



Poetry and Prose from Community Rehabilitation

**SECOND
STEP**

PUTTING MENTAL HEALTH FIRST



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Introduction

Second Step's Community Rehabilitation Creative Writing Group met on Wednesday afternoons from April to June 2023.

Eight people attended at least one of the sessions. The group wrote a mixture of stories, poetry and pieces based on experience.

This selection of that writing celebrates the group's work and gives participants something to keep as a reminder and hopefully an inspiration.

How was the group?

"Taking part in the writing group at Second Step has been a blessing for me. It was scary initially being in a room with a group of complete strangers, but I think we all felt similar thoughts and feelings. I really enjoyed hearing what the other members had written (when they felt able to share) and though I felt quite shy about my own efforts the courage to share came from somewhere inside me. It was good getting to know the other members of the group though not long enough to know them well.

The group facilitators were great and very encouraging, but there was never any pressure to write, read or share if you didn't want to. I have really enjoyed the group and now feel encouraged to start doing some regular writing at home. "

Sarah

"When I came to the writing group, I felt a bit anxious about how well I was going to do, but felt better when I actually started writing. I wrote about various topics and this really gave me the chance to think more creatively."

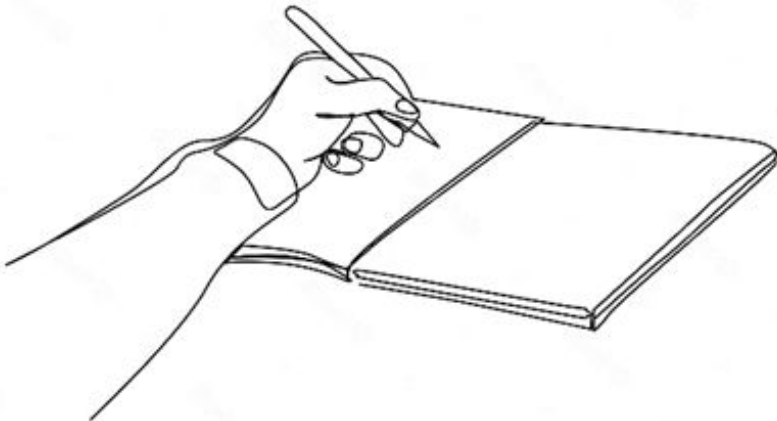
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"I liked the varied nature of the subjects suggested. My favourite was to write about my experiences. During the sessions I felt absorbed and inspired to write. In the future, I would like to write more about my travels and experiences. The time and location were ideal. The facilitators were helpful, helping my confidence. I would like to write a book on local history."

Perry

"The tasks were given with prompts that were helpful to explain the purpose of writing and this made me feel more comfortable to write freely. I feel less daunted approaching writing as a result of the prompts given which were clear."

M



Murderous Situation

Helen shrank back against the sofa, her heart beating frantically. She looked at his battered body lying in the corner, motionless. How had it come to this? She had tried to be reasonable, sympathetic towards him and fearless when he ran amok. She had asked him to go, opened her flat door encouraging him to leave. But no, he point blank refused, his continued presence and random movements casting fear into her. She thought hard and now she was left with his body to dispose of. She took a deep breath and approached him cautiously. Then she scooped him on the newspaper and flushed the big hairy spider down the toilet.

Sarah



Spinach

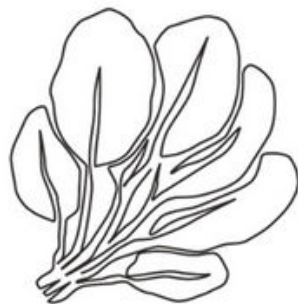
See it, another leafy boring vegetable
tales of Popeye, try to make it likeable
cook it, put it on the table.

Thankfully it's shrunk,

Maybe more digestible

Taste it, it's delicious, more than just a fable

Perry



Innocence

Smiling with innocence,
gazing with pure
intention, child's play
is on the cards,
getting creative with
colour, covered
head to toe, it's
light hearted and
all too natural for
the youngster to
continue their game
of play, go forth
and spread fun
in a world meant
to be explored,
the gymnasium of

a young mind a
area to keep
entertained
on a balance
beam or swing,
creating a space
that is safe
where the flow
of growth and
expansion may
flourish eternally
in a sea so
much like the colour
of your eyes
calming and gentle,
content.

