

# New Chapters

An Anthology of Creative Writing



20  
25



**Change your story**

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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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## Acknowledgements

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Your dedication keeps our sessions grounded, safe and full of possibility. We are deeply grateful and our team feel the impact of your support every single day.

Our sessions don't just run – they breathe, spark and unfurl thanks to the remarkable people who bring their craft, courage and laughter into the room. To Jords, BrokenPen,

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We are especially grateful to Bucks Culture and the Buckinghamshire Library Service - particularly Zoe Loake and Katie DeJoux, for continuing to help our work travel beyond prison walls and into the heart of the local community. Your support reminds us that stories don't stop at the gate; they ripple outward, finding new readers and new meaning.

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Above all else, this collection belongs to every person who has shared a moment, a line, or a breath of courage in our sessions. It stands as a tribute to your existence, your creativity, and the truth you carry. Look at what you've done, and dare yourself to feel proud!

## Foreword

By Abilio Joao A.K.A BrokenPen

I often think to myself about what gives us, as humans, the ability to connect. I always come back to the idea of expression. Working with the National Literacy Trust has given me the opportunity to expand my understanding of expression. Seeing how people who have gone through adverse experiences reach into the depths of their vulnerability and trust the process - going inwards to produce pieces of writing that only their lived experiences can speak to - is both empowering and eye-opening to me.

Every workshop I ran left me with a feeling of awe at how creativity and expression live within all of us. The people I worked with expressed some of the deepest, darkest experiences they had been through in life, yet managed to find lessons and blessings within those experiences and transform them into works of art. It is truly inspiring to witness.

One of my very first sessions in HMP Swaleside involved a young man who had already written an entire book during his time there. Reading through it in the brief time I had showed me how, when given the space to reflect and sit in stillness, it is possible to create. I know first-hand that the work written in this book comes from an honest and raw place of emotion and reflection.

From your time reading these works, I hope you gain inspiration from how pain can be turned into purpose. I hope you gain insight into the lives of those who may not have been dealt the best hand yet are finding ways to overcome their circumstances. I hope you see that within all of us exists a light that can inspire and uplift the collective heart of humanity. I hope you enjoy these works and connect with the art these incredible artists have taken the time to craft.

The work the National Literacy Trust is doing is giving people a voice and allowing their work to be shared. It provides purpose and inspiration, enabling people to see themselves as artists and creators. I am deeply grateful to have been part of these workshops and to have guided a process that has allowed such a beautiful level of expression to be released into the world.

**BrokenPen**

## **Introduction**

**by Melisa Muhanguzi**

New Chapters continues to wave the flag for creativity in the most restrictive of places – places where, sometimes, your only opportunity to come alive, explore your imagination and even travel may be through the ink of a pen.

We often work with people who are ambivalent about the idea of literacy, despite having a story burning inside of them waiting to be told. Often, the resistance to literacy comes from long term barriers presenting themselves in real time – negative experiences with schooling, not being provided the opportunity to explore their literary creativity and believing there may be only a particular way to do so. There are a million and one untold stories within secure walls, and New Chapters aims to give people the tools to express themselves, no matter their writing ability. We take away the pressure of grammar, word counts and handwriting and delve into the world of storytelling through reading, writing, speaking and listening – ensuring that there is a way for everyone to share their journey as a writer.

New Chapters is proud to have been a part in giving many people the confidence to take their first step into taking control of their own narrative – as well as supporting them to continue long after the sessions are complete. Fortunately, our partnerships have allowed us the opportunity to grow

and expand our reach, and we are engaging more people in prisons than ever before – a testament to our humble beginnings at HMPYOI Aylesbury over six years ago.

For our readers, enjoy the ride. For our writers, look at what you've done!

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

“Go home and write  
a page tonight.  
And let that page come out of you—  
Then, it will be true.”

**– Langston Hughes**

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**AYL**

## Untitled

You entered the world,  
Starting as a seed.  
Free from the packet,  
To the soil to breathe.  
Surrounded by dirt  
To protect me from hurt.

Keeping me warm in a  
place where I'm also fed  
I break through the soil  
As the sun beams on my head.

