



Back for the third time, New Chapters brings you our 2024 anthology – filled with poems, lyrics, short stories and beyond from the national prison and YOI population. Hidden, but not forgotten.

New Chapters is one of the projects at the National Literacy Trust that specialises in creative writing for pleasure in the criminal justice space.

What the National Literacy Trust does in the New Chapter Anthologies, is give a megaphone to the voiceless. A sense of pride to the fallen. Freedom of expression to those ignored. Wings to caged birds, with clipped wings.

– Jords

# New Chapters

## An Anthology of Creative Writing

20  
24



Change your story

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Design by Olivia Jaques

All enquiries about this anthology should be directed to: [criminaljustice@literacytrust.org.uk](mailto:criminaljustice@literacytrust.org.uk)

This anthology preserves the unique voices of its writers, including slang, dialect and stylistic choices, editing only clear spelling and grammar mistakes. Some pieces contain language, references or themes that may be upsetting but reflect the writers' lived realities rather than endorsing hate or violence. Many works address sensitive topics such as death, homophobia, racism, substance misuse and violence and may not be suitable for children. To protect privacy, all writers are anonymised, with first names included unless full anonymity was requested.

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But most importantly – for every person who has attended our sessions, this is an ode to your existence, your creativity and your story. Tell it, when you can.

## Foreword

by Jords

Creativity knows no bounds. At its best, our imagination is the part of us that is truly free.

It's ironic that I felt my mind becoming freed, as I worked with the National Literacy Trust to conduct creative writing workshops with people in prison. There's a vulnerability in those conversations. There's a knowledge that what you say will be heard, and what you hear will be as honest as it gets.

Freedom is a funny concept. There's an ironic sense of freedom amongst people in prison, knowing that they have had to look their mistakes dead in the eye, with an unflinching gaze. Knowing that they have to take accountability for the decisions they have made, that led them to being incarcerated.

There's a freedom in hitting rock bottom, knowing there's only one direction to travel.

There's a freedom in the knowledge that best things people in prison can do to pass the time, is to either read, or write. You find a lot of the people in prison are spending their time working to achieve things that people outside of prison simply do not have the time,

patience, or focus, to achieve.

At HMP Swaleside I met a young poet, who had written a play. A play that belongs on the world's finest stages. I've been trying to find the time to write a play for about 6 years.

At HMP Elmley, I met a rapper, the self-proclaimed "Big Sexy", who had written about 200 songs on paper. Worthy of his own anthology.

At HMP Aylesbury, we spoke about issues with mental health and masculinity that society is still afraid to acknowledge, let alone heal from.

As a recording artist, every day I find myself having to manoeuvre through a manipulative and dishonest industry, that seems to put every obstacle it possibly can before the art. Before the imagination.

I never had to worry about how to manoeuvre through any conversation in any HMP, honesty and vulnerability led the way.

It has truly been an honour to work with the National Literacy Trust in prisons up and down the country. Through uncertain times, I believe working with the NLT has helped me way more than I have helped the people in prison I have interacted with.

What the National Literacy Trust does in the New Chapters anthologies, is give a megaphone to the voiceless. A sense of pride to the fallen. Freedom of expression to those ignored. Wings to caged birds, with clipped wings.

When you have nothing but time and your imagination to keep you company, it's fascinating to see how far that imagination can take you.

I hope every page takes your mind to places beyond where your hands can reach. Because at its best, our imagination is the last part of us that is truly free.

**Jords**

# Introduction

by Melisa Muhanguzi

New Chapters is one of five criminal justice programmes at the National Literacy Trust, working with both adults and young people in prisons to promote and encourage reading and creative writing for pleasure.

Core education is already provided in prisons, but what New Chapters does is leave the expectations of targets, qualifications and language proficiency at the door and welcome participants as they are with only two requirements – to enjoy themselves and to try something new.

Our efforts are nothing without our incredible guests who we invite to every New Chapters event. With our network of eclectic, exciting and representative writers, we are able to cover a multitude of writing styles, showing our participants that there is certainly more than one way to utilise their talents and not to pigeonhole themselves as society may have. Watching the participants discover their talent in real time is nothing short of a magical experience which we are reminded of every time we run a session.

One of the greatest joys about this role, is engaging

people who have never previously taken an interest in creative writing. Seeing the mood shift in a participant from apprehensive to awakened in every session is a feeling that can only be described as addictive. Equally, it is always a pleasure to see repeat engagement and work with participants who already know that they possess the gift of writing, which we often have. It would be an understatement if I said that the best writers I have ever had the pleasure of working with were actually hidden from the world's general population, as evidenced by this anthology.

In a world full of ever evolving technology, social media and artificial intelligence, it's good to know that the pen is still going strong, especially in a place full of people who have a lot to say that many of us will never hear. You will read things in this anthology that will make you smile, think and cry – but in the words of Robert Frost: “No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader. No surprise in the writer, no surprise in the reader.”

I hope you all enjoy reading this as much as I have.

**Melisa Muhanguzi**  
**Senior Project Manager, New Chapters**

“You can't sit around and wait  
for somebody to say who you are.  
You need to write it and paint it and do it.”

**– Faith Ringgold**

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**AYL**

## Untitled

Life goes on,  
And we need to cling on.  
We're born, we crawl, we walk, we talk,  
Life itself is a long journey and a long walk  
It comes with many struggles and obstacles.  
But is there an obstacle that love cannot handle?  
We fall, we learn, we rise and learn to survive.  
Life is beautiful and worth living  
It's never too late to start changing and trying

## Love

Love. Love conquers all. I love you, I love myself, I love freedom. If we didn't have this thing, this little thing of ours that we all feel to some degree, then our lives would be empty. Love has the power to break chains, awakened spirits, forgive enemies, and transcend hate. But I could not tell you how to live your life. If I could, I would give you one word of advice and that would be it. Love, open your heart to it. Let the wave crash and the tide rise. Let it fill to the brim and overflow. Trust me, because I love you.

**Dominic**

## Hope, Healing, Progression

Who is the creator of hope? Where will I find the draught of healing? Resolve to become the architect of my future and fill the pages with words, Find light in dark places and serenity in silence. It's one foot in front of the other. Soldier on. Inch by inch, step by step, day by day, I am in control. It's my life, and no one can halt my progression.

