he went to jail for three months. Them were the best times of our life when he weren't there.

But I weren't on me own, you know, there's lots of, in them days when we were children, there was lots of families, poor and got

knocked about like we did, you know? We weren't the minority. There was a lot more like us. I can remember the girls at school saying "oh, me Dad had one on last night", because, they used to drink. The wife was the home maker, but the men used to go out and drink, didn't they? They still do, don't they? But I mean, then, the money weren't about. But they still found money for boozing.

And do you know, when my Dad died, I felt sorry. Other people said, "serves him right, he deserves to be", and all this and I couldn't say that. My husband says to me, "it's 'cause you're soft". His last few weeks, my Dad was incontinent, me and my husband well, I didn't do it, my husband done it. We did wash him and change him and do his washing. Me Mom had two years after he'd done and I loved every minute. She couldn't get out, she were house bound.

She was 17 when she had June, my sister, when she was 22 she had got five children. It was a lot in them days, weren't it? When I was having my first child Kevin my mum was having my sister Kim.

But I can still see me Mum, standing in front of me Dad, when he'd got one on and standing in front of we, so that she got the punches, you know? She never, ever raised a finger to any of us, me Mom never did. I said, he's made up for it. It's a wonder we've turned out how we are, int it?

I can remember now, when people came knocking on the door for the money and he used to hide down the back of the settee and me Mum would say "shush". And we were all frightened to talk, oh and the pounding of your heart. Oh, you know, you remember them things, don't ya? If you couldn't pay the bill like, then they'd come knocking at the door and we'd have to hide and make believe we weren't in. Oh, dear, dear, dear. I think that's why my children never did without. They've not been spoilt, but I've never hit 'em and me husband certainly wouldn't, he was an only child and very quiet and I think I've brought my children up correctly. I'm proud of my children and me grandchildren really. I think because of my background, you know, I think that's why.

We've had some tragedies in our life, we had few good times, up until I got married.



The Start and Part of my Journey

It started in 1988 when I was attacked and then two or three weeks later, I found out I was pregnant, so I automatically thought it belonged to him and I did all I could to kill them. That was July 6th. July 30th, I started bleeding and I went into hospital and they scanned the babies and they said the babies are dead, which, I have to admit, at the time, I was pleased for. Then it was about six months later that I found out, they were actually my husband's babies and they were twin girls. I think that's when it hit me. After the rape had happened, I expected people to know about it even though I didn't tell them. The night it happened, I came straight in, went for a shower and then straight to bed. And I automatically thought, my husband will ask. I thought when he asks, I'll tell him. He didn't ask, so I thought, I can't tell him because if he already knows and for whatever reason he's not saying anything.

Then I was walking past the phone box and I thought, I'll ring the police, So, I rung 999 and said, "Can you not put me on hold, I just need to tell you something now" and was told, "hang on, I'll need to put you on hold", so I put the phone down. There were some people walking past and I asked them for help and they said a few choice words, so I felt it was totally my fault, all these things seem to add to it. Now, I can look at it from the other side and I realise that it was all circumstances. But I think basically, hell opened its doors for the

first time then. I'd made a decision that night, because of all the circumstances, I just wouldn't talk about it, I just wouldn't tell anybody.

I used to run for Wales when I was younger, I'd do 20 or 30 miles a day. I'd work, six until two and then go running until four and then run in the evening. After it happened I couldn't run anymore, I couldn't. I think that's one of the things that knocked me off my feet and now, I think at this point, I could actually go out and do a race, but now it's too late because I've got arthritis in my knees. I think that's one of the things I do feel bitter about, it's one of the things that he took off me that I could never get back which is why I went to kill him a couple of times, which was the only thing I felt I could take from him really that he could never get back.

I think it was three years later, it sort of popped its head up, because this person put a bag on my head so all I had was his voice to go on. So, three years later, I heard the same voice and it was my knees that told me, more or less, that it was his voice before I knew it. I found out who he was, I was really surprised because he was a pillar of the community and I think it was hard then, to keep it in so I decided to tell my husband about it first and that was after I'd been "Sectioned", because I'd completely lost the plot, and I told him and I thought everything would be fine. You know, people say, once you've talked about it, it'll be fine. So, I think I almost expected it to disappear. But obviously, it doesn't quite work like that.



I spent a lot of time in hospital on a "Section" and that went on for a good few years and it seemed I rolled from one thing to the next. I don't think I lived for about 11 or 12 years after, but I did what I had to do. I looked after the children, I cooked food, I did everything that you were supposed to do, but, hand on heart, I don't think I lived. And if you'd talk about it, everything would be fine, but it didn't work, so I thought, I just won't talk about it. My husband knew it'd happened and that was enough for me.

I'd been picked up every time, by the Police and got pepper sprayed by a young police man. I tend to pace and clench my fists and to me, it was keeping control, not because I was violent, but with the voices and hallucinations that came with it all, it was almost as if I needed to keep tense to keep control and stop "them" getting in and doing whatever they were going to do. And I think, for that young police officer that night, when I turned to face the cell door just as he was walking in, I must have looked as if I was going for him, because I must have looked really nasty.

I got picked up on the way to this bloke's house because one night I'd decided I was going to take a knife and finish him and that would have been it, because, if I did that, I'd end up in prison, but to me I was imprisoned and it didn't matter that I was free, because in a sense, I wasn't, but I thought that if I did that, it'd be fine. I made my way up there and you could guarantee the police would

be up there and I'd be thinking, even the police think it's my fault because they are protecting him.

It's hard as well with the voices, because I never used to suffer with the voices and hallucinations. Half the time, if I'm honest, I don't know when they are there, the hallucinations, because sometimes I can't work out if they are real people or not.

Sometimes I think well actually you're not going to beat me and I question them back, but it doesn't stop to be honest, they argue all the more. Somebody said, "if you say no, go away until 8 o'clock", it may work for some people, but with me, if I say, "go away I'll speak with you at 8 o'clock", these carry on all the more. Most of the time, the voices, I know they don't quite fit in with the conversation. But there have been a couple of times, where they caught me out.

I went for a job interview. There were five people on the panel and I thought, there's loads and thought why is there so many, but two of them were asking the most random of questions and I answered them and thought, they don't make much sense, but there they are.

I had a lovely letter back saying I was unsuccessful. But then I was driving home after speaking with the Resource Centre Manager and I thought to myself, I know why they were asking me random

questions, the two people who were asking random questions weren't there, so they really caught me out at that point.

I've been to see a psychiatrist and the one told me I didn't need to take medication anymore and I quite liked him and the other one gave me a prescription with extra medication, so guess which one I listened to? Hence, why I ended up in hospital a couple of months later. If I'd asked him if he was real, I'll tell you what he would have said: "You know I'm the real one". Now when they both say that, which one do you believe? They were both identical, so other than sticking one with a pin, there's no way I can tell.

I mean they are there, constantly, I accept that, they have basically moved in. Now, daft things like having a bath. I bath with my clothes on.

I possibly, deep inside know that there is nobody really inside that bathroom, but when you can see somebody, they are real to me. They are in the bathroom, so I bath with my clothes on and then I get some sort of bathrobe thing that I stitched up the front that I get undressed underneath and dry under and it's stupid things like this really that I beat myself up over, move on, get over it like. But it is hard sometimes.

It's stupid things like if a neighbour asks me to pop into town and get something, I joke and say, can you write it down because I'll

forget it, so in that case you can get around it, but you can't say to people, "can you write it down because I don't know if you're really telling me or not".

It doesn't bother me if people hear me talking to someone that they can't possibly see, but it tends to bother them. It's very awkward sometimes to work out who the real people are and who aren't. Sometimes you know, it doesn't quite fit in with the conversation.

I do laugh about it, but sometimes it does get me down quite a bit. It's something I need to deal with and cope with. It's dealing with the nitty gritty little bits that are always harder to deal with than anything.

I think I've tried to kill myself so many times, I'm really not any good at it and I wouldn't be here now, which now at the moment feel is a good thing.

All in all, I can say that it's made me a better person. I think if that didn't happen, I wouldn't be here now. I really do enjoy doing presentations about the resource centre because of everything it's done for me. I think, if somebody had said to me five years ago, that you'd be doing a presentation, I'd be saying, "no I don't think so, you've got that one wrong". Now I just think, oh I can make a

fool of myself so... My Mother always said "if you do make a fool of yourself, do it in front of someone and give them a laugh". Sometimes I cry and laugh together.

I think I must be going in the right way, because the last time I was in hospital, it was 18 months after the time before, so that's quite a good thing for me. In the beginning, it was six months, and it was going from that to two and a half weeks this last year. That made me feel good. I was in as a voluntary patient as well, which was the first time, I should get a badge for that one, because I was always "Sectioned".

It's been one hell of a roller coaster and it probably still will be. At the moment, I feel pretty good, but then, you don't really know.

Valentine's

Stan Wilson

I was born in Liverpool in 1932. The war came in 1939 so we were evacuated. I remember us all outside the school gates with our gasmasks and a card with our name on around our necks, parents wasn't allowed there. A lad and myself was billeted with a widow who ran a shop that didn't have anything or very much to sell. The thing is I didn't fret or anything while I was there. The lads were allowed to work on the farms two days a week. I remember it was three days – I enjoyed it but it was only the evacuees who did it none of the locals.

We were only there a couple of years when the headmaster started to interfere with the children (The Evacuees again) not the locals. What it was he would rub against you, dirty sod. It came to a head when one of the girls got pregnant. He got nine months and he got his job back when he got out; it was only an evacuee after all.

The war finished and I went home. I was 14, to a home where it had been empty of children for five years now there was six. My Dad worked on the docks. He liked his beer, so with us all he didn't have the money so he just bullied, he was a very jealous person like my two sisters. When I was fifteen years old I started work as apprentice painter and decorator. In those days we went to art school one day and three nights, to learn graining, sign writing and paper hanging. I worked with the sign writer a few months, the paper hanger, then the grainer. One job I had was tracing the pattern round the gothic

window of a chapel. Then cutting them out when the walls were painted. We stippled the patterns back round the windows. Another job I remember was when we had a job painting of a mortuary there was 4 of us but the boss there made a mistake of showing us the body of a woman cut open on a slab. The three men refused to work there so I was left on my own. It didn't bother me, I would go in the dissecting room to paint, I would have to first wash the skin and blood off the walls before painting. On a Saturday there were only half a dozen bodies there. We came back Monday and there was about ninety on the trolleys and nearly the same amount leaning against the walls. There were a few epidemics over the weekend.

It wasn't long after I went in the army. I took it in my stride we went to Egypt when Nasser was trying to nationalize the Suez Canal. I was in a special platoon one night we were on call out because a boat was coming up the canal which the British didn't allow. I think they were only fishermen but we just shot them up, we must have killed most if not all of them. It's been in my thoughts many times but I keep telling myself it wasn't me it was the British Government, it was all hushed up. I got demobbed.

At that time I got me a guitar got into a group of lads and played in the dance halls. We done well, we played on a pleasure boat, and then went half way to Ireland and back. We also played on the same stage as the Beatles.



7

SOMEBODY UP THE ON
TO MORE LESS MIND HIS
OUT 2 THOUSAND? THE RENT
10/- SHILLINGS. 50/- I HAD
A HORSE 3 WHIPPETS & A
ALSATION. WHAT A TIME WE HAD
I WAS VERY HAPPY I DID RIDE MY
HORSE BUT ~~WE~~ ^{WE ALL} GENERALY WENT FOR
A WALK ON THE MOOR MY HORSE
HE'D WANT TO GRAZE & HE WOULDN'T
LET US PASS BUT AFTER AWHILE WE'D
SNEAK PAST HIM AND THEN HIDE
WHEN HE REALISE WE'D GONE HE'D
GO WILD BEING THEN HE WOULD
SNIFF US OUT JUST LIKE A DOG
WOULD WE HAD SOME FUN IT WAS
THERE THAT I LEARN ^{THE} LOVE & TRUST
BETWEEN HUMANS & ANIMALS
I'D NEAR A COUPLE PAGES TO WRITE
IT ALL DOWN / IT CAME TO A END
WHEN ANOTHER FAMILY MEMBER

8

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HAD ALREADY KNOCKED HOLE
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16 ²⁰¹³
IS THE MIDDLE OF JULY NOW BUT IN THE BACK
END OF JUNE I HAD THIS PAIN IN THE MUSCLE
OF MY LEFT ARM I WENT TO THE DOCTOR WHO
SAID IT WAS TRAPPED NERVE'S AND ASK IT
I WAS ~~HOLD~~ GIVEN A FORM TO FILL ASK WAS
THE MED ~~SON~~ I WAS GIVEN ALL RIGHT SO I
WROTE THAT THE DOCTOR HAD JUST MADE AN
APPOINTMENT TO THE ~~THORPA~~ TO SEE ABOUT
THE TRAPPED NERVE I WROTE THAT IT WOULDN'T
I TRAPPED NERVE BUT A BLOOD CLOT AND
THE TABS TO THINK MY BLOOD WASN'T ANY
GOOD THE HOSPITAL SAID NOTHING WRONG
WITH MY NERVES THAT I WAS RIGHT
I WENT BACK TO ^A THE DOCTOR ABOUT MY
PAIN SHE MADE AN APPOINTMENT FOR A BLOOD
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DOWN TO FORTY IT HADEN AT THE DOCTOR'S
AND HE MENTIONED THAT MY H. STOPS FOR
10 MINUTES AND I WAS STILL COMING

It was fun camping and fishing as a gang of friends. I was courting. Well, we were married without the ring but we were getting the wedding ring made. It came to an end when a car reversed out of a side lane and turned us over and she was killed. It's the biggest thing that's ever happened to me. She has been with me every day of my life since. I just sat at my mother's not eating. My mother used to try and coax me.