Stretching up and wide as I,  
Start my journey of life.  
Heading towards the sun,  
branches bark, grow me some

Now my body has thickened and  
green leaves cover my top.  
This is my home for a long time  
Timber is the only time this tree drops.

## Untitled

Outstretched, I sliced the  
air  
using my tail to turn  
Gliding here and there.

Open space, the sky is all mine.  
I feel so free because I can fly  
Up here, I have no limits, no restrictions,  
Not caged, free. I'm not locked in no prison.

From there to there, I travel  
by air.  
Oil coats my feathers to aerodynamically  
get me there.

## Tree

Tree, Tree, oh mother  
tree.  
I'm born from your roots.  
When will I be a leaf on your branch?  
When will the wind blow me away  
Back to my roots?  
Tree, tree, set  
Me free  
And let me be!

## Untitled

Planes and holidays, a long long  
Way away from the wing!  
The Angel of the north, the  
roar of the crowd also a long  
way away from the wing!  
Like a flightless bird, stuck on  
the wing!

**X**

**R**

**B**

## Fulfilled In Me

Always helping others and many faces  
My mind is at war with life's paces  
Try to be first but always last  
There is no need to be so fast  
I know now finally that God has a plan for me,  
so hopefully I'll find happy  
I wish to be, fulfilled in me.

**Terry TT**

## Untitled

Breached my order, surrounded by cops  
Tried to flee, got grabbed, began to drop

Sentenced to custody enroute to Thameside  
10 months in front of me starting to ride

Onto the wing into a cell  
Nothing to say but shit oh well

Onto the bed staring at the ceiling  
Thinking about the crappy feeling

As the officer walks away the sound of those things  
When I get out it will be a new beginning

**Terry**

**N**

**R**

**B**

## **Gush!**

Waiting for the gush,  
To appear.  
Oh how so dear,  
To see red with no fear,  
I've longed,  
I've waited for you to appear,  
You stay too long,  
Now you want to disappear,  
Please go away,  
I can steer you back to disappear!

**Rachel**

## Untitled

Reduced to a number  
 I don't walk here, I stumble  
 And I don't even own a key –  
 That's the difference between them and me  
 Them who has got the choice  
 To leave, to return, to rejoice  
 Today someone said "You do look sad"  
 Is showing your feelings that bad?  
 Or maybe they just don't get it  
 Maybe their lives aren't sad a bit.  
 As I sit there I suddenly realise  
 That us, who are used to the lies  
 Don't get locked up by chance –  
 It's just the way our fates dance  
 To get out and truly be free  
 I'll need to kill the prison guard in me  
 Freed by murder of inner judges  
 Freed from petty feelings and grudges  
 The only prisons and walls that are real  
 Are held up in heads  
 By the way we feel

**Parisa**

## Cheeks

Everybody loves them  
 On the front  
 to the back  
 with two small holes in the middle.  
 One speaks facts  
 The other talks shit  
 Either way  
 The noise comes with lips  
 Think about it.  
 They really do a lot.  
 One side pushes  
 And the other one sucks  
 Pull or push  
 Or even gobble it up.

**Rosanne**

## Untitled

There's a lot of sexual chemistry  
 Like these breasts  
 When they're caressed  
 Dip dive  
 Transfer that energy  
 I'm like a drip in your mind  
 Water runs steadily

**Rosanne**

## Untitled

I remember walking home  
 As drunk as could be  
 Struggling to keep on my feet  
 Struggling to see

Surrounded by nightlife  
 Everywhere's a laugh  
 It starts to get quiet  
 No sound, no cars

Suddenly I am alone  
 Although still with friends  
 I black out  
 Is this how it ends...

I wake up in a place unknown  
 I don't know who these people are  
 Saved by an angel  
 A woman from the bar

She walked me through the night before  
 Which seemed to be a blur  
 I was almost taken away  
 By a man wearing blue.

He brought me drinks all night  
 With bad intentions in mind

I am lucky to be here  
I am lucky to be alive.

**Cece**

N.C BRZ 7

## Untitled

Perfection  
appears  
amidst the tears  
tiny slivers  
of  
untarnished joy  
that permeate  
the intricacies  
of old wounds  
and make  
good.