**Dominic**

## Untitled

I'm feeling betrayed, disrespected and forgotten since I came to prison. Most people I loved never saw my vision. Broken hearts and broken spirits are what I come across on a daily, prison life, injustice... is kinda what made me.

They never heard me, They just pretend like they do.

Hope, healing, reminds me that there is always going to be a second chance, having something to hold onto and to believe in...time heals, hope is like a prayer for the soul, hoping is giving us time to cope.

Feeling better than I felt before. Why? I learned how to understand my situation.

Or is it because time is always a healer?

**Yussuf**

## Untitled

I can't really say how I feel at the moment. Right now I'm just living in the present, going through the phases and waiting on my turn.

There's 8 billion people in the world. Someone out there has got a sadder story than you.

Most people don't even care about your story.

Expressing your emotions and showing how you feel can help take the weight off.

But be careful who you vent your problems to.

Worry about your own happiness. Learn to accept the things you can't control and focus on what you can. Trust me. You'll probably feel better.

## Untitled

Find me one that gives me peace  
Give her everything she needs  
Pack my bags and then we leave  
Till then I'm on the streets  
Still fucking up the scene  
Saw my whole perspective changed,  
they said they see the best in me  
But weren't there when it was peak  
But I'll be there when it peak  
See the difference in me, can't see it in you  
Probably just the same as dukes  
Tryna to blow up for myself  
Cos now I'm sitting in my cell  
I ain't seeing no one else.

**B  
R  
X**

## The Light Will Always Win

Sadness weeps,  
    while loneliness,  
        slumbers in sleep,

To haunt my dreams,  
    as darkness creeps,  
        these hours away,

When all is said and done.  
In mirrors dark refraction,

It matters not,  
    whose devils lie,  
for truth will always win.

For without a single doubt,  
    the light  
        always

WILL GET IN.

**B  
R  
N**

## Untitled

Looking out my bedroom window, I see two beautiful magpies perched on the prison wall, and it got me thinking... what I would do to have wings. Flying high into the sky, being able to leave prison, only stopping for a visit, not knowing what "caged up" feels like, because all they know is freedom. I once had that freedom. When you have it, it's so easy to take it for granted. You start to believe you can do anything. Nothing can take the feeling of being free. Yet one wrong turn, one mistake or one time being in the wrong crowd and you could be sleeping on the blue mat, being locked in from 6:30 till morning. Once you're there, time stops. Everything around you moves slower. One month feels like three, and one year feels like a lifetime. Your days of working, the five minutes of seeing the sunlight and feeling it on your skin you cherish. When you look around and see planes flying to their destination, you wonder to yourself, am I ever going to feel that joy, them people on the plane feel? For some of us, the pain gets too much and the mental health kicks in. This can lead to self-harm, suicidal thoughts or even death. RIP to all the fallen angels. But sadly, this becomes people's peace and just like the birds, they get to be free once again. When you're looking at four walls with only time

on your hands and you're the only one who can fix  
you, what's stopping you from making that change?  
So once you think about doing a crime  
Remember all the time you miss  
Because let's be real, this jail ain't easy  
And all you think to yourself is free me.



## Where I Am

What makes people think the way they do?  
An example of people in prison is one I view,  
I go on the yard but the sun don't shine,  
Don't mind me as I spend my time

And as the day goes on, we get chained up,  
Like a dog on a leash, and it won't ease up

But the day drags on, and it's all a lie  
Because the wings don't reform, it only takes our lives.

**GN**  
**R**  
**G**

## Untitled

I can see in your eyes  
you're holding the world inside  
You've got so much weight on your shoulders  
yet you seem tough as nails.  
If you need to let your tears break loose,  
let me be there for you.  
I wanna be the man to wrap his arms around you.  
Lay you lay you down, close your eyes,  
let your heartbeat next to mine.

Do you want me to get over you  
or start breaking the rules  
Do you care if I sleep 'cause you make it  
hard to breathe  
Do you want me on one knee  
or would you rather set me free

**Bradley**

## Sorry

I'm sorry I wasn't strong enough  
 I'm sorry I left you all in the dark  
 I'm sorry I never had a heart  
 I'm sorry I never let any tears fall from my eyes  
 I'm sorry for the pain  
 I'm sorry for all the walls that I put up  
 I'm sorry I was a trainwreck  
 I'm sorry I never gave you the option to forgive  
 I'm sorry I found you.

**Bradley**

## Neon Blue Eyes

You got me drunk on your words  
 and you aren't even speaking,  
 With every breath that you take  
 My hearts been set a mission,  
 It's like you started a fire  
 With only one condition  
 I see your candlelight smile igniting ignition,  
 So, let's pretend that this is our last night  
 And let your neon blue eyes  
 Take us from sunset to sunrise,  
 Slipping off that midnight glow  
 Letting our shadows put on a show  
 From sunset, to sunrise.  
 Our two souls, will fall in love, but they're never going  
 to love again

**Bradley**

## Untitled

I just wanted love, I wasn't nobody's favourite  
 Life of a thug all the mistakes that I'm making.  
 I just wanted hugs, I was beaten all the time though,  
 Started selling drugs. I was focused on my doe  
 Coz money masks the pain that I'm feeling  
 Slowly going insane, but you won't see it  
 I got engaged to the game, but do I need it  
 I just wanted love. It's just the love I was seeking  
 Searching for love in all the wrong places  
 I've been heartbroken, I've also done the breaking  
 Sorry if I'm cold it's coz my heart still aching  
 Sorry yeah I know, I can be so dangerous,  
 That's why I spent most of my time in them cages  
 That judge gave me 20, 10 calendars is ages  
 My lifestyle's wild man, I guess they had to tame it  
 I just want to make it home to my babies.

**Simon**

## Black Girl

Black girl, you're so beautiful.  
 Black girl, you're a beauty.  
 Dark skin, brown skin, light skin, pale skin.  
 Any shade of black, baby girl, you should embrace it  
 Anytime I can, baby girl I'll let you hear it,  
 I need you to feel it, teach it to your children,  
 Black girl, you're so beautiful  
 Black girl, you're a beauty.  
 You're so pretty, you're so pretty, you're so beautiful  
 Don't let the world get you down, they can't get  
 rid of you  
 Heart of a lioness baby, you're an empress,  
 Being black is beautiful baby, you're just perfect,  
 Even though they ridicule baby, they're just jealous,  
 The more you love yourself, the more you'll settle  
 for the better.  
 The more you love your roots, the more you love  
 your race forever.  
 The more you learn your roots, the more you will  
 keep your race together  
  
 It don't matter where you're from, it don't matter  
 where's your country,  
 Whatever Black you are, Baby girl, you're just lovely

Tell it to your daughters, tell it to your mummy  
I made this one for you and all my sisters and aunties.