I was offered a house to rent from a farmer who had this empty house on the Pennine Moors. He wanted somebody up on the moor to more or less mind his sheep, about 2 thousand? The rent was only ten shillings. I had four dogs and a horse, three whippets and an Alsatian, what a time we had. I was very happy, I did ride my horse but generally we all went for a walk on the moor, my horse he'd want to graze and he wouldn't let us pass but after a while we'd sneak past him and then hide when he realised we'd gone he'd go wild neighing then he would sniff us out like a dog would. We had some fun it was there that I learnt the love and trust between human and animals; I would need a couple of pages to write it all down.

It came to an end when another family member came to tell me that they had found a lovely cottage in Welshpool. What it was all about is that there was two cottages attached, they wanted the one so they thought they couldn't get a mortgage from anywhere

so they got me to get the two from my building society. When I came to live there I had only got one foot in the door and they asked me for my cottage they wanted the two; he wanted to get more foster children. I came home one day they had made a door though to my sitting room. They took over my house, and the children were that noisy I couldn't sleep. I told them about it but they were worse so I moved my bed downstairs, but the noise on the floor up above was so noisy. So I moved into my kitchen which was better. They was told to be noisy to get rid of me. I could have got rid of them but I didn't. They didn't pay anything for seven years. They had half of my house they were trying to claim squatters rights. I moved them out after seven years in that time they used my electric, electric heater and television in each room.

I have never been ill in my life only colds and flu. Ten years ago I was getting these dirty tears like curtains coming down, first in the right eye then in the left sometimes both. Over three years I went to three different doctors each one said they didn't know what I was talking about. Each time it was taking longer to clear I was going blind. Then on the fourth year I went to another doctor who said I was the lucky person, as I would have been blind in both eyes. Within a week or two he gave me blood pressure tablets and aspirin to thin my blood. I told them the aspirin was causing harm but they didn't take any notice. I told them two weeks before my 80th birthday about it but they took no notice. I went the following

day about this pain in my leg, I had a stroke in front of the doctor. He told me I stopped breathing for two minutes. I had a stroke in the middle of the night, I was cold as ice. I woke up with my dog with his head on my shoulder and cuddled up to me; he does that when I'm upset as well. He knows everything.

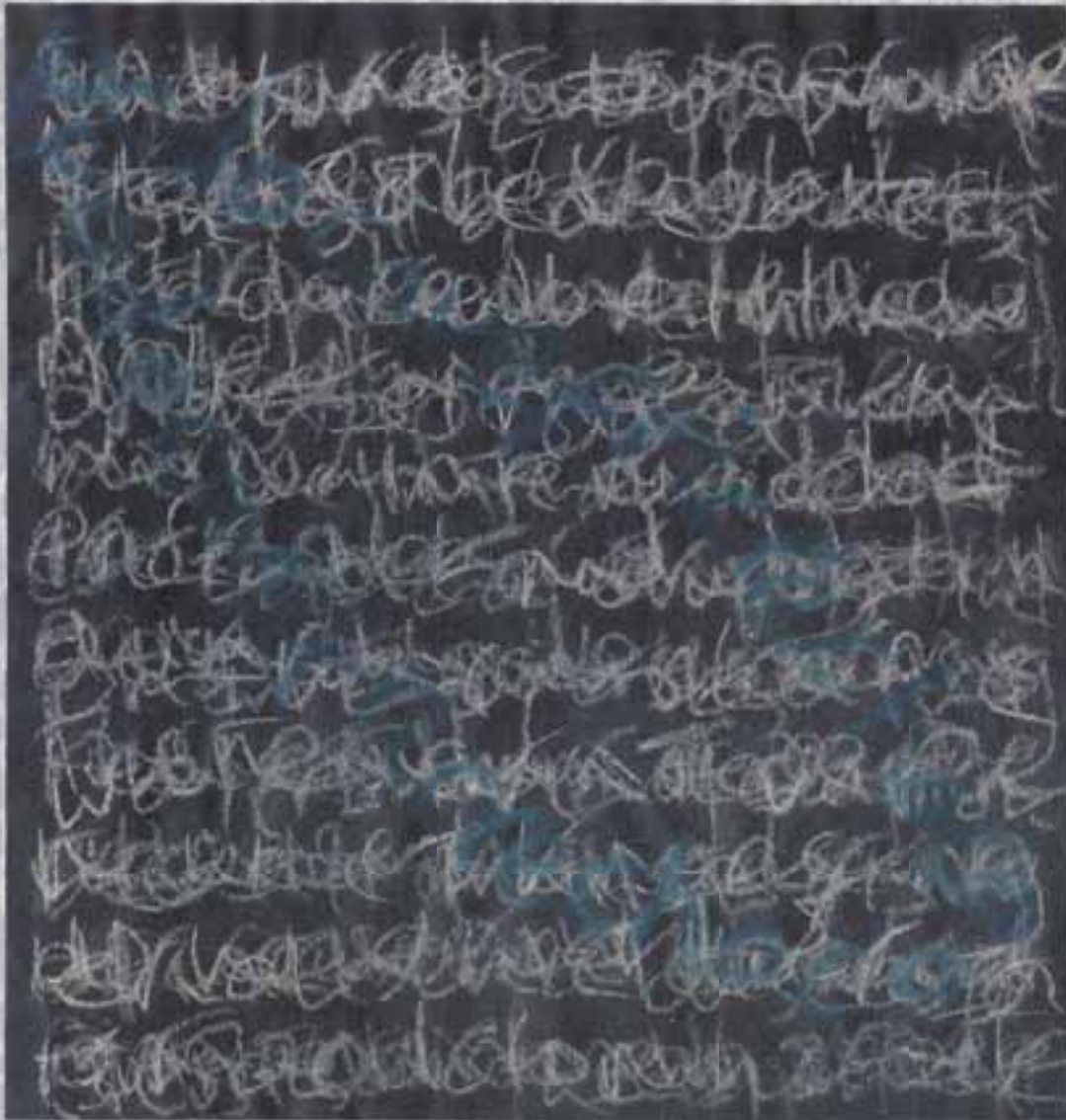
I went in hospital and the doctor told me firmly to stop taking aspirin, they took it off me but never gave me anything instead. I counted over the six months eight strokes; I had two at the medical centre. After that I had a blood clot in my eye, I was blind for eight minutes. The doctor gave me an appointment in three days, to go to Shrewsbury Hospital. I was very worried about waiting three days because I knew what it was. Anyway the eye doctor said I needed aspirin to thin my blood, I broke down in tears. It took an optician to say about thinning my blood, after six months I knew what I needed all along. How could they neglect a person so much I don't know.

I must say that through the years I've just ignored things that hurt my feelings. Like the no crying or fretting about leaving my mother when I was only seven years old. The bullying of my father who used the buckle at the end of his belt on me for nothing, I just buried it all, the accident with my wife-to-be, buried the bullying at work. I made a mistake going to the counsellor. The first thing I said to her was that I don't need help that I bury it. She already

had me grieving for what happened fifty odd years ago. I've had depression tablets, but I got rid of them, I want to grieve naturally which has been the right thing to do.

I've had a lovely life. Thank you

ceridwen powell










Anonymous

My life started just over fifty-two years ago, I don't remember the early years and my mum only told me a few things. One thing she told me was I would hide food under my cot mattress and find it sometime later, mildewed and with a fur coat, which if not stopped I would proceed to eat. The second thing mum told me was I would stand at the dressing table chattering away in toddler talk then all would go quiet, when she looked I was fast asleep standing still. I don't ever remember having cuddles or any attention not of the good kind.

My earliest memories were of my parents getting J ready for school and themselves ready for work, we lived at that time with dad's mum, Nanny G.

One morning I woke up extra hungry I thought if I snuck out of bed and took some bread I could eat it quietly under the covers but my Nan caught me gave me a good hiding and told me she was going to inform Mum and Dad, but I didn't get another good hiding as Mum didn't believe Nan as she had made the mistake of taking the rest of the bread. (Nan was a kleptomaniac)

My next memory was when Uncle R called me into his bedroom where I was instructed take off my knickers and climb on the bed with my eyes closed, which I did without question because even at that early age (approximately three or four years) I knew better than to question an adult. He pushed something between my legs,




a little time passed then he said three words that have stayed with me and those three words still cut deep inside "YOU'RE NO GOOD".

The physical and mental neglect went on but we didn't know any better, in a way I learnt different life skills to most people I learnt how to read people by what they did or didn't say I could read their body language.

One time my sisters and myself went to stay with Auntie D. She said she was taking us to a fair ground, we were instructed to behave and to hold on to a hand or the pushchair at all times. Watching my cousins in the ghost train, I forgot to hold on to the pushchair. When I turned my auntie wasn't there. I was very scared, I wanted to cry but I knew better than that for I was often told if I cried I would be given a reason to cry.

They eventually found me. Auntie D gave me a good hiding for running away. Our stay with her was cut short and we returned back to Nanny L, Mum's mum. Nan gave me a good hiding, the next day Mum came to visit and she was told of my selfishness then she gave me a good hiding. No one ever asked me what actually happened.

One time J, S, and myself were staying with Auntie V. We slept in put-me-up beds in my aunty and uncle's room. J and I shared top and tail, one night J asked me to swap ends. The next thing I know



I was being forced fed, I tried to say no but I was told I didn't mind last night, my protest woke my aunt up, then it seemed all hell had woken up for the noise of my aunt was terrifying.


I was seven, I didn't know what had just happened only that again I had done something wrong. The next day when I got home from school there was an ambulance taking my Uncle with a big bandage round his head. I was told that I had caused my uncle to have an epileptic fit.

A few years ago I found out my uncle didn't suffer with epilepsy and in fact my auntie had hit him with a frying pan, but for me the damage was done I thought I had been so bad I had made my Uncle ill.

Last year I found out mum knew about the abuse because my sister had confronted her about it when she was thirteen, but mum said she had no choice as we had nowhere to live so she had to let us be split up amongst the family or we would have been put in a home for naughty children and would never see mum or dad again.

It was a couple of years later that my sister made friends with S. T. and we went to stay sometimes at her house. This was when the sexual abuse really started.

I remember the first time I had been sent down to the kitchen to fetch some coat hangers but S's dad was busy under the sink. I was told to come over to him I knew somehow something bad was




about to happen. I knew I didn't want to go but I had to. He touched the inside of my legs. I didn't like it even though I didn't understand what was going on. I didn't need to be told not to say anything. After that he would come to his daughter's room where I was sleeping. One time he gave me some books to look at. I was shocked when I saw what was inside but it didn't stop me looking, I felt dirty but yet excited but I knew it was wrong. The abuse carried on for about a year and not even my parents being there would deter him. He said that if I told, mum and dad would go to prison because they owed him money.

That last summer I was invited to spend two weeks with Mr T before the rest of the family went there for a holiday. I did everything I could to get out of it.

I told mum I couldn't go as I hadn't finished my chores, I reminded her that I was grounded. But that didn't make any difference. Inside I was screaming to my mum to listen but I couldn't speak the words and I had to go.

For years I couldn't understand why she didn't hear my pleas. I thought it was one less mouth to feed but now I know she just didn't care.

I found out my sight was failing but I was lucky to have a kind deputy head at my high school and he got me into a school for children who were partly sighted. This opened a new world for me,



I had missed out on a year's schooling because of bad headaches and failing sight.


I was the only one of nine children to leave school with any qualifications. I had achieved four O'levels and three C.S.E's. I liked college at first even though I had to sit in class and just listen because the books I was promised to have in braille or on tape never happened

Because of the sexual abuse and the fact that at the age of thirteen mum told me I had no looks and no figure and if I wasn't careful I would be left on the shelf, I went from one bad relationship to another.

At the age of twenty after only knowing I for five months I married him. I had gone from the frying pan to the fire and the only good thing that came out of that relationship was my two eldest boys and if I had left him sooner maybe I wouldn't have lost my third child. I nearly got married again in haste some years later but luckily for me he walked out on me before the wedding.

They say when you hit bad times you find out who your friends are, it's true especially in my case I lost contact with my family because I was no longer strong enough to help them so I was no longer needed.

Because of my mental health I have attempted several times to end my life. The first time I took a hundred and eighty pills but someone came round unexpectedly and found me. The second




time I decided I would take a hundred and forty pills and go for a walk to the canal where no one would find me. I walked as far as my back and legs would allow me to go so I decided that was where I was to die.

