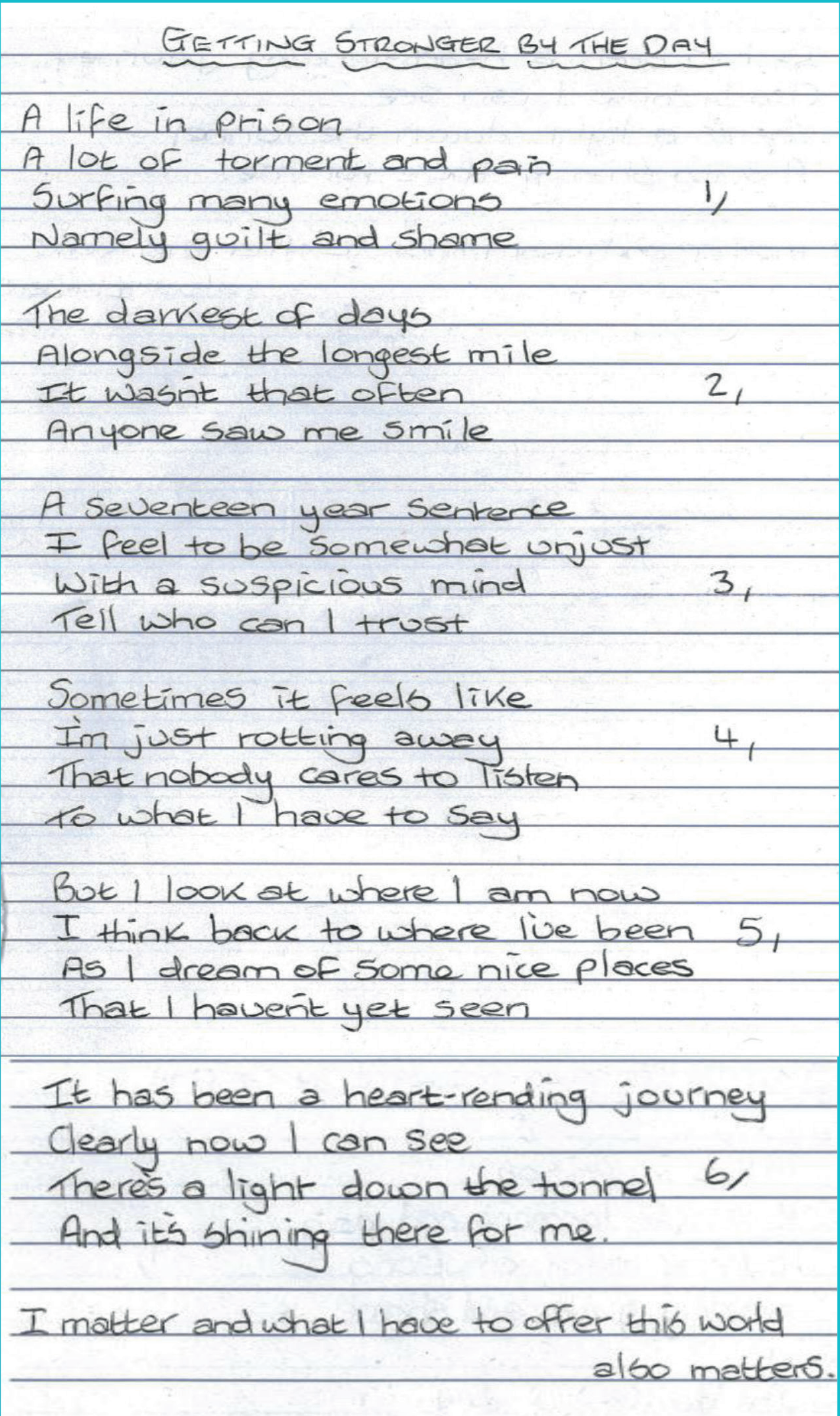


The Complexities of Life Overwhelm Me

The intricacies rush by me
Can't keep up, people frighten me
Had enough, can't go out, can't stay in
Always lose, never win
Will I sink or will I swim?
Stones in my pockets, cracks in my head
Throw me a life buoy or soon I'll be
In need of
HELP! HELP! HELP!
No one can hear me
IS THIS CONNECTION FUTILITY?
Faulted, I see
So I guess I'll disconnect again
Unplug, shut down, switch off, push away
Walls up, east down, give up, had enough
Why did I bother anyway?
You give a little, they take a lot
You make an effort and what's the result?
"Oh, you seem fine, you don't need our help"
Sorry I asked, I'll shut my mouth
Shut up shop, shutters down
Board it up, evelong, drown.



Easier

A year ago,
I was told my mood was entirely unstable.
A carnival of drama,
Raging and rasping to catch a breath and steal the spotlight.

A year later,
There is calm when my dreams shake my soul with unease.
Crafted tourniquet for my trauma,
Ripping and tearing my doom that's desperate to clot to the surface.

It's rough love,
Days which feel easy but undeserved.
Staring at the scars; contending if I'm to be a corpse?
Consumed and rotted by my corrupted blood.

Then also nights,
Guilt free and glamorized with gusto.
My belated euphoria, bastardised with a wicked game.
The story is not there to dwell,
Hell will never leave me ashamed.

Local Legend

His amber bottle gripped
No plastic standards here
The lucent cider draft
Slurred ecstasy laps cool

Sprawled outside the bookies
Counting April shadows
Throwback to another day
Under skies of fresh blue

Talking loud to himself
Voice strong and sincere
Amber-sweet thoughts
Shared with warm breeze

Let us be leaving him
Classifying shadows
In that curious accent,
This titan of characters.

Deep Waters

An encircling sea: depths unknown surround - pulling and tugging.
A submergence beckons...