N.C GRN 33

**Simon**

## What I've Learnt So Far

What I've learnt so far, that my mum's a piss head,  
I've learnt that my dad wouldn't be seen dead with me  
(I'm not your dad),  
I've learnt so far, the other children are nasty to  
each other. (Errr look at your trainers, tramp).  
I've learnt so far, how to run away from home,  
auntie chasing me (Come here you little shit, your  
mum's pissed again. It's time to put her to bed),  
I've learnt so far, the feds have a keen interest,  
a watchful eye. Not my time to commit crime  
(not yet anyway),  
I've learnt so far, how to recognise beauty.  
Saffron laying on a patch of green grass in her  
brother's back garden, sausages cooking,  
ice cream van, music wailing out,  
I've learnt so far, my next-door neighbour has his eye  
on a 14-year-old me. My family didn't believe me.  
Cooking ketamine in a frying pan, watching liquid turn  
to powder. Climbing through windows. Empty houses.  
Saffron died on my mum's kitchen floor, in my arms.  
That's how I learnt about loss. My mum saying  
everything you touch dies. That's how I learnt my

mum despises me.

I've learnt that razor blade edges are smooth like  
butter to the arm, I mutter.

I've learnt so far that blood is really red the deeper  
you cut.

I've learnt so far, I'm not really needed, have pleaded  
not to be lonely, bullied by my emotions and my fears  
and them bloody tears.

I've learnt so far not to tell anyone what I'm about  
to do.

**Liam**

## (Addiction)

This morning I woke up to pain,  
and the sense of loss,

It's like walking down an endless street of nothings,  
just waiting to see your face in some reflections,

You come back to me in 12 different ways,  
like when I'm listening to Elvis.

my cousin lost to a world of Brown,  
lost so young.

I also have an addiction. Nicotine, caffeine,  
alcohol, drugs,

I've tried to stop but it's like I keep slipping down a  
grease filled hole,

I crumbled like yellow buttered toast.

**Liam**

## Untitled

Have you ever watched the sun rise? Slowly ascend from an endless brow of green pastures, showering the eternal blue sky with a kiss of golden light. Have you ever stood on a mountain top under the serenity of a crisp full moon? The stars shimmering like diamonds, so close you can almost touch them. A cold winter breeze caressing your skin, whispering nature's comfort in your ears. It's the world's gift of tactile beauty, and it's quite often in front of you, offering the answers to all life's problems. Some know it but can't see it. Others long for it. Some have it, others waste it, chasing nightmares driven by unsteady emotions, unsure why they can't grasp it. Delusion tells some that they need, they want something bigger and better. Their ego advocates their demands, who only serve to betray their goodness. Some prevail ignorantly, usually being those whose immeasurable greatness defies the odds of life. Those who see, think and feel extra sensory to others, but what happens to them when emotion clashes with reality? Same thing as it does with everyone else. An unstoppable force versus an irremovable object.

As emotionally intelligent as one may be, no one can avoid that irresistible battle. What is life? Nobody can

truly see it for what it is for. Nobody understands the full of extent of it's mystery. All we know is what our eyes allow us to see. We can only go so far before death's boundary presents the big question, what's next? The unnerving fear of the unknown. Some use the paradigm of their unwavering spiritual beliefs, convinced they are touched by God, unwilling to consider the possibility that there is no heaven. But that's OK, because faith is undeniably real. We can't explain it. But it's there, calling for hope. The simple mind often conflicts with the curious mind. The simple accept what's put in front of them, rarely contesting the conveyor belt of life. Bathing in normality, trying to live up to expectations, they lived in earnest life, submitting to society's narrative for perfect world. They teach others to be like them. To abide by the rules which put weight on their shoulders. A simple life equals an honest life. For some it's envious, inviting, but for the curious it can be seen as ambition's enemy. The curious step off the conveyor belt and look behind the forbidden curtain. Jackpot! Sometimes they find a pool of gold at the end of a rainbow. Sometimes they open the wrong door and are left with a lifetime of regret. They know the risks, but the beacon of adventure, the allure of a dark path, is too hard to resist. Perhaps they shouldn't venture, but curiosity compels them to ditch common sense. To rise to their freedom.

Though, are we ever truly free?

When we love people, we are never free from torment. Yes, grief changes shape, but it never ends, it's either there or on its way, dancing silently in our shadow.

But anyone who experiences the power of love will know the pain of loss is worth it. Love drives us to protect, but the way we protect can sometimes be misconstrued by the force of it. And the common ground of simple and curious is the climb. Side by side, we take each step of the ladder, never reaching the clouds. Never winning the race. In the end, all that matters is love and family. There is no race. You're wasting time. And what is time?

From our perspective, there's only three aspects of it, past, present and future. We're living in all three of them at once. Some say the past has no relevance, yet it helps us to make future decisions. The present is a minefield of emotions. It's where we face the harsh reality of life's physical challenges, given little time to act on thoughts. Every second spent cannot be rehearsed, so limit your mistakes because the actions of our present carve out our future. Beware. Ignorant decision-making bears consequence. Don't lack self-belief from witnessing the failure of others, but rather learn from those failures. We know not why we are here, nor where we came from, but we know who we are, and we know what we have. We have only time, the only thing in life that can't be recovered. It holds a value above all. Cherish it. Use it wisely. Let's not waste it hoping for a miracle. Instead, let's create them. Enjoy life. Enjoy being you. Tear down the barriers of your mind. Allow yourself to be. Then you will find that love does exist. Emotion versus reality. It's not a fight. They're your friend, not your enemy. Have you ever watched the sunrise?

**M. Thompson**

**MDS**

## Untitled

Why does the caged bird sing?  
I ask, as I go, through this “in-between”.  
This device, this payment of time,  
For it, gnash and grit my teeth do I.

I see these bars, walls and I sigh.  
Again, I ask the question, of why.  
Singing so soft and sweet,  
While tasting salt, as it falls, down my cheek.