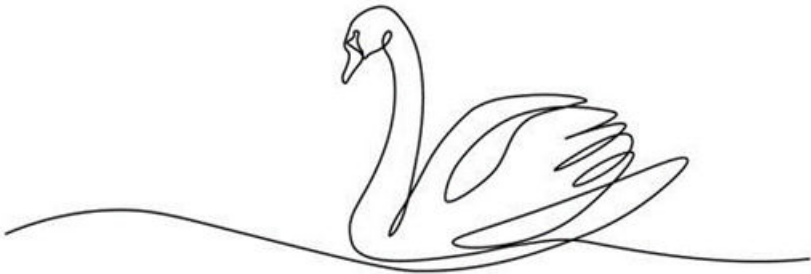
T



A swan on the water

There was a swan on the water at the moat. It was gliding along gracefully. Then around the corner came some ducks. The trees were moving in the wind and at night you could see bats flying around. I had seen the swans flying before and they looked so big in the sky. When they came to land on the water, they skidded with their webbed feet. By the side of the water was a pathway, which leads to some lush green fields. Its is very quiet there. There are some woods also, near to the fields. The woods are nice during the day but scary at night because the bare branches of the trees jagged shapes against the darkness of the sky

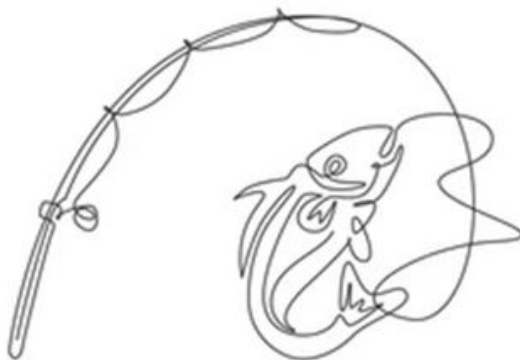
K



Vietnam

When in a boat travelling around islands in Vietnam,
I felt seasick, landlubber that I am
We were given a fishing line with no
bait and told we'd be sure to catch some squid
It's hard to remember if I did
Another large boat came along side
It almost rammed us and someone said they'd seen a rat,
which came for the ride.
They leave a sinking ship, perhaps we were going to sink.
But then the large boat drew back from the brink.
I resumed my fishing, although it was late now the cook had
given me bait.
You could see so many fish,
but catch one, I wish

Perry



Churchill's black dog and Sylvia's dream

A moment, a feeling, a tragic stark scream.
We never shall know their level of pain
And how much was blamed on being insane
Depression is not a feeling one day
It's an agonising state that won't go away
It tears at your heart and casts doubtful notions
What good are these 'treatments' these pills and these potions?
People that matter, those you love and adore
Are thrown out and trashed by that dog at the door
Because that need to escape, that need to be free
Shows you an inviting noose on a bridge or a tree
While a lost little voice cries out mercifully
What bad have I done why now, why me.

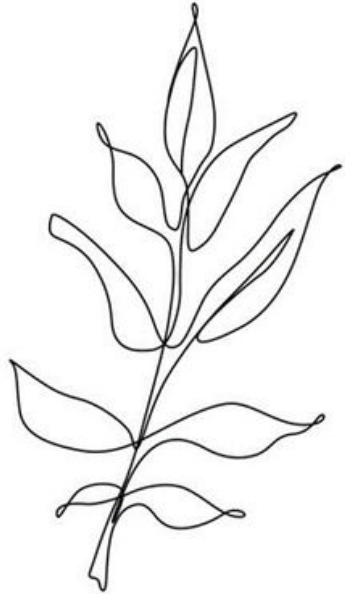
Sarah



Arriving at the fields

I arrive on my bicycle
panting, alien, worn out
arriving at the hills rejuvenates me
this is what I am here for
and I don't want to be disappointed
I draw my breath
and remember what it was all for
I'm energised
my head sits slightly higher on my neck
I feel bliss and calm
nature, there's nothing quite like it
wherever you walk in the land
I'm just glad that I'm here now
on planet earth
and I start to count my blessings
something's gone right
this has worked out as I intended it to
not often but it has
I can hear the birds sing and they seem happy to me
now just to clear my thoughts
and take in the present moment

M



Why is a fox red?

Colour is determined by environment
Darwin said

A caterpillar is green
so it's seldom seen
And can survive until it's been
changed to a butterfly instead



What if a fox was green?
It could hunt without being seen
with the green woods behind
I think you would find
it would blend in from its tail to
its head.

I feed foxes every night
They eat anything, an incredible sight
One is very big, I call him Rambo
He's bigger than any dog that I know
One has only 3 legs, so always comes late
so if I want to see him I have a long wait.



Perry

Jesus was in my room

Jesus was in my room.

And so was God and so was the Devil.

Jesus didn't say anything, but God said that I 'will regret'. I asked him what I would regret and He didn't answer. That is all He would say, over and over again.

The Devil said that I was worth a lot of money in another time zone. I asked him what he meant by 'another time zone' and he didn't reply.

This was all very confusing to me and I wondered where they came from. It was so real, but they weren't really there. Or were they? They were invisible, but don't a lot of us believe the God, the Devil and Jesus are around us, even though we can't see them? I could hear their voices as clear as if I was listening to somebody that is visible, but they were voices in my head and only I could hear them.

K



100 Million Pounds

100 million pounds, that's what they say it cost
And old Lily Reynolds lies cold in her bed

100 million pounds that's what it cost
yet the politicians tell us we must not ask for a rise

100 million pounds
and our cities are full of hungry people

100 million pounds
and the homeless can't get their heads around it

100 million pounds
Shame on you Charles - you could have said NO!

100 million pounds
I wanted none of it - yet we weren't
even asked if our taxes should pay for it.