Parallel energies mirror in darkened waters; still visible yet tinkering on obliteration. They hold and sway with the feverish tide.
Blackened and ominous swirls emit and fuse into purer climes: an insurgence offers longed for insanity.
Rationality hollers its ugly, brutish head. Ignorance - the orbs tightly withstand. Somehow...
Uncomplicated paths clearly marked yet unsatisfyingly simple. An easy riddle: a sum too basic to attend to.
A safety that's restless...
Beauty dazzles from its inner core. An untasted jewel. Endearing potentiality throbs at its blushed epicentre.
Inky sombre hues offer a long-awaited awakening: magnetic forces drive. Unforced and yielding: oddly contented deep waters.

Worthy places

If you asked me to describe my perfect place,
I'd say "it doesn't exist, at least not on this planet."
No wave-jostled shores.
No vertiginous escarpments
plunging below the surf.
No bashful palm trees or ashen sand.
Just a darkened, smooth hill.
With a memory of trees and birds.
A crimson hangover.
And a single lamp with no electricity to power it.
There's a storm in the distance;

Di
ag Di
on ag
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al

grey slashes leering,
but never thrusting a deadly blow.
And the wind prying open all the crevices,
discovering new air
and whispering:
"this is where we are."

The loss is as of a child, not raw emotional pain but deep and dark defeat
the child, my hope and dreams and life, promised and yet not;
believed and yet still forsaken in a quake of reality so alien and booming.

Woe woe woe, is the cry of my heart now drowned in the torrent of light
that is as dark as pitch and air as clear and breathable as transparent tar;
what a mystery, what a joke! and yet only devils are laughing

I am a punch-line; a murdered consumed line; such cocaine in the nose of the evil one
while the fire and death are all in my own veins - coursing and coarsing,
and what of Jesus own, my life as I believed; what of that?