Then I think instead of how,  
How it finds happiness, in a place,  
That tried so hard to snuff it out.

Perchance to dream of paradise,  
To dream of a dream, and say g’night.  
Or is it instead, to decrease the pain,  
And from the thoughts of helplessness, refrain.

**Isac**

## Recovery To Paradise

### *What is recovery?*

The come back  
Winning again  
Finding yourself again  
Admitting you need help.

### *What am I recovering from?*

Myself  
Money  
Addiction  
My past  
Weed  
Forgiveness – forgiving myself and others.  
My mistakes

### *Richie’s Paradise...*

At home with my family  
Kids, sister, cousins  
Good food, no stress  
Laughter, boardgames, loud talking and music!  
My phone on DND so no one can contact me  
Because I have all I need!

**Richie**

## Recovery

Only a person who was once beaten and broken down by society, family, emotions and debts but that person never gives up fights back and fights his own demons to rise above all and recovers, only knows what he's been through and this whole journey and this whole journey of recovery to gain strength and be a winner knows and understands the real meanings of recovery and its joy.

## My kids and my wife

I was once down and lonely;  
 Unsuccessful, felt like a failure,  
 Worked hard to be someone  
 Met a beautiful girl, and  
 Fell in love,  
 We tied the knots,  
 Finally I felt I had been blessed,  
 When God sent me two angels,  
 Through my wife,  
 I gave them my world  
 But got sidetracked by busy life,  
 I took them for granted,  
 But then I realised  
 Their true worth, when  
 I got distanced and left,  
 It changed the life,  
 The life of my angels,  
 I realised how much they love me,  
 How much they mean to me  
 My Gabriel and my Aadam,  
 My angels and my paradise,  
 I miss them dearly,  
 I long for them,

I am heartbroken and  
I know, so are they,

But a day will come,  
When we will reunite, again,  
Their hearts will be fixed,  
Filled with joy and happiness  
We will recover, recover  
Together, make our own  
paradise and we will all  
live in it together for  
eternity.

## Paradise

Jannah, that's my paradise  
Which we have been promise for our  
Patience and steadfastness  
By the almighty who has no partners alongside.  
In gardens where rivers flow below  
A place of happiness and virtue  
Decided on a day of judgment by the one who created  
us all.  
So I can look up at the stars  
Contemplating of the heavens. Because how  
can I believe this beautiful life  
has no happy ending?

## Untitled

From a personal perspective, I think prison is a waste of time. It makes me feel lost, misunderstood and really unsure about the future. Even though I'm a very confident person, prison has really impacted on my confidence, family life, business life, friendships and ambitions. But on the other hand, being imprisoned is like being dead, and you can watch life, friends, everything. Prison makes you think deeper, appreciate your family and friends, and life in general. You see life from a different perspective.

When you talk about smells in prison, it's really a difficult one. It's a combination of unclean, clean, cleaning detergents, oily foods, unclean bodies, toilets, showers, some very unpleasant smells, very hard to describe.

Being in prison has been a long road, my crimes have been hard to describe or explain. I was set up by people I trusted, people I could have laid my life down for, I feel and felt so betrayed, still waiting for an appeal at some stage in my life.

Home feels like far away now, but home for me has never been the UK. But home has always been Africa,

that has never changed, because I have never felt welcome in the UK after 35 years of living, working, paying taxes, being a business owner, working for the UK government. I'm still regarded as non-British, so home is Africa.

I look forward to the day I land in my country Kenya, and I never ever set foot back in the UK. The UK has been like a mother to me - but a bad mother who has mistreated me, abused me, and then gave me up to be adopted. So, I'm feeling neglected, unwanted, and in turn I do not have a love for Mother UK, just bitterness. Now I can go back to Mother Africa. She would love me and look after me until my last days on this earth, Mother Africa, I can't wait until I see you again.

**Ras Kamau**

## Untitled

Prison feels like the bottom of the sea, where you can learn things about yourself that you can't find until you get to the bottom of it.

Prison smells like a cemetery, as there are dead people collected from everywhere. To me, prison smells like a rebirth. Where you will find a lot of pain and a lot of hope.

I'm here because I found myself. I know who I am. I had to fight for my freedom. And I'm willing to fight for it no matter what happens

Home to me is love, peace and family. I get to be home in my prayers, talking to family members, and being myself. Home is finding where you belong. Doing what you want. And being with whom you want freedom is home.

How can I go home?

Funny enough, I could walk out of this gate and I would be in the place where I used to live. I have gained a lot of self-understanding during my sentence. I am so grateful to the Lord for healing me and guiding me to the right path. Once I found the Lord, I humbled myself to the truth and I start my new me, Finally, I am free.

## Untitled

I come from a place where forgiving is rare  
The big fish eat the little fish,  
And the weak and poor are not spare.

## Untitled

### **What does prison feel like?**

Prison feels like a slow bureaucratic system stuck on the past, unable to update to the present time. Your voice is unheard. Prison should help you on your way to rehabilitation. But they just pretend to do their job. Actually, they don't care. It feels like you miss the people you love, and you don't ever want to miss them again like this in the future. You know how they miss you as well, and you don't want them to suffer like that.

### **What does prison smell like?**

Prison smells unhealthy. Bad hygiene, bad food, etc. But sometimes it smells like hope for the future as well – if you want to work hard on yourself and make change happen.

### **Why are you here?**

Because at some point I stopped taking care of myself and didn't realise what direction I was going in, and how it was going to affect my life, my kids and my family.

### **What does home feel like?**

Home feels like family. The love of my kids, cooking for them, playing with them, putting them to sleep and your

freedom to make your choice.

### **How do I get home?**

I plan to carry on with my life in Grand Canaria, where my sister lives. It's something I was very close to doing 3 years ago, but for some reason I didn't do it. Mainly because of fear to start again in another country. I feel it is the right time to do it now. I'm focused in education here in prison – improving my written English and getting my level 2 certificate. Also – improving my IT and multimedia skills, because I would like to work in the tourist sector in the future. I will go back feeling stronger and ready to make the change I was wasting time on, because I was always afraid.

## Untitled

### What does prison feel like?

A cheap all inclusive holiday. Without the fun activities, kind of like boarding school.

### What does prison smell like?

I don't think it has one smell, but a range of smells. Depending on where you are and whose cell you're in.