**Blaze**

## Hey Misogyny Prison

Some officers destroy all my integrity.  
 Leave me naked, in only solemnity.  
 In silence I ponder, query and wonder  
 Of why they're so scared to treat me any fonder  
 I see them beam, when they're not kind  
 With empathy they'd see they've fucked my mind  
 They'd begin to see we're women as well  
 And the guilt they'd feel for giving us hell  
 They've tortured their sisters with smiles on their faces  
 Shut the doors to our cells to rot in our places  
 Now let's draw a line – for a new beginning  
 One where both sides can truly be winning  
 Open for talks of equality and support  
 And give this HM Prison a glowing report

**AnnaBelle**

## To the Governor

I dream and think and hope for a fag  
 For goodness sakes – just give me a drag  
 No matter how long the passing of time  
 The promise I give you will never decline

Vapes in here do nicotine no justice  
 Cigarettes are something I more than miss  
 Work for free to smoke freely – please don't decline  
 I don't want to hide my shame and pine

So governor please, allow me this pack  
 My mental health has gone out of whack  
 I'll be on my best behaviour – smoke for free labour  
 I beg you; I beg you, please do me this one favour

Sincerely, SERIOUS, before I go DELIRIOUS!

**AnnaBelle**

Σ

Γ

Ε

## **The makings of my heart/ if my heart were a gallery,**

On the outside is like a mansion in the jungle.

Full of wild animals sneaking around through the prickly bushes, and up in the trees looking for prey to hunt on whilst trying to survive and learn who is to be trusted to be around, without being preyed on.

When someone enters through the old wooden creaking doors, there's total silence, the taste of dust and the smell of damp. The room is dark and empty.

At the back of the room is an iron gate with chains and padlocks on it. As days and weeks went on, the padlocks and chains started to unlock and in that room there was a small window of light. The room smelt of lavender and there was a sweet taste of tropical fruits in the air. The sound of classical music, slow calming birds chirping away. The room being more open and fresher, it made it easier to get a bit more comfortable to explore and know the surroundings of the room before entering the third room.

After time went on, the third door started to open and in that room was the smell of salt water and the sound of waves smashing up against a wall. This is the room of peace and laughter where all the happy memories come and new ones get stored – but it is quiet and rarely open.

Through the final door is an art gallery, full of all the life trauma; happy, sad and laughter. Times that have happened throughout past life experiences that is open for show IF you make it through all the three other gates and door. But it is most used to help those learn from times in my life experience and what they may need to change.

**Malachi**

## To love someone

To love someone is to love thyself,  
 To love is a great way to invest,  
 Love is seeing that shawty you had a crush on in year five,  
 The nauseating feeling you both get when you lock eyes.  
 See I know a story of a husband and wife,  
 Who lived in the same house,  
 But barely ever spoke,  
 And kept interactions short and concise.  
 After a while even the intercourse stopped being nice,  
 Only arguments lasted long,  
 The kind that involved threats with a knife.  
 Until one day something inside them both came alive,  
 They agreed to a divorce,  
 A decision that saves both of their lives, so you see love can  
 be many things.

For some love is everything,  
 Love is to thrive,  
 It is the glitter and shine in the moonlight sky.  
 Love is where your deepest and darkest secrets reside.  
 That same place, someone or something, you feel you never  
 need to hide.  
 When you board a plane,  
 And anxiety conjures up deep inside,  
 You know what I'm talking about,

Right before you take flight,  
 The gut instinct that makes you pray for your life.  
 Love is the poem that Tupac wrote Jada,  
 'you bring me to climax without sex, and you do it all with  
 regal grace'  
 Love is what the Shakespeare novel quotes,  
 'to have lived a life without being loved, is to have lived a life  
 without trust'

After being arrested so many times,  
 My still having hope,  
 There are no conditions,  
 Love is free,  
 Planting the seed and being responsible for it until it grows,  
 It I am the roots then you are the tree.  
 Love is 'to be or not to be'  
 I am committed to our relationship  
 To you and to me,  
 We add to each other's values and to our beliefs.

Lastly but most importantly,  
 Love is our creator forgiving us our sins,  
 Gifting us His only son.  
 In turn we crucified Him.  
 After all that.  
 Love is The Most High allowing the earth to still spin.