Reality has become but a mocking bird, a jester of pale and vibrant deceit
I am a beggar picking through it's garbage heap looking for a pearl of great price
that yesterday I had thought mine but the truth claims it was a washer not worth

What now and why?; I dispense with the 'why?'; a desperate attempt at hope
and a hope chain heavy and pendulum free around my neck dragging...
on and on but to low places of humiliation while I search it's end for a key

enslaved and entombed I cry acceptance is freedom, acceptance is freedom
but what cost this freedom and I a beggar! I am all but lost and yet I must hope;
for death has her jaws open and her breath is not heavenly scented

my heart and head shake and my bones may too before I find the key
that ethereally fantastic thing, truth; the person not the actor playing the part -
I know for I have leapt on the stage to look in the eyes of an imposter, God help me.

He will, I know, but even that scares me... the loss is of a father now..
the child bruised blue and blue; fostered by death while life cried out 'my son'!

Disorder

As the damaged wings of an injured bird
so your arms hang limp, frail, unsure,
your silhouette pierced by the blades
of your shoulders, your wrists, your jaw.

How has it come to this? What short circuit
in your thoughts has caused such disorder?
Food consumes you yet cannot be consumed.
You love it, you hate it, it scares you, it owns you.

Without it you will die. You understand this
in a way, but dare not do what it takes to live.
As the constant sway of a turning tide
so your courage draws near, drifts far.

In your hospital bed you are held prisoner
while they search for the key to your mind.
They will watch as you eat, watch as you chew
watch as you struggle to swallow the dread.

Pledge for the darkness

I want to tell you there will be
no more dark places
but we have strayed there too long
and we know the ways back
how our feet may remember them
even as we try to walk away,
how the hedges squeeze
breath from the lane up ahead,
how the rain sweeps ink
across the loch.

So instead I tell you this:
though there may be dark places
there are more paths still
for us to find; though the road
before us coils into shadows
we will walk it hand in hand;
and when the clouds
swoop down from the hills
we will gather them around us
like a rug, and wait
for the light to break.

Telescope of Melancholy

The eyes of my soul weep for meaning. Who am I?
Much weight of grief do they bear for glimmers of sunshine.
Journeying through the tunnel of life's vision slow torn.
My weary retina a blurry night sky.

The hands of my choices hold tight my life's way.
High tides of my tears so constant 'till dawn,
Crashing rocks of my life, the sediment forlorn.
My drooping eyelids a woodland decay.

The ear drum beats war of whispering arrows,
Rough boulders of pasts make haste to my ruin.
Pounding aches cut so deep in my nerves,
My rotting perspective rings bells to my death.

Pitstop my hurts, no cries for my birth,
So, tender my weakness this absence of worth,
Let bygones be bygones, that mantra of earth,
No rope down this quicksand of nothing but dearth.

This telescope of melancholy, fogged lens of dismay,
as the lumen of life holds ransom today.
Raging larvae of minds, to pits of despair,
My withering brows tainted; cold seasons unfair.

Parkinson's

Blink now and keep them shut.
See my face? A shroud;
my pupils exploding stars.
Don't open your eyes.

You do and I'll be lost,
leaving just my hat on the quicksand.
I'll be swallowed down, resisting with soft fists,
adding my tremors to the earth.

Don't film to watch me back.
Don't piece me together.
I don't like time, can't manage lengths of it.
Now, prise apart the frames and pluck just one.

Then another. More.
Hold me to the light and see
eyes wide then shut, mouth gaped or pursed,
my lines smooth, or cratered by you.

I'm fingering the peeler-crab softness of new holly;
you, splitting privet leaves one-handed,
dropping them, spineless,
onto this marbled breeze.

Dark Matter

Thoughts are not facts they say
But I cannot accept the grey.
I live for partitions and lines,
For the clarity of confines,
Not the space between imagination and reality.

It is not black and white they say
But I cannot accept the grey.
Logic's light cannot penetrate from behind
The dark nebulae of my mind,
Cannot pass the black hole that accretes my sanity.

It is all in your head they say
But I cannot accept the grey
Because here
Through a telescopic tear
You will see my struggling soul,
The dark nebulae and the black hole.