### Why am I here?

I was unfaithful to someone I love dearly, which caused a chain of reactions.

### What does home feel like?

Home feels warm, safe, peaceful, fun, comfortable.

### What does home smell like?

Whatever fragrance is in the oil burner.

### How do I get back home?

I'll take the train.

## Untitled

Prison feels like being dead in the grave and actually seeing who will visit you.

I feel like the reason I am in prison is because of being around wrong people, mostly.

Home feels like being in a heaven, after thinking about it in prison.

## Untitled

### **What does prison feel like?**

Well, there have been many suggestions about how people find it in prison. How prison feels...it is to be your better self. Where you only need to see yourself, amongst people who are really struggling with their own decisions. It feels like you need to find your utmost self-reliance. I have been to different jails and prisons; I have served my sentence in different prisons, and it has been a progress to freedom.

### **What does prison smell like?**

I have read a little bit of a book called Forty-Six Quid and A Bag Of Dirty Washing and it came to me in the book said that when he (Barry) got out, he smelled like he was fresh out of prison. So, does prison really have a smell? Yes, we prisoners are all contained in a cells in not-too-big rooms. A couple of times, during a body search, I have been told I smell nice, and it was a really good thing to hear.

### **How does home feel?**

There is a saying, that home is sweet home. But as time goes on, you may find that home is not the first thing you think of in times of freedom. Just because it

is always a sweet place to go, what about your society, community, friends? I find home as a place you only visit when it's time to celebrate or visit when you need to get yourself back to life. Home is a lot of freedom and a sweet time to meet your person or past.

### **How do you feel about going home?**

It takes a good decision to know where you come from and how it feels to be there. Freedom.

## Untitled

Prison is what you make of it. It is punitive by design and not rehabilitative.

Foreign national prison exacerbates the pain imprisonment, it exposes or stamps the British class system right to my face.

Here no one knows the day of release. You can only hope and pray. Even if you agree to be deported, the ticket will deliberate delayed – this is real pain.

However, all this pain can be turned into gain. Reading from and meeting someone with lived experience is reassuring. This clearly reminds me that I too can one day make a difference in spite of all my traumatic experiences. I too can win and so can you.

## A Strange Place Where Your Bed is in the Toilet.

A place you have no control over, uncertainty, no accountability. There is no security. A place where anything you say will be used against you.

It feels like...sometimes from prison, there is no way out, and life is going to be extremely difficult.

Prison smells like...I don't even think about it. It just smells so bad.

A series of traumatic events led me to make a wrong decision.

Home feels like the place where my heart and soul are.

I have done a few certifications and would like to carry on with my self-development. I will try and get back to my previous job if I am allowed to stay.

## Untitled

### What does prison feel like?

Prison feels like a jungle. Every day you have to fight to be heard and constantly looking over your shoulder. Always worrying what is around the corner and always trying to survive.

### What does prison smell like?

Prison has all different types of smells. Some are different, like good food. Some smells are very bad – it can smell like the back of a restaurant. It can smell like a dump.

### Why am I here?

I am here because, I didn't listen to my mother. I thought that I know best, I guess I was wrong.

### What does home feel like?

Home feels like a paradise because it takes all my stress away. Home is where I am loved, it's where my wife and children are. Anywhere my wife and kids are is my home.

### How do I get home?

Changing my ways, doing everything positively. Always listening before I act. Work had to be with my family.

## Recovery Vs Paradise

### *Recovery*

the situation when one is revived from, it can also be the healing process from something.

What am I recovering from?

The death of my mother. I saw her very ill to a point where transformation took place at only 46. She became so hard to watch, everything changed from the food we had, to the lifestyle we all led. I got scared of her, not knowing how to assist even though the doctor had already prescribed it.

### *Paradise*

Freedom from these barred walls, able to take over my life again, make amends for all the wrongs I've done 'cause man...sitting on my bunk bed after lock-up thinking about good and meaningful days to come, they always say "it begins with you".

Giving a rest to all these vitamin D supplements to feel the sun on my face, the smell of soil when rain drops upon it, long sunny days and the breeze, the community spirit of "Ubuntu".

Africa, my humble beginnings, my happiness,

### **Boituemlo**

## The Little Boy from Africa

He recovers from the pain he feels for his family  
and friends.

He recovers from the injustice of this world.

He recovers from the love he has lost, for his country  
and his people.

The little boy from Africa who left behind the beauty  
and paradise of where he lived,

to carry out the dream of seeing the other side,

wants to recover his long-lost identity,

culture and values.

The little boy wants everyone around the world to  
make it to paradise.

**Buila**

**SWI  
S**

## Fulfilled in me

Free at last, heart is racing, mind at war with  
 life's paces.  
 Steering fast to make my mark,  
 Wish to feel alive in me,  
 Where to go and who to be, free? Me? Who am I to be?  
 I dream of soaring like a bird, but most of all...  
 Of all my dreams, is helping others,  
 and feeling meaning.  
 I wish to be, fulfilled in me.

## Blooded Hands

I'm soul searching four walls deep in HMP  
 burial grounds. I have invisible demons haunting me,  
 creatures that are not made to see.  
 Before I can discover victory,  
 I have to fight the system mentally to learn what  
 it's like to be free.  
 I feel like I have forgotten.  
 I'm emotionally disconnected from my heart strings  
 popped by my self-destructiveness.  
 I have killed more than the pieces of my soul.  
 But while I have the light in my life,  
 my warrior spirit will never give up or diminish.  
 I miss my family.  
 Loneliness is how I'm punished.  
 Prison is not rehabilitation.  
 It is an untrusting place of judgment for the  
 shadows locked inside.  
 Received for their sins.  
 To find our freedom first we have to find ourselves.

## Seek The Light

Desperate measures to save the mind  
 Spearhead methods to see the light.  
 Be that child of the night, silent dreaming  
 and precious life.  
 See no dangers or dangerous light,  
 Do you see and hear those warning sirens,  
 Meaning your heart and your mind.  
 Hope to feel and hear and see alright,  
 Not masking and clasping that precious light,  
 Hiding it from your darkest nights.  
 So unseal and unfeel, breathe free and create needs,  
 Seek your heart and your mind, but most of all,  
 Spearhead methods and your precious life,  
 And see the light.