**JB**

## My heart is

My heart is big and tender, easily broken like glass.  
 Cold like winter.  
 My heart is as soft as snow on the ground, Cold, like you're  
 playing with it in your hands.  
 My heart is pure and warm. Like the shining sun.  
 Loving and genuine like a silent summer breeze.  
 When my heart is confused, It's like a storm, full of lightning  
 and rain. To wash away the pain of hailstones hitting  
 my chest.  
 When my heart is sad, it tends to hide away in a cave  
 To protect itself from shame.  
 To heal after the rain.

**D.A**

## Untitled

As my world I sees imploded  
In the sins of flame which carry blame all the magic has  
been exploded  
From the lies and cheats and the hive that speaks to the  
minds inside eroded  
As we suffer in cages in wars and mazes to the lost and  
broken souls that faded  
My sorrow waits for their own mistakes in this battle I seek  
my soldiers  
To regain my crown and unchain my grounds so that heaven  
can defeat its holders  
who've snakes there change into satans games as my vision  
of peace was stolen  
So I shall free the ghosts and save all souls as this world is  
mine I own it

**Ryan**



## Untitled

This world ain't the same  
Meditation is a must but it  
Drives me insane, my thoughts  
Are corrupt but it's hurting my brain.

Who can I blame, I struggle so hard through this life  
And pain but you won't know about it

I write these words off my chest whilst  
People boat about it, people say I'm kinda weird  
But it's kinda odd like floating  
Back seat driving a taxi car

My momma said I'm gonna rise  
If I focus hard ever since  
My life has been like a  
Façade looking at myself like  
Damn man.

What is wrong? With me 'cause clearly  
I don't even know what do to or even speak

Looking at myself I got PTSD  
Martin Luther Kind while I'm preaching  
In my dreams

Stuck in the ghetto but a  
Person still lonely (x2)

Life is a blur let me get this thing clear  
Wipe all that wax all that dirt from your ear  
Listen to these words I'm about to say here

It may shed a few tears  
The feeling that feels broken for years  
Can't really realise what I'm missing here

## Untitled

Eyes wide open,  
 Even when my eyes are shut  
 My eyes wide open  
 Look deep, deeper than the ocean near line down to the  
 earths core  
 We waste food, but there's people poor. You lie and they  
 want us to kill each other  
 So they give us soft metal knives and guns from the devil.

## Untitled

**Deep it, deep it /**  
 You know it's bad, but you can't leave it /  
 Money, drugs and women, I breathe it /  
 Resentment, pain and power, I feel it /  
 And when the temperature is too much, I can't put a lid on it /  
  
 I have seen it /  
 They never tell you the truth, that's the biggest secret /  
 Life is a puzzle, you have to put the pieces together /  
 And the pieces that don't fit go somewhere else /  
 So direct your energy and love will fall into place /

## Recovery

Recovery could be good or bad /  
 The fact ya in recovery, you should be glad /  
 Cah some don't make it /  
 & some get high to cover up being sad /  
 Rock bottom, tears & pain /  
 Under the influence in the fast lane /  
 Spliff in my mouth and a line of cocaine /  
 Whatever the poison, it messes up ya brain /  
 It was all good at first, now it's not the same /  
 Chemicals get mixed so it changes the game /  
 The disease makes us believe we need that poison in  
 your body

## Time

Time is what I'm doing /  
 Time is what I'm wanting /  
 Time is flying, but I'm not moving /  
 Lock the locks /  
 But you can't stop the clocks /  
 Time is of the essence, so stay on top /  
 You only get a certain amount of time /  
 So you get up when you drop /  
 Time can make you a man /  
 You need time to sort out a plan /  
 Time is just as important as air /  
 You need time to think cah' life ain't fair /  
 Take your time and time do you care?  
 Take time out before you act impulsively and you're  
 in despair /  
 Embrace time and grow /  
 Take time and flow /  
 I was lost /  
 But I did time and now I know

## Theme / Topic: –

Fashion, clothing industry, confusion

## Battle: –

Race, preference, age groups, business

## Resolve: –

Equality, acceptance, growth

Growing up, we all thought we had to look the same.  
 Low battys, new era hats, but we had no brains.  
 Looking at the catwalk confused like...  
 Why does nobody look like me? Do I need a new style,  
 trainers, coat or jeans?  
 We wanted all the latest designers but never thought they  
 were created by a crowd that was never behind us. Sooo....  
 I created my own, can they see us or find us?  
 “It’s too baggy”  
 “It’s too black.”  
 “You’re too young”  
 “It’s crack”...  
 You know, the one they’re selling from the trap!  
 Sooo.... We get older and switch it up, skinny jeans, loafers  
 and type tops... guess what? It never stopped the stops....  
 for a lot of us, never opened the locks – for some of us time

just stopped!