"A TIRED HEART STILL LIVES INSIDE, A HEART THE SIZE
OF A FIST,

A HEART THAT'S APPROPRIATELY SIZED; AS IT FIGHTS TO
KEEP US OUT OF THE MIST.

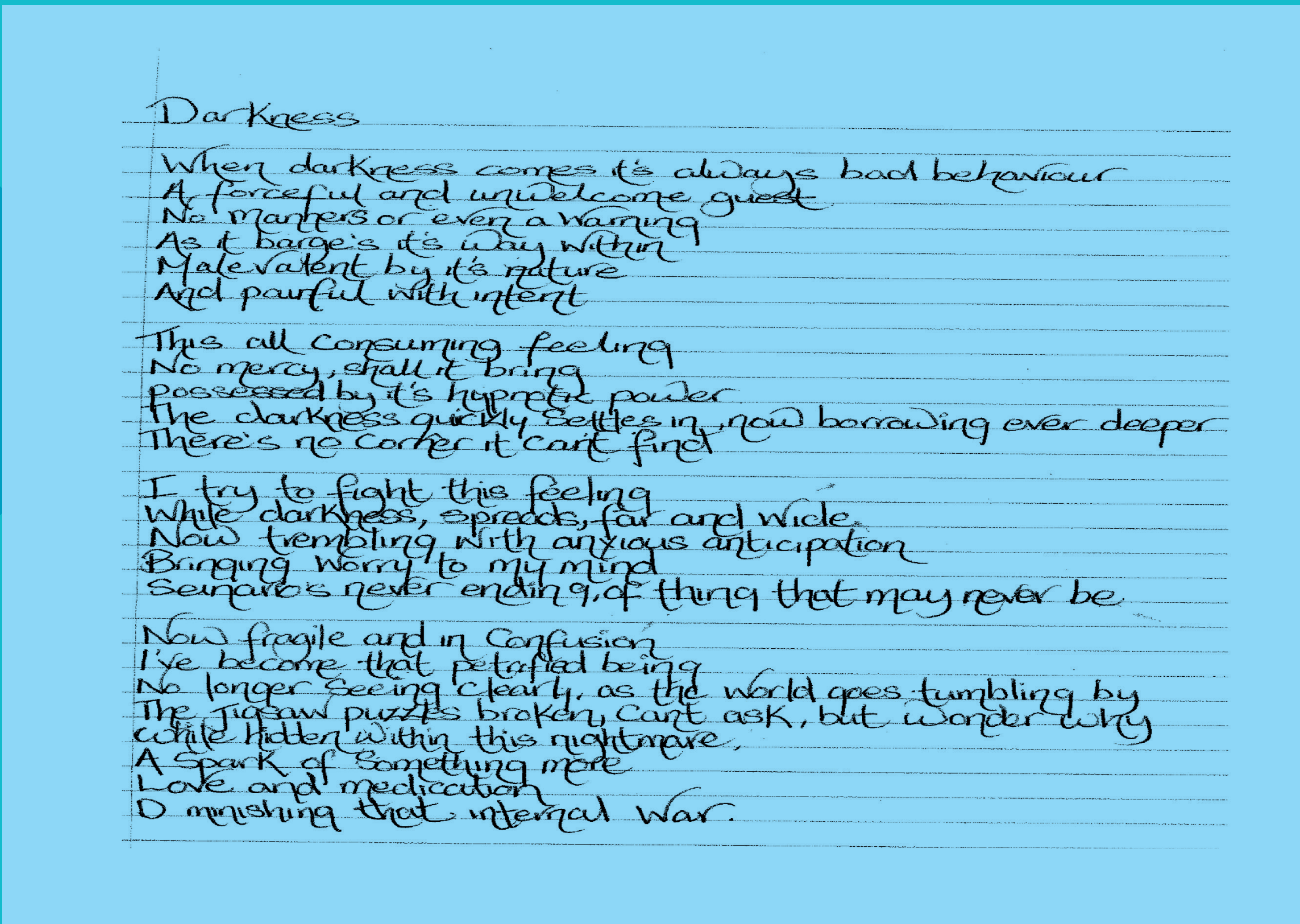
A HEART THAT'S BEATING. A HEART THAT'S NOT BEATEN.
AS THIS TIRED HEART CONTINUES TO BEAT STUBBORNLY
INSIDE AN EMPTY SHELL,