## Building Blocks

Stepping out those gates, I will finally be able to  
 face fate, and say I made it.  
 The dark corners, overthinking, the crowded visits,  
 digital postal orders  
 When it's over maybe I will look up to God, and say  
 the fire at my feet, things all around,  
 It's finished.  
 At the restaurant with a strong woman, so I won't  
 miss five-foot midgets key turning me inside a gimic.  
 I don't have to just exist no more. Travelling the world,  
 hot and cold environments.  
 Get out of hell to live it.

## Untitled

Crash, wrong place, wrong time,  
 Pain, confusion and dazzling lights.  
 Who are these strangers by my side?  
 Where are my loved ones?  
 Where am I?  
 Cat scan, x-ray, MRI, they tell the results,  
 not the journey.  
 Bones heal quick, the mind slowly.  
 Depression, PTSD, anxiety, the true battle grows,  
 Here are my loved ones/  
 Where am I?  
 Fake smiles, bent truths, buried feelings.  
 Each accountable for hindering my healing.  
 Honesty brings progress, life's painting takes time  
 The old me is not the new me, the journey continues.  
 Here I am, loved ones beside me  
 Continuing the painting that is life.

**James**

## Untitled

My dad didn't agree with the life I  
 was livin, felt like I was going off the  
 rails, man used to live in a one bedroom  
 flat no lie, I couldn't take home  
 girls so moretime it's me and my  
 killy on the block wid two tings getting  
 flicky. I grew up in Peckham, LC if  
 you didn't know that's London City  
 everything litty, back then and never had  
 to pay bills, I was on a pedal  
 bike getting juggy, I gotta watch out  
 for the Babylon, they know my face  
 so I wear me a hoodie

**J.C**

## (Three Bullies and a Ouija Board)

### *A short story*

Lewis “Thumper” Larson, James “Jimbo” Johnson and Alex “Strongman” Carson all attend the same school in the West Trinity area. They’re also St Trinity’s high schools most notorious bullies, and today was like every other day, picking on some scrawny outsiders or “nerds” as they were otherwise known. Jimbo, Thumper and Strongman all meet at the same spot every evening, the old, haunted house on the corner of Norton Street. Many rumours have arisen from this old and derelict place, such as

**“Everyone who enters this house gets possessed” or “Everyone who enters dies a horrible death.”**

Luckily for these three miscreants, they never enter past the yellow police tape which covers the infested and rotten wood which plagues these premises. The door barely hung upon its hinges and what was left of the windows had been shattered by tiny rocks thrown from the hands of a rowdy teenager hell-bent on destruction and revenge.

This day would be different. After the stroke of five, all three met at same spot that they have met at for the past six years. However, this time, instead of just

criminal damage, they decided to embark upon a voyage of trespassing, although they did not see it this way. It was boredom that drove this adventure. They couldn’t back out even if they wanted to – as just after school, one of the older lads, Daryl from the sixth form dared the three bullies to document a night in the abandoned, infested and derelict house. Before they entered, they made sure they had all the necessary equipment to document and navigate their way through the manner. Things such as extra batteries for their flashlights, cameras, their sound recorders, and an ovule which is a word bank, using frequencies to pick words in order to understand spirits.

They all shared a cigarette, not knowing that it could be their last.

“I’m not sure about this guys,” said Thumper.

“Don’t be a wuss, we’ve got to do this, otherwise we will be the laughing stock of all of St Trinity’s High. Even the nerds will laugh at us. Now stop being a baby and hand me that torch” replied Jimbo.

All three entered the door. As they looked inside, they looked at all the faded portraits which hung crookedly upon the cobweb filled walls. One particular portrait freaked Strongman out.

“Guys, I swear the eyes in that picture of following us”

Thumper turned around.

“If them eyes blink, I am out of here!”

“Will you guys pack it in?” Replied Jimbo.

As they walked around documenting the various rooms and experimenting with the equipment, an hour in they had finally seen a result.

“Basement” said the ovule.

All three of the lads turned white and after talking a few minutes to see if anything else would be said, they preceded downstairs to the basement. As they poked around, Strongman pulled out a box from a dusty old safe, which sat under a table in the far corner of the room.

“Guys, you will never guess what I found. It’s a Ouija board!” said Strongman.

“What are you doing? Don’t touch that quick, put it back”!

Just as Thumper went to snatch the board from Strongman’s hand, the Ovule spoke again.

“Play.”

They looked at the ovule again and once more it said.

“Play.”

In a panic-stricken moment, they decided that the best way to prove to their school that they were cool was to play. So, they sat in a triangle and engaged with the Ouija board. As they all placed their hands on the planchet, it began to move slowly. It spelled out the words:

**“DEATH TO THE BULLIES”**

After it spelt out these words, the lads absolutely panicked and as their skin turned whiter than a snow cone, all questioning what exactly was about to happen to them at the same time. The planchet moved, spelling out the words

**“PERISH AND POSSESSION”**

Just as it said this, Jimbo began convulsing on the floor and foaming at the mouth. Strongman and Thumper walked closer and as they did, Thumper flew across

the room. Jimbo had seen enough. He took to his heels and headed for the door, leaving his friends behind. Just as he reached the front of the house, the doors and window slammed shut. All three were now trapped in the house with the vengeful spirits...

A few days later, the families of the three boys that went to that particular spot where they knew their children hang out. As they looked on the ground they noticed, the camera battery right by the front door which was now wide open. As they searched the house there was no sign of any of the lads - just the trail of blood leading up to the Ouija board, which sat open on the ground with the cameras and equipment laying beside it. As they picked up the camera and replayed the film, they were mortified at what they saw. As they quickly tried to exit the house one by one, they were dragged by their feet towards the Ouija board and the Ovule spoke one last time....

Keiran

## Realness

I used to be free, in a place where overlooked privileges, as minute as they seemed back then I couldn't see, through eyes of wisdom that one day... I will realise how much I took for granted. The details imprinted between the lines are as important as those expressed above. Our environments can enhance our skill sets. But if we surround ourselves with those that prioritise agendas instead of loyalty and respect. Just by keeping the company of visionless teachers, they cannot learn us the qualities we need. To survive or to even prosper. Your ability to adapt and create new beginnings. The stones that are thrown from glass houses. Don't throw them back. Catch, save up and build: an illuminated clear picture for your life to grow. First you as a person has to grow. Don't be better than anybody else, just be better than yourself.