It was approximately five hours later when my good Samaritan came along, not that I appreciated her at the time.

Things seemed to get better for a while but really I had just locked the feelings away. In between these times I had contemplated taking my life several times and on occasions I found myself in danger not knowing how I got there. The third overdose I decided it was not so much the amount of pills I need to take but I needed time for them to do their worst but my sister phoned, I answered when I was semi-conscious without thinking and she called the police. I didn't realise that they could make me go to hospital if I hadn't agreed to go. I managed to convince the hospital I was no longer a danger to myself; I had learnt from a very young age to tell people what they want to hear, because really they don't want to hear anything else.


It was several months later when I found myself sitting near a large pond with a Stanley knife at my wrist, without any idea how I got there. I realised I needed help and phoned the day centre I attend who alerted the police who took me to Wrexham Hospital. It was eight in the evening when I eventually saw someone up until then I was locked in a corridor all by myself which didn't help my anxiety



the only thing that did was when I heard the nurses talking about sectioning me. I knew I had to get control or that is what was going to happen to me. By the time I was seen I had managed to take control again and once again convince them I was not a danger to myself anymore. A few days later I realised I wasn't in control and I had to accept help and I did this on the grounds I wouldn't be sectioned.

I was lucky my CPN managed to find me a place in Telford which was more relaxed than Shelton hospital. I thought I was only going for a few days, I hated it there at first, there was bed checks every hour which disturbed my sleep and even gave me flash backs. By the fourth night I had decided I couldn't put up with that place any longer then one nurse showed me some kindness above and beyond the call of duty and that changed my mind and made me realise that I had to accept help from others and give the control over to those who say they know best. Because of this I started to feel a bit better and I even made a friend something I haven't had since I was nine.

One thing that has helped me with my mental health is keeping busy, I don't mean the daily chores I mean I have joined every course Ponthafren outreach has put on and because of this I am now doing a Btec in art and design, I also teach craft on a voluntary basis at the outreach.



Many people say they admire me. My CPN says I am an inspiration on legs they say I should be proud of what I can do, but all I think is are they saying that because I don't let my eyesight dictate what I can do or is it I have real talent?

When I was asked to tell my story I said yes straight away, it is easy for me to talk about the past for I have no emotional connection to it. What I didn't realise was that meant reading what I had said. I didn't realise that what would happen was I would get connected to the past and it would bring up feelings I had locked away a long time ago. The door is now unlocked and hopefully although painfully I know but one day soon the door will become completely open and I can deal with the past properly and I will be able to feel things once again.

Blessed be.

Cheleann








Life changes in a Flash

I was helping in the local school and one of the ladies there was looking for someone to take care of her four boys as her life had changed to a single woman with a busy job. The boys were wonderful and I loved them dearly. I went early morning to get them off to school and then went to do some light cleaning for the local church and helped with the boys.

This one day I had just visited a really good friend Mrs Davies for my cup of tea and toast and chat in the morning and then went off to do my chores of the day. I went to collect the boys from school and this day their mum had a late meeting in school and wouldn't be home until six-ish, so I stayed late.

It was a nice evening, bit dark, bit dry, end of January 2006. My husband was at home that day with our dogs waiting for me... driving home... the next I remember it was early February. I had been hit head on with a 100 miles an hour impact. I was in a bad state and had to be cut out of the car. Apparently I had pneumonia on impact and couldn't be operated on for ten days, so I was put in a morphine coma for relief and to help with the pain. At this stage no one expected me to live.



My consultant woke me from the coma to tell me that I may have to have my legs amputated and he needed a signature before I could go to theatre – now!

I next remember April. I was in hospital for five weeks; then back and to with many infections. I left hospital with a boot on one foot and an Ilizarov bone-frame on the other leg. I had a pylon fracture, broken ankle and toes. I was crushed from head to foot, tibia and fibula broken. I was unrecognisable on first look; face a mess and nose broken and badly bruised.

The man who hit me had a broken toe and a damaged car. My car was a write-off.

I had to learn to walk all over again with a frame, then a wheelchair for 18 months, then two crutches, then one crutch and now a stick when needed.

I was in terrible pain every day. I had to have my leg cleaned by my husband every day. The help from local neighbours was fantastic. I was pushed for twelve months in a wheelchair over the road for a shower as we had no walk-in shower at home. I needed help; I couldn't do anything for myself for many, many years. It was pure hard work, toil and strife. There were constant, constant hospital appointments, hydrotherapy, physiotherapy work at home; it was

Dangerous driver escapes jail sentence

Head-on crash leaves woman in wheelchair

A WOMAN suffered severe injuries in a head-on crash and was now in a wheelchair, Mold Crown Court was told on Monday.

She emerged from a dip in the road as she drove home and was confronted by a car on her side of the road and there was a head-on crash.

The driver of the other car, Brian James Chaplin, aged 25, of Mount Pleasant, Welshpool, admitted dangerous driving but escaped a prison sentence.

He was ordered to carry out 150 hours of unpaid work and was banned from driving for three years. He must also take a re-test.

Victim Michelle Willingham, aged 57, was driving along the B4394 between Llandrinio and Crew Green when the accident occurred.

Chaplin, who approached in a silver MG Rover, had ignored a solid centre white line and a warning sign about a blind dip in the road, it was alleged.

Judge John Rogers QC said that it was about 6pm one January evening that Mrs Willingham, a housewife, was driving home.

"You were driving in the oppo-

By County Times Reporter
news@countytimes.co.uk

site direction. You ignored a hazard warning sign and drove a hard white line in to her path," the judge explained.

"The collision was inevitable as were the consequences. She sustained serious leg injuries.

"This is a bad piece of dangerous driving but not prolonged and not aggravated by drink or drugs."

The judge said that he took into account his guilty plea, the fact that he was a young man of previous good character, and had no convictions of any sort for driving.

Prosecutor Brett Williamson said that there were damp and freezing conditions.

Mrs Willingham was driving on her own side of the road and as she came up from a dip in the road she was met with a pair of headlights on her side.

A head-on collision was inevitable, Mrs Willingham was trapped in her vehicle and had to be treated in the car by paramedics and a witness had told how the rear end of the defendant's car had lifted on impact.

Mrs Willingham was taken to

the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital where she was kept for about a month.

She had serious injuries including a fractured right ankle and foot, three fractured ribs, leg fracture, a cracked sternum and a fractured left foot.

It had a serious impact upon her life and she was now in a wheelchair - but she did not feel angry towards the driver.

Interviewed, Chaplin said that he had used the road about four or five times and knew of the solid centre white line.

He saw some lights in the distance, pulled out to overtake without realising that there was an on-coming vehicle in the dip.

Defending barrister John Oates said that his client at the time believed that the solid white line had not started but accepted that he should not have pulled out assuming that it was clear simply because he could not see anything approaching.

There was clearly a hidden dip in which the lady's car was when he pulled out to overtake.

"It was an error of judgement," he said, but the case lacked many of the aggravated features associated with dangerous driving cases.

Motorist is spared jail over smash

A Mid Wales man has been spared a jail sentence for dangerous driving after a head-on crash which left a woman in a wheelchair.

Brian James Chaplin, of Mount Pleasant in Welshpool, admitted the offence at Mold Crown Court yesterday.

The 25-year-old was ordered to carry out 150 hours' unpaid work and was banned from driving for three years. He must also re-take his driving test.

The other driver, 57-year-old housewife Michelle Willingham, was travelling along the B4394 between Llandrinio and Crew Green when the accident took place at about 6pm on a January evening, the court heard.


Emerging from a dip, she was confronted by a car on her side of the road.

Chaplin had ignored a solid centre white line and a warning sign about a blind dip in the road, the court heard.

The judge said he had taken into account Chaplin's guilty plea, and that he was a young man of previous good character.

Prosecutor Brett Williamson said Mrs Willingham was trapped in her vehicle and had to be treated in the car by paramedics. She was taken to the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital with multiple fractures and was kept there for about a month.

John Oates, for Chaplin, said his client accepted that he should not have pulled out assuming the road was clear.

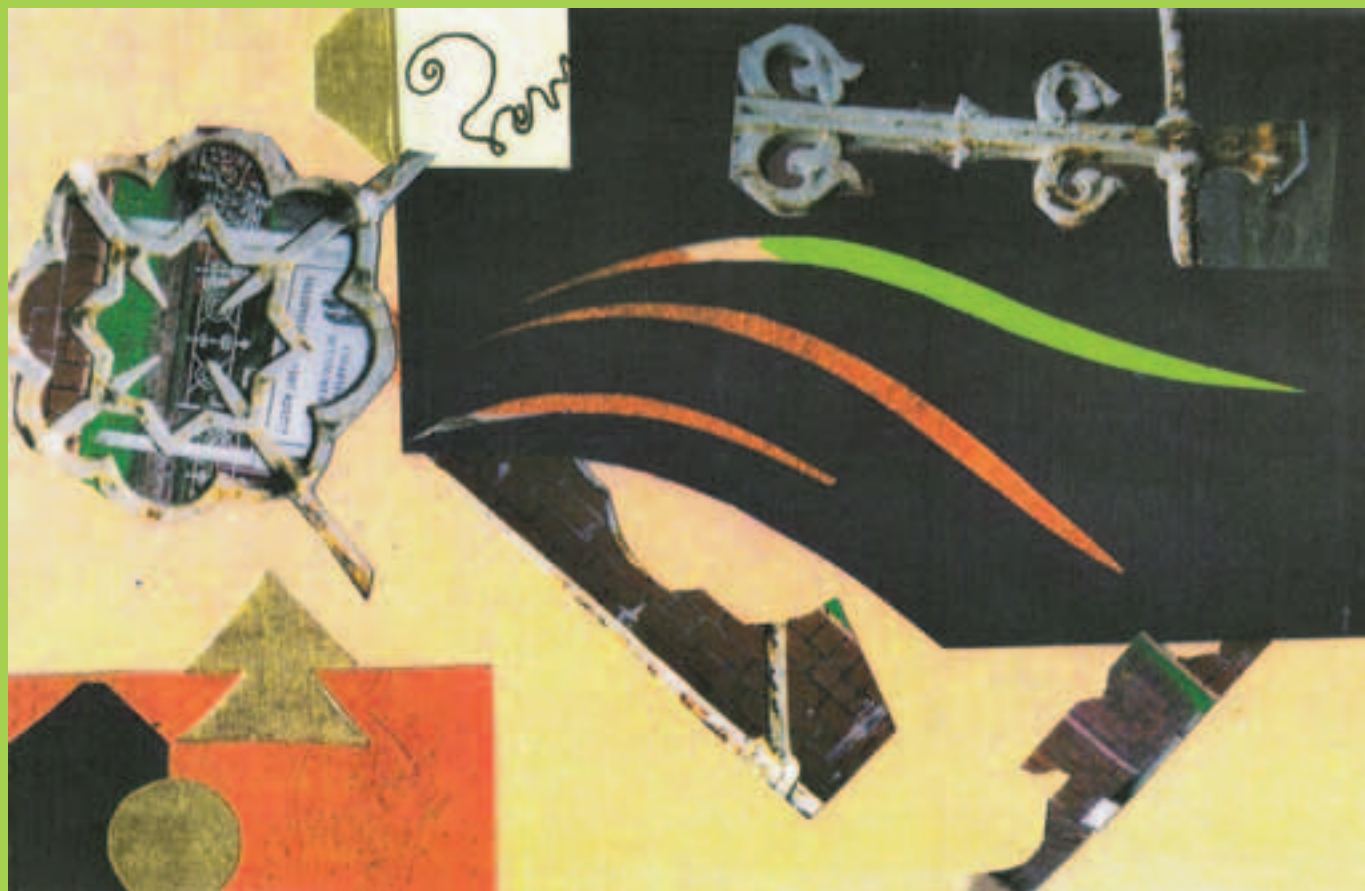


awful. I had lots of people to help me along the way. One person was a counsellor and they introduced me to a support worker and I was taken out for coffees, taken to charity shops and generally helped. My mobility was bad but my mental state was well worse. I had to learn to trust, to believe and love again. My confidence was lost, I thought forever. Then I learnt to paint and did craft like making cards etc. I have learnt to drive again. There have been many, many hurdles to cross.

I had very good friends who came into our lives, who helped so much, who were not there before: Nan and Angus, thank-you. My husband would come back from hospital after being there all day (thank-you Alan), and find a nice home-made soup outside the door. Cakes were made and flowers and cards were sent. Thank-you to Brenda and Dennis, Isobel, Ron and family. Thank-you Brynterion and most of all Gill Colerick and PAVO for DIY and this Stories Project. My family helped also. But the real hard work was down to me. At times I didn't want to live; then I did. It was pure hard work – but hey! Some of the very, very bad days were outshone by an odd good day. Then it went from bad to bad and good to good, it was so up and down, as was I.