IT'S ENOUGH TO KEEP US GOING IN THIS LIFE OF A
JAGGED EDGED HELL,

IT'S A THUMPING REMINDER THAT WE ARE NOT BEATEN
YET,

MAGIC AND WONDER THRIVE WITHIN US AND WE CAN
NEVER FORGET,

IF WE LISTEN TO OUR HEART IT PUMPS US INTO MOTION,
SET TO DISPEL THE HELL OF THE EMPTY SHELL -
DEPRESSION'S DEVOTION."



All my dreams are nightmares

I don't feel safe inside my own head
My mind, detached from its home, waits in vain for an alternate life to begin
A haunted house, turning a blind eye
Offering an unattended stage for ghosts to perform their carnage
Amounting their vengeance for every show I dare miss.

So I sleep to escape.

But sleep is a beautiful brute who welcomes me all too often.
Letting me rest just enough to forget my days, though never without consequence.
A soothing caress before an unexpected beating,
I return to it daily. Hopeful. Naive.
Repeating pardons to a heavy handed lover who will never change.

I'm afraid to fall asleep because I'm tired of nightmares.
I'm afraid to wake up because I'm tired of life.

I'm just so tired.

Samaritan asks me:
"If all these things went away, what do you wish your life would be?"
I don't even know anymore...
I've forgotten how to dream.

Written: Monday 15th July 2019 (after waking from a nightmare)
28 hours after calling the Samaritans
26 hours after suicide attempt

All In The Mind

Hubbell bubble toil and trouble
My heads in a spin my mind's in a muddle
'Do I turn left or do I turn right?'
'Do I give in or do I fight?'

My world is collapsing around me now
I want to survive but I don't now how
Like a young child that's learning to walk
I just need comfort and with someone to talk

- But wait I Something's just hit me, that's not very pretty
Am I deeply invoked in a bout of self-pity?
Is this true? Is this is a confession?
If it is then I know, I'll not be beaten by this thing called depression.

THE SCRAPINGS OF MEMORY

Rest your hand upon my shoulder:
walk me through the maze.
As the once-warm world grows colder,
as my fading embers smoulder
out -in listless days-
keep your hand upon my shoulder
through this final phase.

If, as life presents closed doorways
locked beyond a key,
I'm diminished more and more ways;
if the faces I've known always
scrape from memory-
though my life presents closed doorways, stand and wait with me...

The Girl Who Conjured Fire

First, the famous coal-slip out of the grate, catching a thread,
a fluff ball, fallen birthday card, the 'keep away from fire' label
on the cushion slumped by the sofa. Next, the black box plugs
stacked like Tetris, and the advert on T.V., where smoke seeps
down the sides like a wizard's beard, or a blue spark zips from
the switch after the party when you play 'disco' with the lights.

Then the bedside lamp that might, if hit by a sleepy arm,
land upside down on the carpet and heat things up a bit -
picture a circle charred on some crop; or perhaps, if you run
your finger and thumb along the flex long enough ... or leave
a book too close to the radiator and put your hat, teacup, shoe
on the windowsill to harbour the morning sun, or whisper 'fire'

at the mirror and see a iliune shoot up your arm, shoulder,
nestle by your neck like a griffin's wing, a leopard's tongue -
it's the last thing you want, but here it comes, waltzing in;
until you take it down, place it in your palm, feel its danger,
it's 'what-if-thrill' - see a palace on fire, the roof caving in,
a city burning, hear the fizzing, popping, the untamed roar.