## Realness

Ask yourself, how do you stay alive when living puts obstacles in the way? Demons strife, I won't lie. They indignify my pride, so I, just I, strategize a plan to rise above the puppets crammed into a trance. I'll be leading nomads through open deserts, ravished in ungranted wishes; while wisdom is blown onto the sand. The devil is backwards, it's evil... envision even bad can be peaceful. It's just a dropped stitch in life's tapestry sewn back together, the eye of the needle, flesh and blood are just people. Love is blind, like a wise guy with family ties. Sometimes lies are there to protect, not just to deceive you. Read more. Endure the sky and the mirrored glass reflecting. There is more room for invention when you fall lower than the floor. Being unsure can be remorse. Enforce knowledge and focus into your thoughts. Don't just be average, be more than your thoughts.

## Untitled

Every action has consequences  
 Lost in the streets, man, got no defences  
 Forget, all these fake pretences  
 But I've burnt bridges, and now I'm building fences  
 I'm tryna live life, for each one of my senses  
 But I've hit rock bottom, soo many times, it's like I'm  
 lost in trenches  
 Fake friends lurkin, with fakeness they're talking  
 These jokes are flexing, acting like they're balling  
 Deep down inside, I hear them demons a calling  
 I'll admit, most of my actions were absolutely appalling  
 But my brain switched, when I woke up this  
 autumn morning  
 The anger's in my veins, fuck a smile on my face  
 Thought I'd win the race, but I'm stuck in this place  
 Tryna find pride, but I'm stuck in disgrace  
 The failures haunt me, like ghosts in the night  
 Tryna escape my past, but it's too tight, too right  
 Anything, just to get me through the night  
 Cuz what happened, it scarred me for life  
 Soo much potential, I was soo bright  
 And not it's time, I think, I need to see the light.  
  
 Jail time, livin in this cell, livin in this hell  
 But I guess that's better than being killed by a shell

Soon I'll be saying goodbye to these gates –  
 Adios, arrivederci, ciao,  
 K1DG3, can't you see  
 The anger's like a furnace, burning deep inside of me  
 Cuz, every night I dream  
 Thinking about what might have been  
 K1DG3, is here to steal the scene  
 B9 too, S-O-T  
 Real talk, I've only got a few that's true to me  
 Because one minute we're living life, now I find myself  
 reading eulogies  
 None of this is new to me  
 Struggles, my companion, There's no escaping its grip  
 But I'll rise from the ashes, with the burning light that  
 I lit.  
 Bit by bit, with the bars that I write  
 Fakes are always talking, but they don't feel my pain  
 I'm hustling day and night, Through the coldness  
 and rain  
 Through the darkness and pain  
 From born and stoke raised  
 It took to the streets, to teach me the game  
 16 and I knew life would never be the same  
 Yeah, in life we've all placed the blame  
 For all of our pain  
 But if you're offered help, then it's time to engage  
 And one day, I'll be king of my block  
 Watch me rise from the gutter and breaking  
 the clocks.  
 Tickety-tock  
 Koke said you can lock the locks but you can't stop  
 the clocks

Cuz now it's time to stop  
I guess it looked appealing, but trust me, it's not  
Now I'm flexing on these haters and I ain't  
holding back.  
Got the heart of a Hogan and I'm ready to attack  
Upon all the ones that are talking whack,  
talking smack  
While they're scoring the dust and crack  
Even the ones who have money laid in stacks  
Cuz they are the first ones to stick a blade in  
your back  
This is from experience, it's all fact  
It's just life, so you do the maths  
And failures just the lesson, So I'ma wear it like  
a crown.  
With my squad by my side, we ain't never backing down  
Yeah, I just wanna make my family proud.  
Can't you see, that anger is like a furnace, burning  
deep inside of me  
Struggle is my companion, there's no escaping its grip  
Watch me rise from the ashes, with the lights that  
I've lit.  
Every scar tells a story, every tears a fight  
But I'm done with the darkness, and I'm reaching  
for light  
Always through the system, they can't cage  
my ambition  
Ain't no stopping me now, I'm a man on a mission  
It was my daughter and partner who showed me  
this vision.  
I just wish that I listened.  
But I guess it's better than never

Now I'm sitting here, reminiscing over their letters  
Trying to be better, even though they're gone, I'll never  
forget em  
So, remember my name, when I break through chains  
I'm a soldier in this battle, got the fire in my veins.  
In a cell, for the crimes of committed  
Feel the rage building, like I'm fully acquitted  
Caged in this madness., my thoughts, they be fighting  
Lost in the struggle, and my demons are igniting.  
  
Counting days, like minutes in the slammer  
Waking up bothered, I'm a beast, not a sham bruh  
Failures in the rearview, but I'm still role playing  
Thugging in the night, while the weak and feeble  
are praying  
For food, love and a place to stay in,  
This is jail time, living life in the gutter  
Anger's my motive and I'm breaking that shutter  
Flexing my pain like a tattoo on my soul  
Rich in my struggle, can't let this stuff take hold  
Sipping on sorrow, my cup runneth over  
Caught in the cycle, can't just roll over, like a rover  
Got psychological issues, just like the joker  
Manifesting anger, but I'll be king of my block  
Balling with the girls, while my hearts feeling locked  
Thinking about past days, men on both sides getting  
dropped. Every step I take, I'm feeling that weight  
Life's a house of cards, and I'm raising the stakes  
'Cuz I left life to destiny and fate  
But that led me to hells's big gates, and the devil has  
the ability to assume friendly shapes  
For instance, your family, girl or your mates.  
Trying to scheme, but they can't comprehend

When you roll with the best, every battle's a trend.  
 In the shadows lurking, demons on the hunt  
 Thugs with ambitions, never backin from the front  
 They be doubtin, but they can't see the vision  
 I'm a warrior, ain't no room for division  
 Every brick in this cell, is a lesson I've learned  
 Anger fuels fire, so watch this world start to burn  
 Failure's in the past, but today's a new chapter  
 Stacking up my hustle, making dreams come faster  
 When the sun sets low, I'll rise like the dawn  
 K1DG3, is Stoke raised and Brum born  
 Once a hustler but now reformed, always on form  
 Gonna go global, just like the dawn  
 So I say hola., hello and bonjour  
 I'ma make my legacy, once and for all.