I couldn't cook, clean, wash or even stroke my pets at first. I was sleeping in a recliner chair for over twelve months, I couldn't move from side to side. I missed some real good family events. My sister







Ilizarov bone frame
with screws in my leg



had asked me to be her chief bridesmaid which was a real honour. We had even chosen the dresses, but it wasn't to be. My youngest brother got married a year later and had his wedding in Italy and I couldn't go to that. So lots of things I endured.

I come from a rather big family of eight and I am the oldest, but I can't remember too much of my younger days. I couldn't concentrate to read, write or anything and here I am writing to you all. There was light at the end of the tunnel, but it was extremely dark for a very long time.

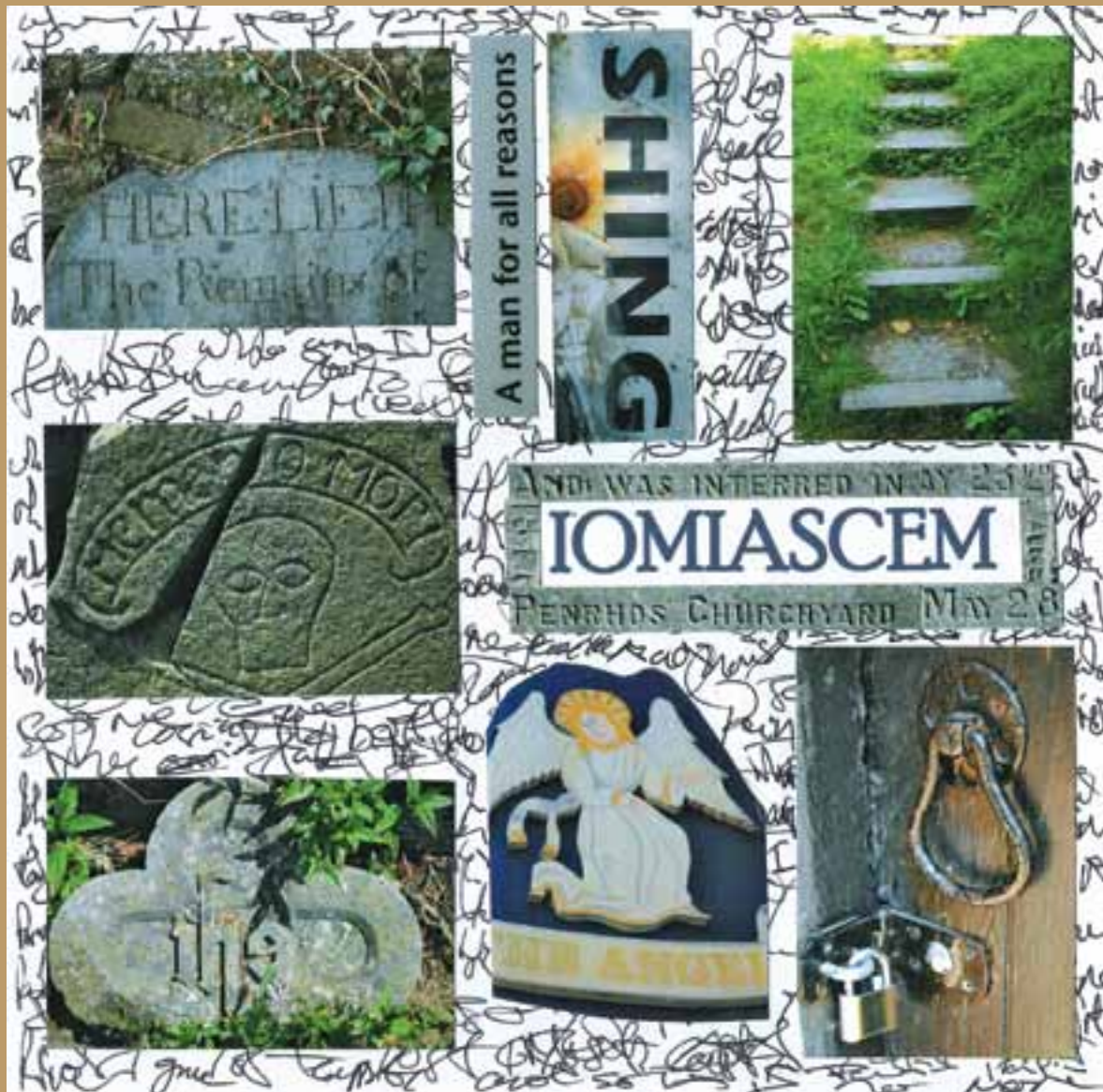
I've met and made lots of good friends and met lots of people in a similar situation and all I can say is never give up hope.

I am seven and a half years older now and middle-aged but I still have a lot of living and helping others to do. I hope I have helped just one person that reads my story to believe and trust in themselves and keep the faith. Remember I was broken and spilled out but now I'm put back together again.

As you see from the illustration this story is true and I have lived it!

Thank you for listening and I hope it will help someone out there.

Anonymous



Iomiascem

Watch me bleed →

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the hurting ?




Snippets and Scraps from a Malfunctioning Mind

Wordless Nonentity

I was the youngest of four and it wasn't really a childhood that I wanted. It was, at best, a dysfunctional upbringing, in a very dysfunctional family and not a happy place for me really, well for any of us. I grew up in a house full of conflicts and intensity. The details of which I need not dwell on, but the affect and consequences this environment has had on my life has been significant. Now, looking back I can understand how the emotional and physical turbulence of those events caused me to react and behave, but it took me a long time to change the conditioned, unhelpful behaviour that I learned in childhood. From an early age I'd withdraw physically and emotionally which left me feeling a lonely outcast but at least that way I felt I would hurt less. I was often caught in the middle of the whirlwinds of arguments and wars of attrition. I would understandably be greatly upset and in floods of tears but this only brought more scorn. I guess from the age of four I concluded that these situations were my fault. It was me! I felt rejected. I felt unloved. I was unlovable. As a boy I believed that I was to blame for everything and that I deserved to be punished. And this led to me secretly hurting myself.



The background of the page is a textured, abstract image with warm orange and yellow tones on the left, transitioning into a greenish-yellow on the right. In the bottom-left corner, there is a white triangular sticker with the word 'FRAGILE' repeated in red capital letters along its edges.


It began with head-butting or punching a wall. As I developed and got older my self-hatred and inability to communicate my emotions became a stick to beat myself with and I did this through eating. I had always had a bad relationship with food but now I started to restrict what I was eating. It didn't happen overnight. I just ate less and less and as I enjoyed running I exercised more and more. I got to the point where my routine was I would eat one apple at lunch-time and two rich tea biscuits at night and then run eight miles. Physically, I experienced lower back pain and agonising stomach cramps because it was empty and became so light headed and headachy. Mentally it took over my life. I would feel a euphoric sense of achievement to get to the end of the day and hardly eaten anything and that spurs you on to the next day however terrible you are feeling. And it becomes an all-consuming way to live. I guess as I was exercising so hard as well I inevitably became ill and had kidney stones. As well as restricting food I started making myself sick by drinking salt water and taking large quantities of laxatives. Then I started binge eating. This unhealthy cycle of destructive eating plagued me for years. I would starve myself for months, and then use laxatives for months, then binge for months then make myself sick. There was no particular pattern in my mind. I just used a jumble of these behaviours. I guess I fluctuated the method but my aim was clear. I knew I was causing myself pain, compromising my health and dying a slow death. I detested myself and I was going to pay big time. I became more and more depressed and people



The conflict

Fragility



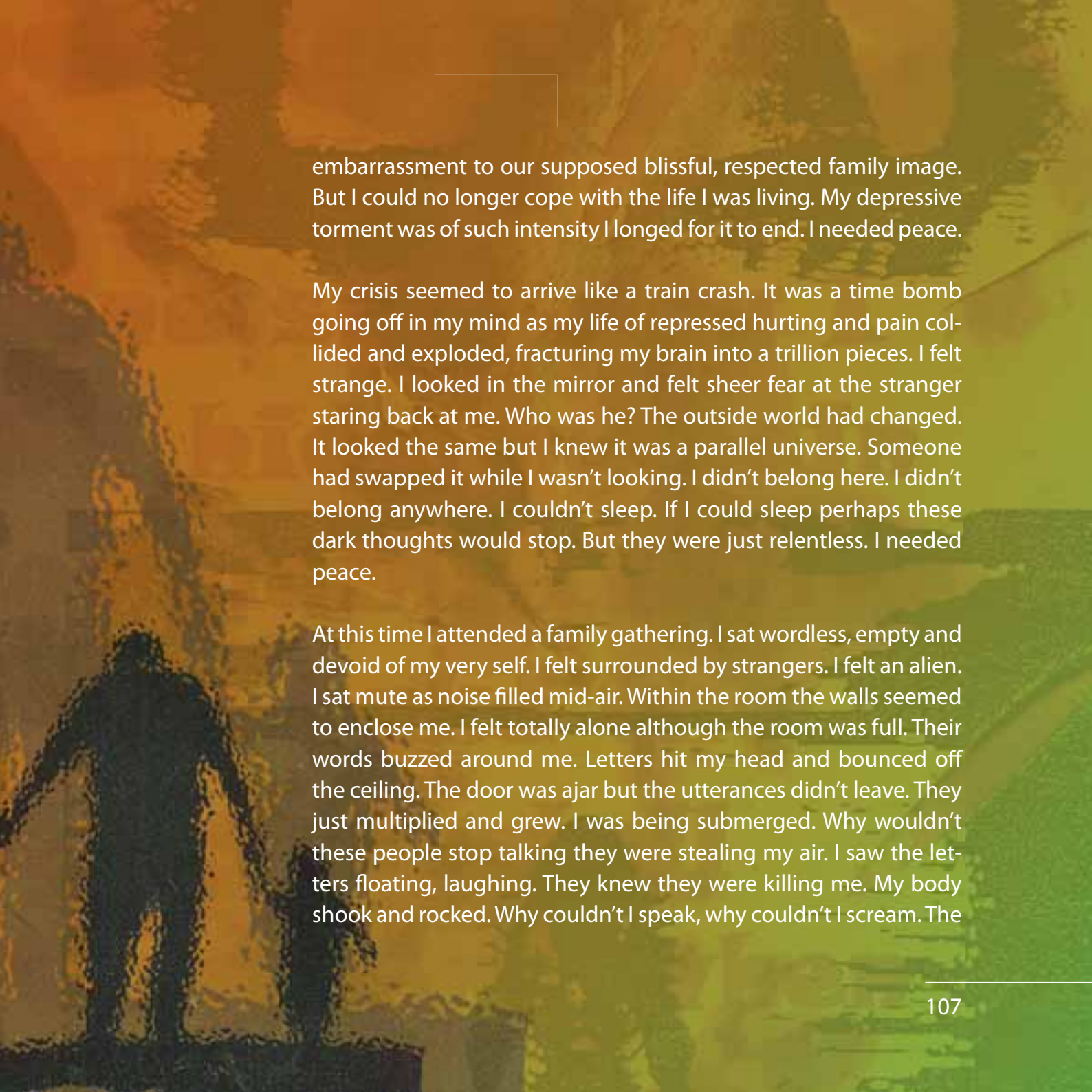


started to notice. But I didn't listen. I just shut myself off, isolating myself from friends and became a phobic recluse.

In my twenties my moods seemed to range spectacularly from depths of despair to being elevated and these changeable moods influenced my eating into more sporadic periods of destructive eating but also periods which were not as extreme. However, I started using other forms of self-harm and self-abuse. I have been enormously cruel and violent to myself. It is so much easier to endure physical pain than confront your psychological pain. My self-abusive actions didn't improve until I received therapy and I learnt to be kinder to myself. But to this day I still have a poor relationship with food.

A Scrapyard of Absurdity

Within the month of February 2008 my life changed. I had struggled for a long time. I had struggled all my life. Now aged thirty-seven the actor's mask had slipped and collapsed, shattering into a myriad of pieces. I had needed to reach out for help regarding my mental angst and erratic fluctuations in mood twenty years ago. But I couldn't ask for help, not me. No one could be allowed to know how I was feeling, what I was thinking. What would people say and think. I would let everyone down and bring shame and



embarrassment to our supposed blissful, respected family image. But I could no longer cope with the life I was living. My depressive torment was of such intensity I longed for it to end. I needed peace.