Which is the scariest of them all? To go on like this or not,
and make a different choice - ignore the wizened voice
that whines in the attic's clamjamfry of heirlooms and dust,
and look again. What have you got? A golden nugget,
a pink opal, a lost moon? Or a talisman, a soft-edged star
there to guide the Captain of the Rescue Team - you.

Bipolar

Of all mankind I am the most well blessed,
With silver spoon and Midas touch, the best!
For me there's never any need to strive;
All things fall into place. I always thrive.
By temperament I am the life and soul
Of any party, which is my chosen role,
The golden boy, the man who's got the lot.
Sligh(swings of mood are just a minor blot;

When told, it caused me such hilarity,
"You've got depressive bipolarity."
That spell in hospital was just a blip;
My God, depressive types give me the pip!
But that was yesterday. Today my mood
Bas changed, and now become much darker hues.
I realize my life is but a sham
And this sadJudas world's not worth a damn.
Unloved, unwanted, mocked behind my back,
No wonder that my mood is turning black.
My Janus headed friends all gone, I think;
For solace now there's just the demon drink.
The whisky that I sup is bad enough;
So what? Who cares? I'm done with life, MI snuff
It out. Death is the cure for all my ills
So now I'm reaching for the sleeping pills.

Depression Session

Which way is up again?

I think I recognize that sign
I've been down in the dark
for the longest time
the roses have come and gone
winters nip has numbed me
only a slight shiver was felt, oh and
the house has grown a beard of ivy.

Which way is up again?

the sludge is loosening around me
I'm getting my footing once again
my mind is all the clearer now.
The sun is almost visible
through the slats in the Venetian blinds.

Which way is up again?

its light and overly bright
my eyes are taking a while to adjust
at the beauty out there
I feel safe for now.

So, which way is up again?

Unseen baggage carried
is upsetting to feel
to be around
reaching out shakily takes time
patience
I see it
the way up again.

But it's true: I still ache,
That you can't see me now...

You can't see how
I've grown;

How I've found strength I'd never known.

You can't laugh with me
'cause now we can see
The folly of this fickle life.

With the seeds of confidence,
You once sowed in my soil:
You can't watch me grow,
You'll never know.

You would be proud
That I still find beauty
in this frightening storm.

That I'm not afraid.

You would breathe a sigh of relief
Knowing I can carry this grief.

Yet still,
I ache.

I shudder and shake.

It's you I want to tell:
I'm growing so well

ECHOES IN THE BONE...

UNRECOGNIZABLE INSIDE MYSELF
OUTSIDE OF MYSELF, REFLECTED THRU
EACH PAST CRACKED WINDOW OF MIRRORS,
AND A COLD WIND COOLING MY NETTLE
BLURRING EYES, COURSING DOWNWARD TO
MY COASTAL SANDY THROAT PIERCING
UPWARD A SKY OF FLOATING AIRY CLOUDS,
FOR THEIR POURING OF SWEETEST DEW
TO QUENCH THESE GRAVEL POVERTY LUNGS
FROM THEIR MANTLE OF CRASTING DUST.
AND MY JUMBLING 'SIGSAW MIND',
ROLLING INSIDE A BARREL OF MY LIFE'S
EMOTIONAL STALED THICKEN SOUP,
WHERE THESE HOBBLING FRACTURE BONES OF
MINE SHUFFLED FOR A SMILING BRONZE PENNY,
YET MY RICKETY THOUGHTS CAN NO MORE
ELEVATE IN EXPRESSION THEIR LOST PLIGHT,
OF THESE STREETS MUDDIED TO NOWHERE,
WHEN EACH SOURLY NIGHFALL BRAISING LIKE
A SLOW WATERFALL OF BLACK PENNED INK,
BLANKETED OVER MY RAW FIERY SKIN,
LIKE RAINY CHILLED SHIVERY ORPHANS, THEN
RESIDING BEYOND SINGE PORES OF MY BOXED
INVISIBLE DARKER OBSCURA...