**K1DG3**

## Chapter 1 – Refuge

(An excerpt from *The Reunion Journey*)

Anna is a 10-year-old girl who lived in Berlin, Germany. She had blonde hair and green eyes. Anna was the oldest of two siblings – a baby brother, Smal, who is five months old and a sister, Thalie, who was five years old, also with blonde hair but brown eyes. On Wednesday, Anna and Thalie were sat in their room, which was bare and empty except for the beds.

“Girls, are you ready?”

“Yes, Ema”

“OK, then go downstairs and wait by the door.”

Anna and Thalie sat on the stairs. In front of them were suitcases and bags. The door opened.

“Aba! Thalie shouted.

David Spearburg walked over to his daughters.

He knelt down, hugging and kissing Anna and Thalie

“Aba, why are we leaving Berlin?”

“We’re leaving because Berlin is no longer safe.”

“Aba, I don’t want to leave!”

“I know you don’t want to Anna, but sometimes we have to do what we don’t want to do. When it is safe. We will come back to Berlin.”

“You promise?”

“I promise, Anna”

“OK, Aba.”

Maria Spearburg came down the stairs with Smal in her arms, he was fast asleep. “Ready to leave?” Maria looked at her husband and nodded her head. The front door opened and Anna and Thalie followed their parents outside.

“Girls, get inside the truck.”

Ana and Thalie took a seat in the truck. After a short period of time, Maria and David entered the truck. David started the engine and the truck went forward. Anna and Thalie looked behind them as their house got smaller the further away the truck got. “Bye house.” The girls said and then faced forward again.

The Spearburgs were out of Berlin, with nothing but open road and land for miles. In the distance, Maria saw a German checkpoint. Thalie noticed the panic on Ema’s face.

“What’s wrong, Ema?”

“Nothing Thalie,” Maria smiled and looked at her husband.

“Stay calm and act normal,” David said.

A German soldier stood beside the checkpoint gates with his hand in the air. David brought the truck to a halt. The German soldier was on the driver’s side. David wound the window down.

“PAPERS, NOW!” The soldier boy shouted. David handed over his family’s papers. The soldiers looked at them individually, at Maria, Tally and Anna. He seemed happy.

“GET OUT NOW!” The other soldiers raised their MP40’s but lowered them after the soldier spoke to them. David got out the truck, and the soldier unclipped his holster, his right hand resting on the Luger pistol in

the holster. Anna grabbed her Ema’s hand while Thalie had grabbed Anna’s arm. They were both scared. At the back of the truck, the soldier question David. “Where are your family’s Star of David’s coats?”

“Why would we need those?”

“You’re Jewish.

“No, we’re not.”

The soldier pulled his Luger pistol out of the holster, pointing it directly at David’s chest.

“You can lie to me, and I’ll kill you right now, your wife too and your sweet little daughters. Or you can be honest with me, and you go on your way. It is your choice.”

The soldier smiled, maliciously.

David had fear on his face, but his fists clenched so that the soldier would not notice him shaking.

“We are Jewish, and we are going to Holland to live.”

“Just your family?”

“Yes.”

“Open the back.” David did as he was ordered.

“Okay, close it and get back inside the truck.”

David closed the back and got back inside the truck. At the gate, David put the truck in gear and stepped on the accelerator taking the truck forward.

David was still driving whilst Anna, Thalie and Smal were in the back, fast asleep. Finally, the Holland border was in view. David drove a little faster and then came to a stop at the border line. A Dutch border officer came up to the truck.

“Good evening, can I see your papers please?”

Maria gave the papers to the officer, and she looked over them,

“Are the little ones in the back?” David nodded.

“Okay, are you here to claim asylum?”

“Yes,” Maria answered.

“Okay, where are you coming from?”

“Berlin.” Maria answered.

“I’m sorry you had to leave; you are welcome and safe here. In the morning, go to the Home Office and they will house you somewhere.”

“Thank you” David said. He took the papers and then drove into Holland.

**Jamie**

## Jungle

Wild baboons scream as the branches of the jungle squeeze their new habitat, lashing out at everything and anything that crosses their path of destruction, minds clouded by rage and disillusion.

But the tiger stays patient.

Pigmies, spotted deer and reptiles of all shapes and sizes graze and feast in the horrid productions of the jungle, forced to endure the endless repetition of their encroached lives, whist cowering in the face of the wonderous menagerie of pain and suffering their predators threaten with every breath.

But the tiger stays calm.

Creepy crawlies, critters and cruel creatures scuttle through the undergrowth – known by all but overlooked by many – as they scrounge and scavenge the leftovers and scraps of the menacing hierarchy above them, simultaneously providing the essential basis on which their overseers crave and desire for survival in the confines of their decrepit oasis.

But the tiger stays vigilant.

Emperor of all but rules not one soul, roaming as if afloat across his domain with ease, paying no mind to the autonomous lives that surround him. He ensures his spoils, as any ruler would – but protects the perfect

balance in which himself must live and survive amongst.  
Upon the hallowed ground he prowls and nearly beyond  
the great blue canopy he clammers but never oversteps  
where he knows he should not.

**Astro**

## Depression

Depression is my friend, no weekdays or weekends  
Just Sundays, stop repeat, again and again  
Knows all of my sorrows I had in the pen  
The one friend I know will hold on to the end  
Hit back on the bottle, my throttle, my friend  
Again and again, again and again  
Depression reminds me who is my friend  
And as long as we're together  
We don't need trends  
As of my words, you twist and you bend  
For all who don't know me, this poem I send.

**Kci**

## Untitled

Just a kid, shirt tucked in, mind like cold steel,  
yet could never sit still  
A need to be the greatest, like nothing could hurt me  
But he's just a kid, by ten nothing he thought he knew,  
was true  
Mind overruled, overview, words like glory shot out  
of place,  
These can pierce in places, stick in others, or go  
right through  
Leaving a hole to mend, out of place, guns ablaze,  
Oh, how he hates it this way.  
To be just a kid, world view unproven, left in vain and  
full of poor feelings,  
Forced ceilings like a make shift safe, there lies  
my brain,  
Solid like a mind of cold steel, all too real.  
Was I just a kid? Heart packed up, full just like a mind  
Of cold steel, is it all real? Or just phantom feels?  
Mind favours those phantom seals, am I truly  
damaged still?  
I guess I'm a phantom kid, oh, just a kid.  
Just a kid.

**Corbin**