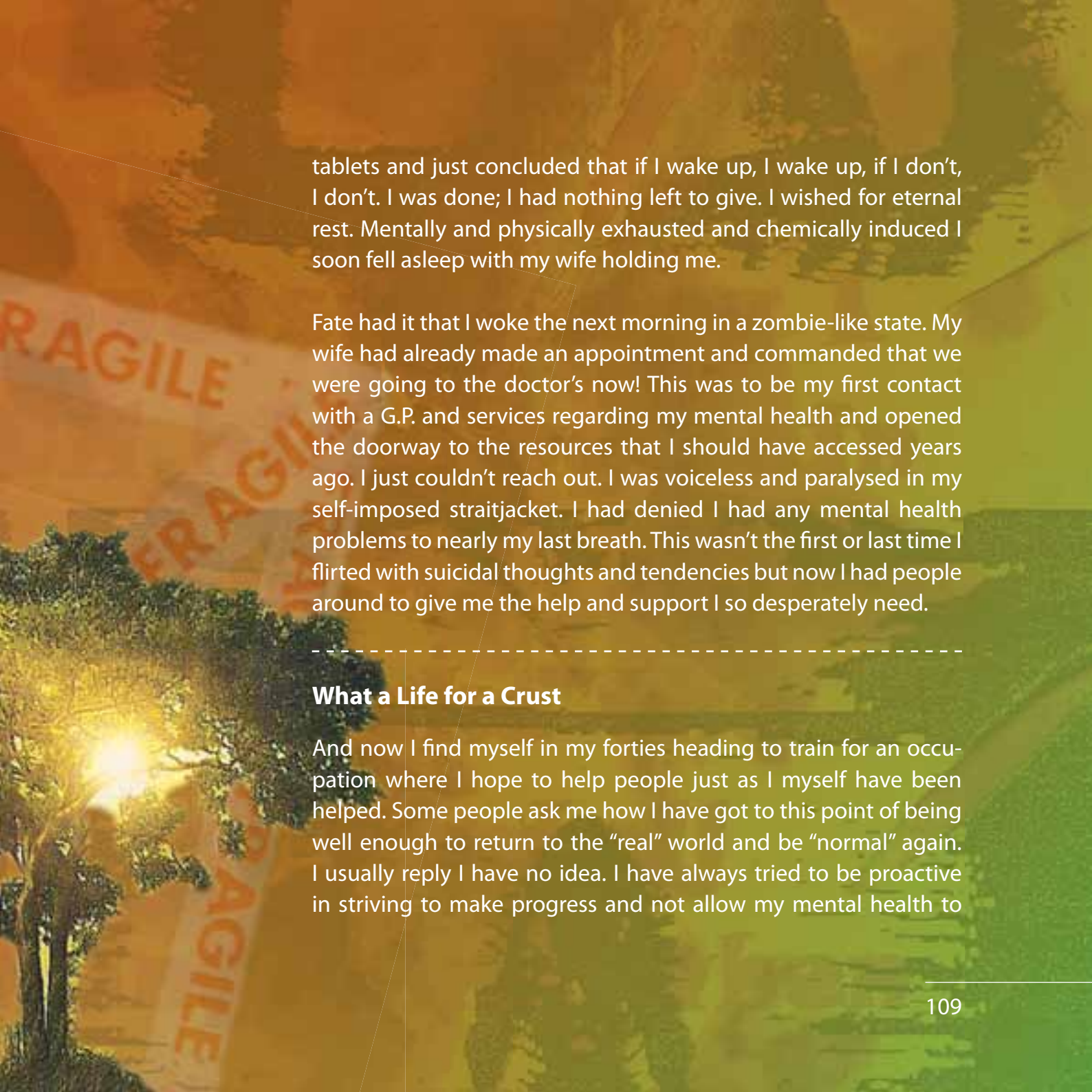
My crisis seemed to arrive like a train crash. It was a time bomb going off in my mind as my life of repressed hurting and pain collided and exploded, fracturing my brain into a trillion pieces. I felt strange. I looked in the mirror and felt sheer fear at the stranger staring back at me. Who was he? The outside world had changed. It looked the same but I knew it was a parallel universe. Someone had swapped it while I wasn't looking. I didn't belong here. I didn't belong anywhere. I couldn't sleep. If I could sleep perhaps these dark thoughts would stop. But they were just relentless. I needed peace.

At this time I attended a family gathering. I sat wordless, empty and devoid of my very self. I felt surrounded by strangers. I felt an alien. I sat mute as noise filled mid-air. Within the room the walls seemed to enclose me. I felt totally alone although the room was full. Their words buzzed around me. Letters hit my head and bounced off the ceiling. The door was ajar but the utterances didn't leave. They just multiplied and grew. I was being submerged. Why wouldn't these people stop talking they were stealing my air. I saw the letters floating, laughing. They knew they were killing me. My body shook and rocked. Why couldn't I speak, why couldn't I scream. The

intense vice like grip in my head terrified me. I panicked and ran from the room as if it were on fire. I needed to escape.

I walked rapidly, where I didn't know or care. I found myself miles later standing on a bridge looking down at the brown, murky water. I needed to escape this life. I needed peace. I just longed for rest from this life of suffering. I needed to die. I stood on the bridge and just stared transfixed at the flowing water. I cried so hard my body shuddered but I just felt numb. Nothing mattered anymore. No-one mattered. My head spun like a spinning-top one minute, and then was empty of all thoughts the next. There was no single clear thought like jump or fall, just a mismatch of undefinable torment. I don't know how long I stood there, it felt like hours. Suddenly, I concluded that the river looked too shallow and the fall may not kill me so I must go home and take an overdose of tablets instead.

I don't know how I got home but remember being in the kitchen and smashing a glass. I used a shard to cut wildly at my arms. I deserved the pain, I deserved to die. I swallowed a handful of tablets and sat down. My heart was beating to burst. My wife rushed in after vainly searching for me. She found the kitchen and front room adorned with blood like something from a murder scene and me in turmoil. We both cried buckets. I don't think my wife knew what to do. I think she was lost in an absolute shock at my state. She attended to my wounded arms. I said nothing about the



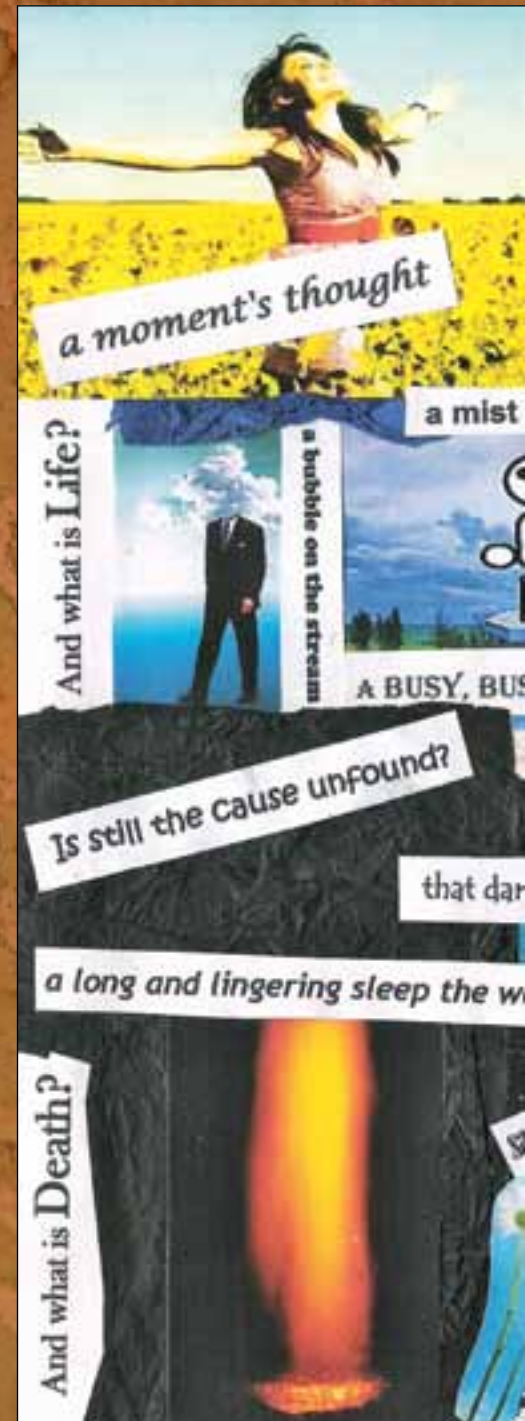
tablets and just concluded that if I wake up, I wake up, if I don't, I don't. I was done; I had nothing left to give. I wished for eternal rest. Mentally and physically exhausted and chemically induced I soon fell asleep with my wife holding me.

Fate had it that I woke the next morning in a zombie-like state. My wife had already made an appointment and commanded that we were going to the doctor's now! This was to be my first contact with a G.P. and services regarding my mental health and opened the doorway to the resources that I should have accessed years ago. I just couldn't reach out. I was voiceless and paralysed in my self-imposed straitjacket. I had denied I had any mental health problems to nearly my last breath. This wasn't the first or last time I flirted with suicidal thoughts and tendencies but now I had people around to give me the help and support I so desperately need.

What a Life for a Crust

And now I find myself in my forties heading to train for an occupation where I hope to help people just as I myself have been helped. Some people ask me how I have got to this point of being well enough to return to the "real" world and be "normal" again. I usually reply I have no idea. I have always tried to be proactive in striving to make progress and not allow my mental health to

dictate my life. Often my enthusiasm has been chaotic but my support network has always been there to guide me and listen. Some very special people in their professional capacity, to use a boxing analogy, have rescued me when I have been knocked down and nearly counted out, have made me hang on in there when I was running on empty, have patched me up between rounds and sent me back out refreshed for the next battle and they have backed me and been my loudest supporters when I have come out fighting. My corner has the best people in it. A scaffolding of strength whose selfless care has inspired me and softly nudged me over that line of recovery. Individuals, without whom, I would not be here to tell this story. It would have been easier to stay behind that line, safe. But hiding there has kept me stuck for too long. I take the spirit and wisdom of these wonderful people with me down my chosen career path. I have encountered poor treatment along the way, of course I have, but there are people in the system that care. I still struggle to cope. Sometimes I find myself lost in no-man's land but these times are becoming less frequent and I now manage these times better and I ask for help long before I reach Armageddon. At times I question whether I'm well or ill, depressed, frenzied or normal, happy, sad or indifferent or if I'm mad or sane. But I always conclude the storms will pass and the sun will shine again if I just wait it out. I am not untroubled by life, every one of us carry scars and face difficulties in one form or another, but now I travel lighter in life and try to keep moving forward and enjoy each step.





An hour-glass on the run



retreating from the morning sun



STLING, STILL-REPEATED DREAM



k mysterious name of horrid sound



early crave



ve heaven and the grave.



And what is Hope?

The puffing gale of morn



which stings more keenly.

its charms divests the dewy lawn

a cobweb, hiding disappointment's thorn



'tis but a trial all must undergo



Until he's called to claim it in the skies.

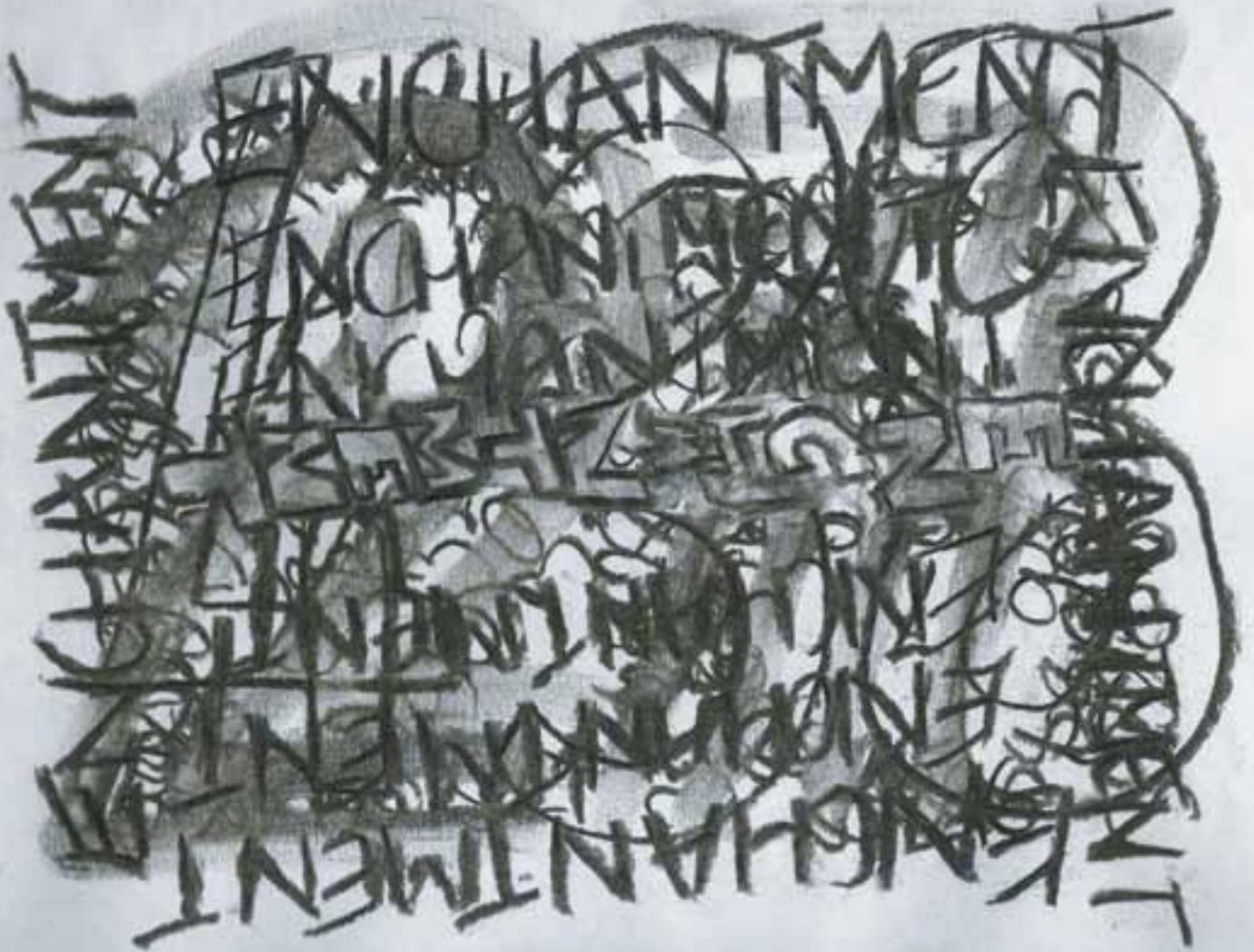
Then what is Life?