Gone but never forgotten, just like fashion, dumped in the  
 ground, old and rotten, but we hit a cycle, going around and  
 around trying to recycle... all the old things, leather jackets,  
 baggy jeans, boots and bling, but is it all what it seems?  
 Race, religion, music, social media and the latest trends will  
 have our anxiety creeping in! Now mental health got me,  
 sleeping in.

“I don’t have clothes for the party”

“I don’t have clothes for work”

“I don’t have money for the clothes I prefer”

She looks like him and he looks like her... It’s all confusing,  
 the fashion industry wants us to conform, but to who?? The  
 models on the runway using?

Spending all our hard-earned money trying to buy the latest  
 designer and flexing on social. Gucci, Louis, Prada... Nahh, I  
 know what I’d rather, but do you?

I think we should all take a step back and try and walk in  
 each other’s shoes, be who you want, wear what you want  
 and do as you desire, don’t conform to what others want!  
 Be your own designer! Whether it’s black, blue, pink, brown  
 or green, short or long sleeved, loose and baggy or slim and  
 tight, there is no such thing as right! Get it from a shop or a  
 recycling bin just please.... Be happy in your own skin.

**N**

**R**

**G**

## Untitled

1. I belong to a union of tortured souls,  
Undamaged by a chaotic society,  
My irons are no longer bound,  
My freedom can not be granted as I am  
Already free by the words on the these pages.

2. I used to lose sleep about filling up my bank account  
To buy that forever house or brand new.....  
But the older I get I just care less and less  
About keeping up with Instagram posts  
If you're not with (the) people you love you'll never be  
at home  
You could chase a higher high for the rest of your life,  
Find greener grass over every hedge, or a shined up  
mustange a little  
Newer than yours, you'll never fill an empty cup if what you  
have is never enough,  
The thing about happiness I've found so far...

3. Iron like hours to reminisce  
Of the singular one that I couldn't resist  
Someone so detrimental  
Yet still sentimental (to me)  
I wish it didn't feel like this  
But I don't want to risk your kiss

My whispering heart's confession  
You imprison my attention  
Like the solar event horizon.

4. A goodbye  
A goodbye is always full of regrets  
A lifetime is unspoken words  
A self-soothing way of dealing with memories of upset  
A goodbye is imperfect  
A desire to fix our disconnect  
A world without goodbyes  
Would be a world to truly, admire

5. You blame me for your mishaps,  
The specials and the mistrust  
You say that I'm broken, that I need fixing  
Yet you're the one whose been outcast,  
You lack the freedom, the feelings to change in your heart,  
Yet somehow it's my fault you're stuck in a rut  
I see you all manipulating, deceiving, conceited in your art,  
Your words on paper, in the room are bred from the dark  
But what of the light, the good, the trust and the love  
I see change, some achieving new greats,  
So if in your heart you long for that new path  
Use my Grendon to remove that mask  
And accomplish a new you, peaceful at last.

**Bradley**

## Won't you celebrate with me?

It's been forever since we  
were allowed fresh air on  
the yard. Patience and time  
will result in me being able  
to do embroidery. Family ties  
and video calls from many  
miles away, always nice to  
see family's face. Routine and  
Chapel every Sunday. A nice  
time to end the week on  
Prayer.

## Won't you celebrate with me?

Here, in adversity, the moments  
when we're set free.  
Fish, sauce, sweet potato and beans  
Cooked up with love for me  
and my fellow beings.  
Fried dumplings on, everyone  
watches expectantly then they  
munch the plate with the rice and peas.  
When the lock down comes,  
we all go with a smile.  
'cause the food is outside  
if only for a while.