Sarah



Travels 1984

At 22, having floated from job to job, been a failed musician, worked in a laboratory, as a credit salesman, stocktaker with the master general of the Ordnance Inspectorate, I ended up at Rolls Royce as a purchasing clerk. My claustrophobia was intense, seated at a desk wondering how I got there and some days not getting there. My earlier social life had consisted of hanging around with the musician friends who unlike me were content to down 8 pints of beer and go for a curry.

My home life was traumatic. My younger brother was fast becoming the ladies' man I was not, my father becoming unemployed, exhibiting the first signs of dementia in his late 50's.

My mother tried in vain to be the peacemaker among 3 men with nothing in common, even coming to blows over petty arguments.

Searching for a role and identity, I heard through a friend about a religious teaching Subud. We both became involved in this which originated in the East Indies. We had a 6 month wait before we were allowed to participate with other members in a group gathering called a Latihan This involved the group being in a darkened room, waiting for Subud to enter you. There were wailings from other members. I was able to put myself in a trance like state. From the outset I felt different when I emerged from the Latihan, although my friend was unphased. He said nothing happened to him.

After I seemed to change, I became withdrawn, lost weight, although felt there had been a rebirth inside of me. From then I had the confidence to face situations, where previously I would want the earth to swallow me up.

My family were concerned. My withdrawn nature worried them. I saw my doctor whom I tried to explain how I felt to. He told my parents I had had a nervous breakdown. I was referred to a psychiatrist, who said I would benefit from going to Barrow Gurney Hospital, which I did. The doctor said it's or its like a holiday camp. When the elders of Subud were told I had a nervous breakdown, they said, no it's a spiritual rebirth.

Vietnam

We landed in Hanoi and were surprised it was raining. Not surprising, North Vietnam is not as warm as South and gets more rain around March, when winter begins. I noticed one man in the group lagged behind, walking with a stick. I found later he was the least mobile, yet one of the youngest. We began with our 1st Vietnamese meal, abundant vegetables. I never really liked the food but became used to it.

One man stated from the outset he only ate 1 meal a day, breakfast. And it was strange seeing him survive on 1 meal, apart from the fact he was wasting the large amount of money he spent on the holiday.

The roads of Hanoi were chaos. All young people, there seemed to be few old, travelled on motor scooters. They never stopped at crossings, traffic lights. There were countless 'Tuk Tuk' drivers all competing for

your business, and ride in their vehicles. I even noticed someone with a fridge on the back of a motorcycle.

I was surprised that Vietnam, which is still communist after their defeat of the U.S.A, is so progressive. Everyone seems to be an entrepreneur.

Travels

In the 1980s I went to a workcamp in Gdansk in Poland where I cleaned windows in their university. There I met a Kurdish man from a village in east Turkey, who said he was the first person from there to go to university. I told him when this finished I was going to a work camp in central Turkey, and he invited me to go to his village after it. When I arrived in Kurdistan, on the bus I noticed no-one spoke English, so I wondered what I would do if my friend who was delayed or never turned up. But he arrived in the very next bus, and we travelled to his village. There they had no electricity or running water.

This was the family's mountain summer home. My friend translated for me a comment by one man, Edison, never came here, man reached the moon, but forgot us. They were there to harvest sugar beet and I gave help with it, long, heavy work. One day a group of Turkish soldiers arrived and ask the Kurds who I was. Satisfied I was not some spy, they left.

While I was there my shoes, which were already far from new, wore right out, and my friend, imagining I must be affluent, commented 'You are Scotland man, I think. In my village we don't like the Scotland man'.

I survived my experience, but my skin started to come out in blotches, perhaps through the strange diet. And when I saw a doctor in Syria, he said I had something in my bloodstream which would last 7 years. It did.

And I had a last memory of my visit.

Ironically, when in Vietnam this year, the group I was with's attention was again drawn to my footwear which they claimed was hanging off. The truth is I hadn't had time to buy new shoes. It wasn't the ones from 40 years before, but they did need renewing. A woman from Liverpool insisted she come to the market with me to buy more casual shoes. I did and in our farewell speech, one man said 'And Perry bought some new shoes, or perhaps Perry exchanged his old ones for them.' Strangely, reading a Bob Dylan book, he analysed a song about shoes, and remarked there's been more songs about shoes, than any other item of clothing. Like 'These Boots Are Made For Walking' and 'Walk Around In My Shoes'.

Perry

Community Rehabilitation

Second Step's Community Rehabilitation service supports people living with complex mental health problems to achieve their goals and gain the skills and confidence to live as independently as possible.

Since the service began in 2015, we have supported more than 400 people, reduced inpatient admissions and successfully discharged 70% of clients to their GP - a really positive outcome considering many of the people we work with have been in secondary mental health services for many years.

We work in a partnership between Second Step, Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP) and Missing Link. The specialist clinical leadership is provided by a AWP Psychologist and brings together social, psychological and medical approaches to give individually tailored support from a team of professionals. The team also includes peer recovery navigators who have their own experience of recovery and mental health services.

Find out more at www.second-step.co.uk