When stripped of its disguise

to teach unthankful mortals



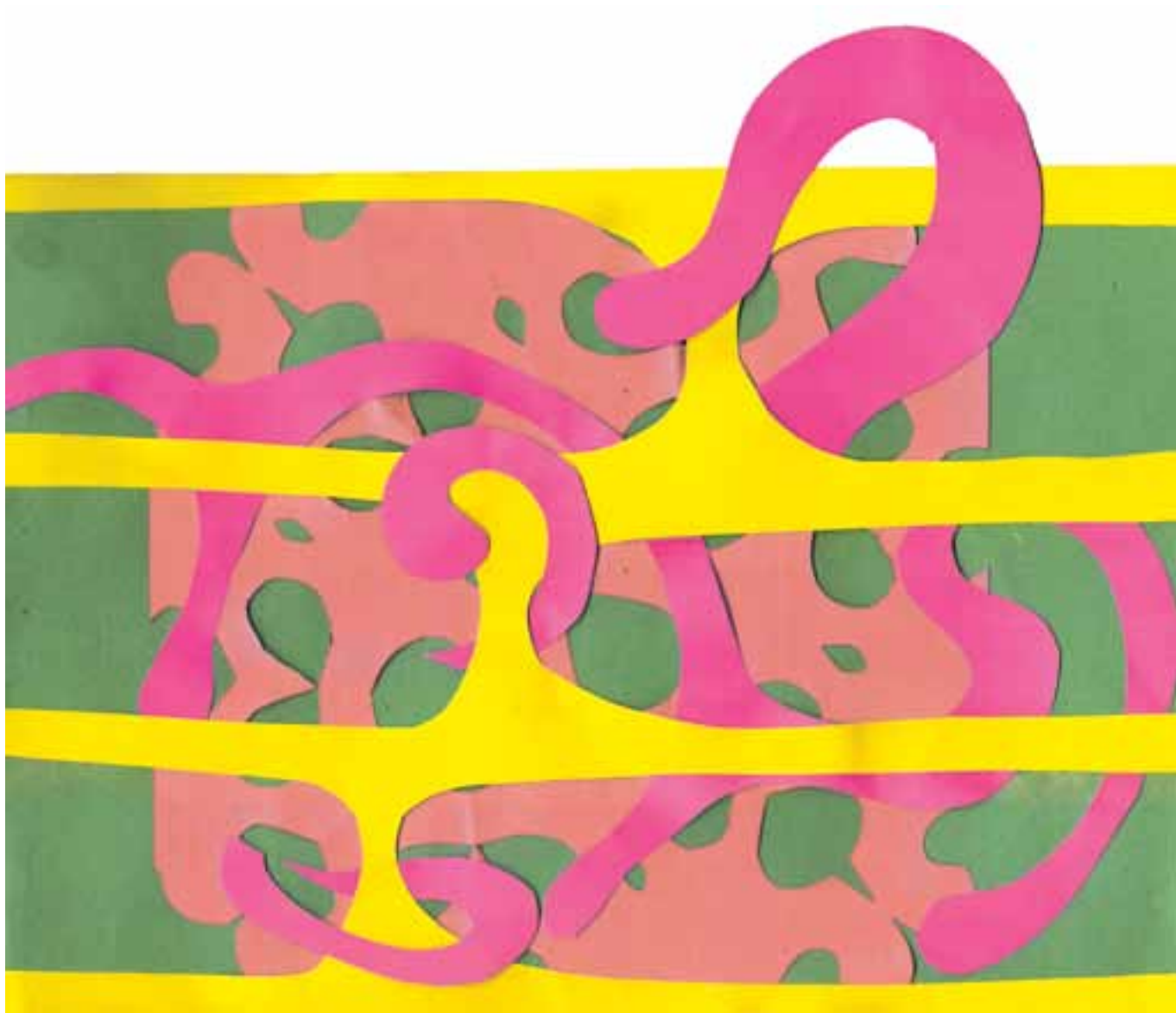
Anna Jenvey



Enchantment by Anna Jenvey







Let me out by Anna Jenvey

Anonymous

I was born in Montgomery, a small town on the border line between Wales and England.

I went to Montgomery Primary School and then was educated in Welshpool High School where I did reasonably well. I got physics O level, computer studies O level and Maths CSE grade 2 and various other qualifications, which I didn't favour as much.

I had my first motorcycle when I was in the high school which was a BSA Bantam D 14/4-175cc with 4 speed gearbox, which I used on the field to get prior experience before going on the road.

When I was able to go on the road with a moped, I had a Suzuki AP50 road bike and after other bikes.

At 16 years old I had an apprenticeship with M.A.N.W.E.B.

At 17 years old I had a Suzuki GT 200 EN X5 which is a 200cc motorcycle, which I passed my test on.

Then I went to college in Newtown, where I studied Electrical Installation City and Guilds PT 1. I then went to Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology, where I studied Electrical Installation PT 2 & 3.

In 1985 I achieved an award for getting 2 distinctions and 1 credit – which was a £10 book voucher, which I received at a ceremony at the college.

Then I studied a BTEC Electronic Engineering Level 2 at Shrewsbury College and then furthermore I went to Wrexham College PLAS COCH, which is now the university of Glyndwr, I achieved 4 merits.

I then studied a HNC in electrical engineering, which was hard academically. I struggled with it and I didn't pass.

I also passed my apprenticeship as an electrician which was 4 years with M.A.N.W.E.B.

When I worked as an electrician I did first fix, second fix, re-wires, storage heaters, showers and industrial work.

In 1989 after doing all these courses and work I had the start of a mental breakdown, I had to go see a psychiatrist – too much work and not enough socialising.

I went into hospital in 1990 for 4 weeks and in 1991 June 26th, I was made redundant prior to this they put me on light duties in Oswestry instead of Newtown, where I worked.

I don't think the management knew what they were doing with me; I was put on sanding down a big container and painting it and taking electrical items for the electricians at various sites.

In 1992 I was admitted to hospital again for 3 weeks.

In 1994 after this I returned to do an RSA Diploma in I.T. which took me 6 months to complete.

In 1996 I did supplementary electronics course for an electrician in Shrewsbury College and in 1997 I did the 16th edition of the Wiring Regs for an electrician.

I must talk about some of the bikes I had they were Kawaski GP2 100RX, 2XR1100, 22R600 and a Yamaha ThunderCat Y2F600 and Honda FireBlade 900RR and a Suzuki RF 900R.

In 1998 I gave up all the bikes. I couldn't afford it financially to run both a car and bike. I really do miss the bikes and whenever I see a bike going past I look.

In 2005 I did a PAT Testing course in Telford where I did a 1 hour exam here and it was about 10 sessions of 3 hours per week, which I passed.

I also did my adult literacy level 1 & 2, which I did because I didn't do communication studies in the course BTEC ONC Electrical Engineering, so I felt I needed to do it. I obtained both levels 1 and 2.

I have worked voluntary because of my health at Phoenix Furniture charity at Newtown, which involved cleaning furniture, lifting furniture, house clearances, PAT Testing electrical items and liaison with customers.

I also worked for Sue Ryder Charity Shop in Welshpool, where I built new goods, put out bric a brac on shelves, steaming clothes and liaison with customers.

I currently do voluntary work for the happy times club at the Church House in Welshpool. It involves putting out tables and chairs for the elderly club and then putting them back when they had finished with them. I can manage this as there's no bullying with it, its every Thursday expect the 3rd Thursday in the Month.

Back to the Hospital

The hospital was a Victorian hospital, the rooms were gloomy and drab and the ward was very run down and there was bars on the windows like a prison and you were locked up. Not a very nice atmosphere and environment by far. Now-a-days the hospitals are very modern with separate dormitories and lots of modern things.

The 2 times I went into hospital it was voluntary, I didn't get sectioned at all, I couldn't sleep at home so the psychiatrist put me in Shelton hospital.

I am beginning to see the light. I am feeling better these days with things, and its quite comforting to smile at people especially the social interaction.

I am more able to talk to strangers and people I wouldn't have spoken to perhaps before. When its traumatic and depressing you don't feel or you haven't the energy to talk to people, everything is a big effort.

My illness is anxiety/depression. I suffer more anxiety than depression though.

For therapy I had various Community Psychiatric Nurses where I had to go in several times a week it is a big burden the illness.

I also work for the district nurses – leg club. When I work for the leg club I get a reasonable amount of satisfaction but I would like more of a challenge.

I also help out at the Outreach. I get milk or any items they require, put out tables and chairs and fetch things for people.

When I think back it's the stigma of the hospital which seemed to stick out – if only I could have gone to a halfway house or had help at home it would have been easier.

I also take medication for my illness for anxiety and depression.

I don't think I hear voices but I get terrible paranoia about the things people may be saying, unfortunately my parents are no longer with me – around to see how I am doing.

My main hobbies are motorcycles, swimming, pool, snooker, walking and music.

I quite like playing pool I like the game itself. I also walk several miles each day and when I'm out with people I try and talk to people as much as possible about problems or feelings.

Now I just see the physiatrist every 3-4 months. Also the other was two counsellors at Ponthafren and one specialist abuse counsellor at Aberystwyth. The counsellors and CPN's are more therapists. Recently I have found being with people which I know that have mental health problems nice to be with as I have something in common but I am beginning to want to socialise with people without mental health issues, you can get in a rut with the same sort of people.

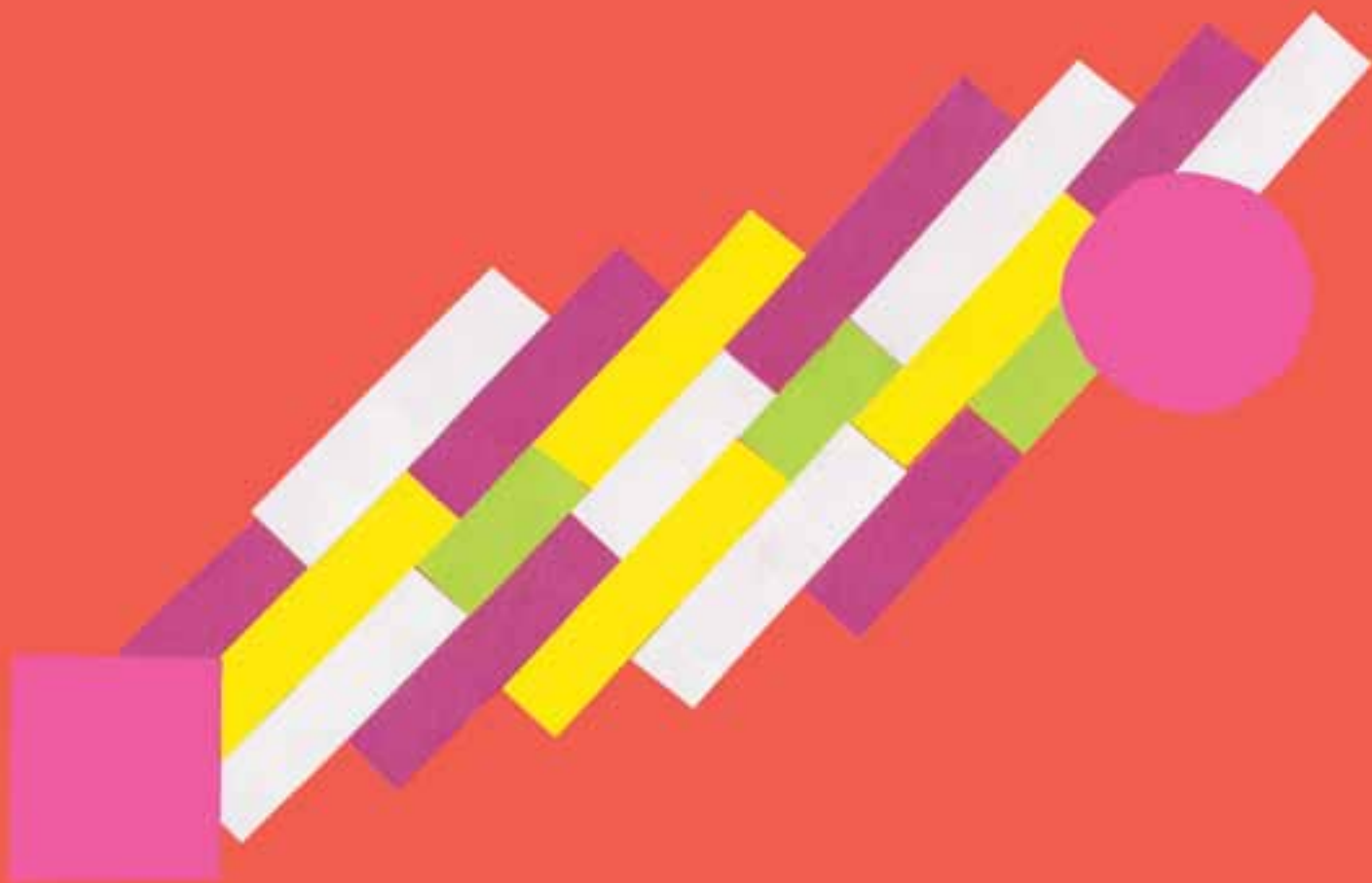
When I look back on my illness I was a fool to do what I did to achieve what I did, all the qualifications and work experience. When you have a mental health illness like I had it was extremely difficult to keep going with the pressure of it without showing any signs of distress.

I am hoping to do an electronics course in September 2013, it is different to what I did and I haven't studied for a long time one day a week.

Yes! It kind of highlights all of the things I've been through and everything it kind of puts it into perspective. Basically I think it's quite important to me to be able to share it as you're on the road to recovery you begin to think where you're at and what you've done and everything and I kind of think it is as I've said before, you move onto the next step.

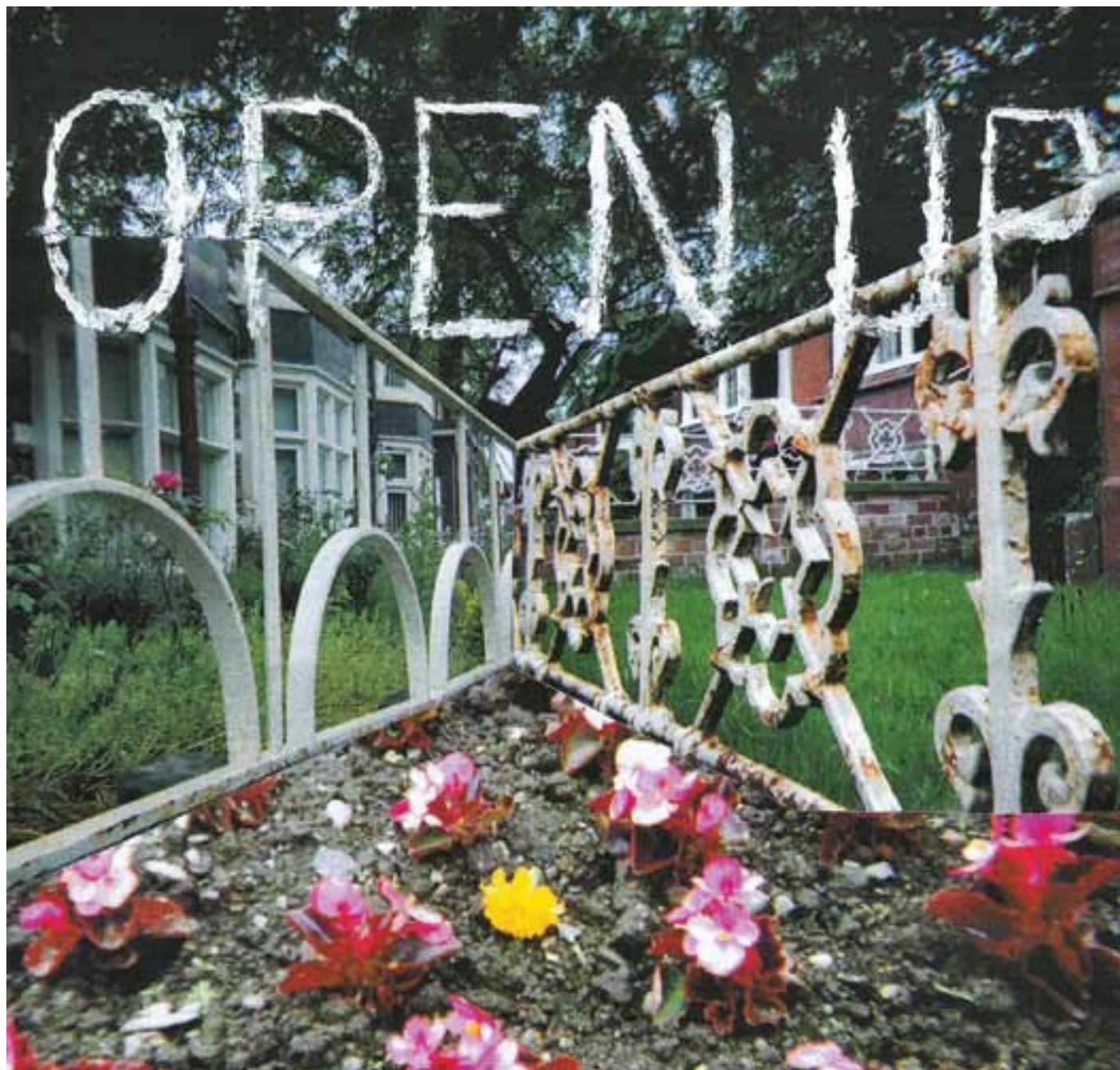
I have also not to forget to mention I had a lot of support from the DIY Futures which have supported me whilst I've been at the outreach at Ponthafren. They have helped me with courses and any work related ideas – I do feel that projects like this should continue as there is only so much funding they can get for these projects, the government must realise the importance of such projects and be able to continue them.

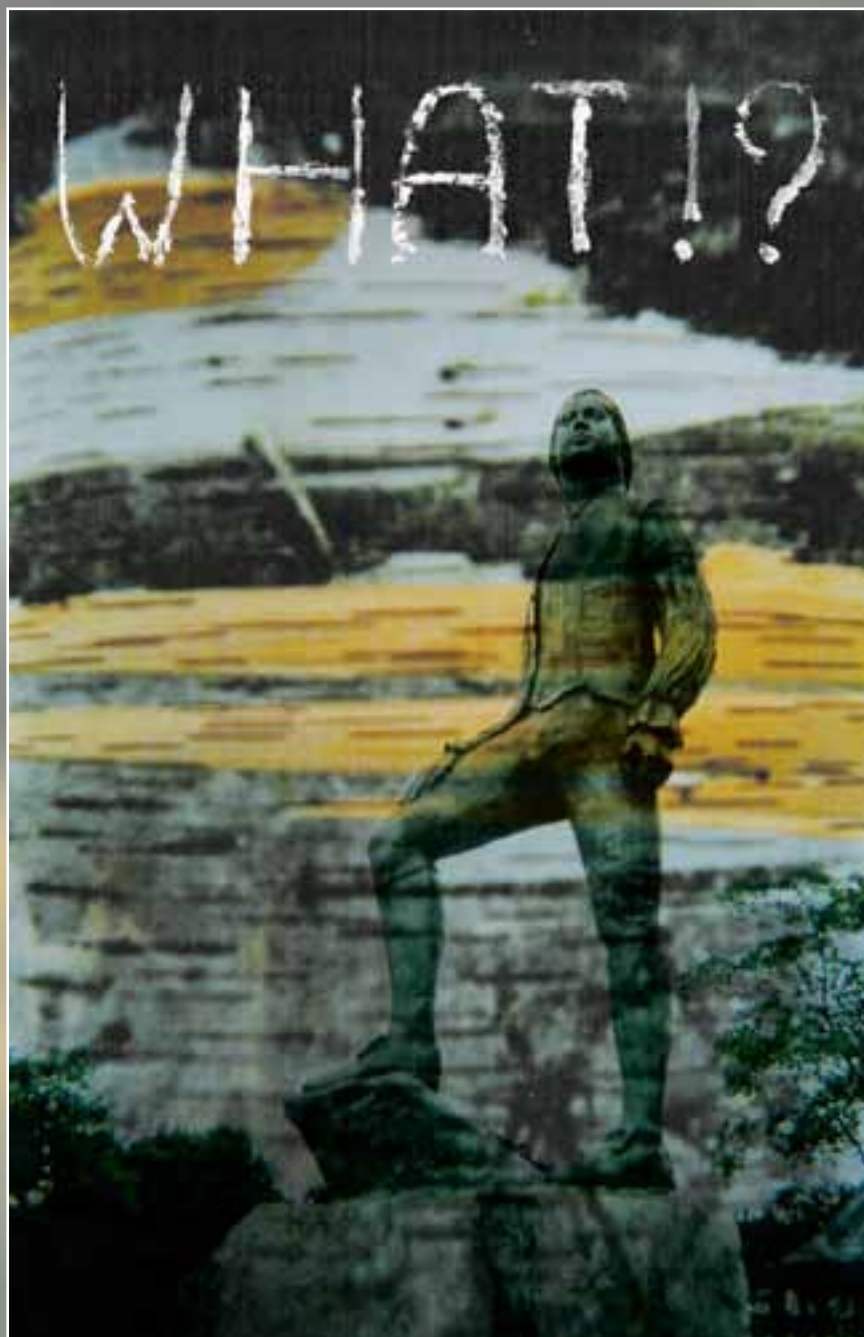
jam



FIELDS







Anonymous

When I was young, it was the time when the people used to go out for dinners and play dominoes. And we had a sitting room and he was the headmaster's son, and I really can't remember the ages that we were, but we were three girls, about eight, nine and ten.

Previous times that he'd been there, he'd said to me, "Oh come and show me where so and so is", come and show me where something or other was, and then this one night I went down and it was completely different. All I can remember is the toy cupboard behind me and the print of the wall paper, on the wall in front of me and this couch. But I don't know, after that, my parents said, "did you have to go downstairs" and he never did come again. But I've remembered his name.

So, childhood went on then and it was after my Father died. My Uncle, my Mother's brother had a green van, he'd said about going to my Nanny and Granddad and he stopped on the way back and... but over recent years, my Mother never believed it. She's dead now, but she never did believe it. In fact, her and my sister have said that they couldn't see how it could have happened. Then the third time was when I was working, and someone we all knew and who was a police man, obviously isn't now, but he's still a councillor, came in and he'd had his arm bandaged but he was covered in blood, all on his arm and that. I can even tell you what clothes I was wearing. And

then, he attempted to rape me and what was attempted rape, he didn't succeed. It went to court, but there was insufficient evidence.

I'll never forget the questioning in court. And then, that was it. I mean, rightly or wrongly, I didn't think about it or I didn't think I thought about it, but I got no respect for my body after. Mother was on about the lads I went out with, and this, that and the other, but I just didn't, I didn't have any respect. And it was, you thought that things like that happened because you wanted somebody's arms around you anywhere.

You wanted to be thought of, you know, you wanted somebody's arms around you so you just didn't think anything of it. That was the way to be loved, really I suppose.

So that set my teenage years. Really, I'd go out with all and sundry, drinking a lot. Even when I got married at the age of 19, I was horrendous. My husband really, really had to, you know, sort of, because I was always out. I mean, he's never, he never went out with anybody else at all.

Three times, I've upset the marriage and three times we've got back together again. But now, it took me years, it took me absolutely years really, I mean, I think this is why... I worked, I worked with all men, all the time, I've always worked with men. I've worked with

two big organisations where it's mostly men. And it's just been a case that you'd got to, I've worked really, really hard to prove, I don't know, to prove to them or to prove to myself that I was capable of doing things, capable of...

I worked all hours and I used to come home really tired and even when my son was in university, I was working full time there and I did every other weekend at the nursing home as well. I did, I really did and I've worked very hard.

But it's taken me many years to get respect for myself. Many, many years. And I suppose that, with the depression that I've had, I didn't really know I'd got depression until I was with the one company.

And then we never got to the root of the depression. There didn't seem to be any counselling, it was just "oh, you've got depression". And, that was it. It was only since we changed Doctors and I can always remember when I worked, going in to...we had to keep up with all these courses and it was about recognising depression in other people. And I was sitting there and they'd got the white board and they were picking up on things and I thought, well, that's me and that's me and I had to get up and went out crying. And then somebody had a talk with me and then every now and then, the welfare officer would take me to the side and say, "people have said you're looking really tired, are you sure you're alright". "I'm fine".

“Well, I’d like a word with you”. Once you’d gone into his office, you knew what had happened, you’d breakdown and you’d have to go back out, after being crying. You’d have to go out. Because, I’d put my makeup on every day and that was my masque.

There was still the guilt and everything, I still feel the guilt, that... when anything goes wrong and...I still think, it’s me. I mean, I still do get depressed, but not nearly as bad as I used to. And sometimes, I feel that I don’t want to go anywhere, I’d rather stop at home. But I make the effort.

I was getting more and more depressed and then, the Doctors really pulled their fingers out and then I started having Jenny, who was a social worker. She was very, very good. I think I had her for four or five years.

Well, if I was young today I wouldn’t be any madder than all the other kids today, but it was then, it was frowned upon, you know. And you just didn’t do it then. I mean, I’d walk in the park on my own, not blink an eyelid and stuff like that. From sort of 13 onwards, I did find it difficult, really, really difficult, I think they probably found me really difficult as well.


I think as you get older, you respect things more, but I just wish, how I wish I could have turned the clock back and done my start

at my teenage years again. Not to do them now, but to have them altered. From then to now.

Sometimes, I tell myself off. People used to say to me, you've built a wall around yourself and we've taken ages to chip it down and then you've gone and built it up again. And that's what you tend to do, isn't it.

A lot of the teenage years, you know, you can't...I can remember back, but all of the memories are bad ones. Really bad ones. The one, the attempted rape, I'd been to the Town Hall and the remembrance service, three or four years ago, and he was there. And he walked out of there when he saw me. I didn't. He went, he's a councillor now. But he couldn't...in fact, that made me feel quite good, that he was the one that walked out. Because I looked straight at him, he was the one that couldn't...he walked straight out.

He wasn't convicted. He got away with it, he couldn't be a councillor if he'd been convicted. But not a nice man at all, very big, very big man. And I can remember going to the Doctor's, and I was reversing the car and this voice said...and I knew it straight away and I just froze, I couldn't do anything, and I just drove off. And then I came back, I couldn't stay there, I just couldn't, you know. Because it really upset me, you know, to see him then.



So, then talking to Jenny, that is when it came out about going to the Stories Meetings and the meetings started then and, it did bring it all home to me. Until I actually admitted to somebody what I'd done and what had happened to me, and then you suddenly realise, just how, that you aren't the only one that it's happened to and it isn't unusual to lose respect for yourself or your body or whatever. And it does affect your marriage, really.

I think it's important, for anyone that's in the same position that they know that there is somebody to talk to, that you're not on your own, by any means. Even if it's difficult for the first few times and my God, I cried for every meeting that I went to the first few times. But you'll find that it does really help. I mean, I still have to take medication now, but at the same time, I know that there is somebody, that there is somebody who can be there. I don't know what I'd have done if Jenny hadn't come out and I hadn't gotten involved with things. I really don't know what I'd have done.

Anonymous

despair

might not be
ect, but at
you're real

labelled

despair

You might not be
perfect, but at
least you're real



coaster roll

Transform

hope

BLEND IN

and

facts

memories

THERE WILL BE
NO MIRACLES
HERE

Rhydian Parry

I guess I'll start about 12 years ago, when I was 16 years of age. I experienced depression for the first time after much turmoil in my life. I had drunk a lot and taken drugs to try and escape. By the time I turned 17 in 2002 I thought I had got past most of issues from the previous year, I didn't realize how those issues had really affected me. I then experienced a much more severe bout of depression that summer. I remember months of vacantly lying on the sofa, a huge pit in my stomach gnawing away at me. I was taken to a child psychiatrist at Brecon hospital, who only took 20 minutes to send me away with a hefty prescription for Prozac.

My Diagnosis is one of Bi Polar or Manic Depression and giving someone anti-depressants with that diagnosis isn't always the best idea, in my case it made me high and then psychotic very quickly. I was really, really ill, deep in psychosis. I was running everywhere constantly feeling like I was coming up off some kind of wonder drug. I found myself in North Wales, Glasgow and parts of England with no idea what I was doing there. After a very disruptive few days I was taken back to the same Doctor. She decided to section me, I was only 17 and didn't really know being sectioned was. I just knew I had to go to hospital. Through fear and the general surge of the high, I absconded from the Doctor and my family. I was eventually taken in with help of the police late one September evening. When I got on to the ward I was so volatile that I think I pissed off every single patient in 10 minutes. I was doing the same to the

staff who ordered me to bed. I was in no mood to sleep and as soon I refused that order, kicking off a bit in the process, big burly nurses who looked more like nightclub bouncers surrounded me along with the other staff. I lashed out at the nearest one to me and punched him as hard as I could. I was instantly thrown to the floor in the middle of the corridor and injected in my backside. I was thrown into the 'white room' (basically the padded cell without the padding) where I almost passed out. Somehow I came to again, I got the Hospital blanket and tore it to pieces. The nurses came in and injected me again.

I think I came round properly a few days later, although I still don't know exactly how long I was out for. Everything hit me at once when I realized where I was and what had happened to me. I only spoke with one or two patients on the ward, the nearest person to me in age was in his mid 30's. I didn't talk to the nurses if I could help it, I just kept my head down and tried to get to the end of my section. I was threatened with another if I refused to stay voluntarily when it ended, so I agreed to stay. I was very low for most of my first admission to Bronllys. I had successfully escaped and made it all the way to Brecon once. I got to see my friends and had a half day away from my hell. The thing that helped the most was merely knowing that I could escape if I wanted or needed to. It settled me down somewhat and by mid December I was beginning to turn the corner.

I was discharged in January but I was not in a good place. The medication I was on at the time was a big dose of Depokote and another of Olanzapine the latter being quite a horrible anti-psychotic. I had gone into hospital in peak physical condition playing football and rugby to a relatively high standard. I had lost some weight, down to around 9st when I left hospital. I was over 18 stone by March and kept going up. At the beginning of the summer of 2003 I was in a completely different world from the one of a year before.

I was also in a completely different social circle. Most of my school friends didn't want to know me after what had happened. If they spoke to me at all it was mostly to openly mock me in conversation, as if I was no longer able to understand them. The group of friends that I did have at the time, although loyal, were not creating a very healthy environment for me. I was drinking heavily, around 3 or litres of cider most days and taking drugs on occasion. They were very dark times, I couldn't get used to the new me, just a shadow of who I was or could have been.

I was back in Hospital halfway through October until the end of November. I know that my lifestyle at the time didn't help. The second time around was so different from the first. Not only did I know what to expect, I knew the staff and the doctors, I knew how to get around the system and make sure I had leave and low levels of observations. There were also a few people closer to my age

there, I was a lot more open with everyone and the other patients really helped me out. They showed me that being in hospital and having a serious mental illness wasn't the be all and end all and although the illness defined who I was at that point it didn't really matter. It was a whole shift in attitude, which made the general experience of being on the ward so much easier. I was out a bit quicker because of it.

For the first couple of weeks I was doing okay, but I was still drinking a lot, and within two weeks of the New Year I was back in hospital, this time for about 3 weeks. It was hard to be back there so soon but I gradually starting making real progress in the months after leaving. There was plenty of small progress being made in baby steps along with a change in anti-psychotic but when I look back one of the most significant changes was having a new group of very good friends that I was able to fully open up to.

Not long after that I got a new CPN, the previous one seemed content to just go along with things, containing me. I was on an enhanced care plan and it was hard to change or lower my medication because of it. My new CPN was much more focused on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and it started quite small with her, like writing a simple diary every week. It was a gentle build up to being more productive then I was put in touch with The Loft (a mental health resource/contact centre) in Brecon. I initially volunteered at a coffee shop running twice a week on the grounds of

Bronllys Hospital. It made a big difference to me in many areas and was extremely rewarding.

I also started an Access to Higher Education course at Coleg Powys. I found it to be quite easy despite a while out of education and continued my volunteering.

After a few months in college I met a girl and we hit it off in a way I didn't think was possible for me at the time. It was another massive boost as I hadn't come close to having a relationship since my initial episode. It went well for 8 months then in September 2007 it ended quite suddenly in the same week that my dog died. I moved back home briefly before moving into my own flat in March 2008.

My Mum got ill around the same time and never got better. She had a shadow discovered on her lung after chest x-ray, she had never smoked in her life. She was admitted to a regular ward in Neville Hall and spent 2 days there before going into intensive care and dying in early April from Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma.

I was left shell shocked, but somehow I kept it together. It was hard to know what was grief and what was depression, what was my illness and what was normal for the situation. It became harder to separate one from the other as time went on.

I wasn't doing very well around my Birthday the next spring and with the anniversary of Mum's passing upon me I just kind of lost control.

I ended up in hospital and again, it was different than any other time. I placed so much more value on my life and felt like I had more to lose. It took a while for me to get truly better through various reasons, and after a long summer inside with two separate admissions I was out and recovering the best I could.

I feel like I've gained a lot of experience and knowledge through my experiences in hospital, and it's a bit of a cliché but the shit you go through really does make you stronger.

In 2012 I met my girlfriend, I felt like I wanted to get to know her properly before anything happened. She's awesome and I got lucky. She has changed my life for the better in so many ways. I also started volunteering at The Loft again but in a more serious capacity, I did some training and am still there now, running my own computer gaming group for younger members amongst other things. I also started Volunteering with the Patients Council who go into hospital and act on any issues the patients might have. I have lost many of the friends I made in hospital over the years, and 3 friends (2 very close ones) from my last visit. I think if I can help just one person through my volunteer work the difference is worth making, it's worth putting in all that work to achieve it.

I have also had the opportunity to take part in Powys Stronger in Partnership network meetings along with Mental Health Action Wales meetings as a service user representative. PAVO and the PMHA have been very good in getting my involvement up to the

next stage. It's a bit daunting but I like to talk about my experience and be involved at that level. It has been, along with the other volunteering I do, vital in increasing my self-confidence and self worth. Now I'm thinking of three or four years down the road and what I would like to do as a job or as a career. I'm thinking of all that I could be doing instead if dismissing everything on the basis that 'I can't do that because of who I am'.

So I am doing pretty well at the moment, for all I have been through I wouldn't want to change it. I like who I am because of it all.

By Rhydian Parry

How this book was produced

This book is part of a lottery funded project which ran across Powys for over four years. This project, DIY Futures was firmly based on a set of active values:

- Active participation in the processes that affect people's lives and communities.
- Equal citizenship without stigma and discrimination.
- Change through learning, sharing experiences, increasing knowledge, developing skills and positive risk taking.
- People taking responsibility for their own life journey.
- The necessity for hope and fulfillment.

Much of the work of this project was via one-to-one work with people seeking support to make changes in their lives. Many of the people who sought and received this innovative, flexible support used mainstream mental health services and some did not.

The Stories Project has been part of the final stages of DIY Futures, giving a voice, following the value of active participation. We ran some listening skills training, and we asked if people would be willing to give their story. And they were. We didn't set any limits about what people should talk about, or how long for. We didn't ask any questions, we just listened. People were recorded and their

words transcribed. Then each person, in a variety of ways, chose, or sometimes re-wrote, around 1,500 words to go in the book.

The designer, Johan Ameal, worked with the art group to get a clearer understanding of the project.

DIY Futures was a project of Powys Mental Health Alliance which was managed by PAVO.

The art project was run by Celf o Gwmpas

Powys Mental Health Alliance exists to:

- Give purpose to the many voices of people across Powys who may have reason to use, or rely upon, Powys mental health services in the past, present or future.
- Facilitate meaningful participation by individual people in shaping all aspects of mental health policy and service delivery.
- Provide opportunities for individual people to design, develop, and deliver pioneering and innovative services that support pathways for recovery
- Encourage and enable people to use the learning from their experience to contribute to everyone thinking differently about mental health and mental distress.

<http://www.powysmha.org.uk>



(PAVO) Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations is an interdependent intermediary body whose purpose is to empower and equip the third sector in Powys, enabling it to deliver its aims and objectives effectively, and to represent and facilitate the engagement of the third sector at all levels of the strategic planning process.

www.pavo.org.uk

DIY Futures was supported by the mental health team within PAVO.

You can contact the Mental Health Information Service to find out more about what is going in Powys around mental health, read the blog, contribute to discussions and find information about sources of support if reading this book has raised issues for you.

01686 628300, or 01597 822191
or email pamhinfo@pavo.org.uk
<http://www.powysmentalhealth.org.uk/>

Celf o Gwmpas has a sixteen-year history of creating high quality performing and visual arts projects with disabled and marginalised adults and young people who are often excluded from society, leading to new art work in the communities of Powys.



Cefnogwyd gan
Y Loteri Genedlaethol
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The National Lottery®



The organisation runs an exhibitions programme, commissions artists to lead workshops, produces shows and festivals, organises gallery and theatre visits and promotes and runs an artist in residence programme, exchanges and other networking opportunities locally, nationally and internationally.

This Visual Poetry project was led by Newcastle upon Tyne based artist in residence Sean Burn; a writer, performer and outsider artist with a growing international reputation. Actively involved nationally in disability arts, he was shortlisted for a dadafest disability arts award 2009 and has completed a major residency at the new gallery Walsall in association with dash (Disability Arts Shropshire) where he worked to 'reclaim the languages of lunacy'. www.gobscure.info

Also involved were Jan Butler and Amanda Wells, artists who participate in the Celf o Gwmpas Training and Mentoring Programme, an ambitious and ground breaking project that succeeds in developing artists' professional practice

Celf o Gwmpas
Beaufort Gallery
Temple Street
Llandrindod Wells LD1 5HG

01597 822777
events@celfogwmpas.org
www.celfogwmpas.org