## I Don't Know What You Saw

I don't know what you saw as a child, but I'm gonna take a guess.  
 I guess you saw me drinking all them alcoholic drinks,  
 thinking of them dreams I've never had,  
 Giving birth to your sister, having her with another Mister  
 Calling on all them dicks, not giving a shit.  
 I guess you also saw my arms bleeding, me dealing,  
 me falling, me being sick,  
 Laying in a puddle of piss,  
 Getting smacked, beaten and down-trodden.  
 I guess you also saw me locking myself in the bathroom,  
 threatening to take pills,  
 not giving a shit how you feel.  
 But most of all, when Saffron died, I'm sorry for saying  
 everything you touch dies.  
 I'm sorry I couldn't love you, cuddle you, give to you.  
 But now at least I can say I'm sorry.

## Saffron

To say goodbye to you,  
 Is the hardest thing I've ever had to do.  
 Waving goodbye to your love,  
 Your cuddles, your warmth,  
 Watching your smile, disappear into the depths of decay,  
 The day you left me, is the day my soul was  
 dragged into hell.  
 My spirit discredited  
 I had nothing to live for, watching you die on my floor  
 I turned to drink, because I couldn't speak,  
 I still remember you slumped in my arms  
 Your body melting through my embrace  
 I've turned into a disgrace  
 A shadow of my former self  
 Just left on the shelf  
 I really missed the way you smelt,  
 Your black long hair, blowing in the air,  
 I wish I told you I care,  
 It's not fair,  
 It should have been me, not you  
 But Saffy this isn't goodbye,  
 I'll soon be there,  
 Your beautiful Ruby smile,  
 Why am I still in denial,

I watched your coffin, get marched down  
The church aisle  
No one knew, what you gave me,  
Understanding, courage, love and warmth  
Now, I've got nothing to flaunt  
Nothing to shout about, no one to care about.  
Left in this world, full of hate.  
I hate myself, for letting you go,  
But I hope you know, I really did care.

## Won't you celebrate with me?

From being put on earth knew line with no sense of purpose  
Shackled by invisible chains  
Freed by the natures vicious people.  
To suffer this thing they call life  
To be here today is a wonderful thing  
To go through what was unbearable  
How am I still here?  
There's a lot we missed  
There's a lot to celebrate  
Come and enjoy it with me.

## Untitled

High fences, rows of barbed  
wire, dull clouds, cameras  
watching a million miles away  
from anyone that cares.  
Full of people from all walks  
of life. Young people that  
don't seem to care, people that  
want or need to change. Plenty  
of people who have lost the  
plot. The man who couldn't  
cope and couldn't continue  
with life has ended his life  
through self-harm.  
There are many things to  
pass the time, but smoking drugs  
can put you in the Danger Zone,  
Setting fire to your cell,  
putting yourself at risk  
when all you ever need is a  
bit of help.

**Z**

**D**

**I**

## Untitled

Jammy and joyful, albeit jealous  
 Inventive and inquisitive, but sometimes insensitive.  
 Mindful of much, yet mad and mesmerised  
 Minimal in stature, but masterful and mighty in thought.  
 Yob no more, but yearning for youth.  
 Maximises masculinity meaninglessly.  
 Involved intently in imagination.  
 Curiously charismatic craftsman  
 Hesitant, Humble, Heartbroken.  
 Acknowledge, accept, acquit.  
 English, entangled, estranged.  
 Loving, lustful, lateral thinking  
 Family, Freedom, Fortune.  
 Resilient, re-fined, rugged, responsible.  
 Apparent, anxious, ambition.  
 No longer needed, never neglected, nameless  
 Contained and controlled, calculated yet clueless,  
 convicted by corruption.  
 Idealised, Ignored..Impregnable.  
 Saviour, Self-awareness, Sober.

**Jimmy**

## Untitled

Joyful and just in nature  
 Observant and oppositional  
 Solitary and shy  
 Humble and honest  
 Unusual and unpredictable  
 Articulate and apprehensive

Josh

## Untitled

Sometimes I feel like I'm trapped in a **corner** screaming  
 "I just can't take this no more."

The **screws** try to help but they probably just think  
 that I'm a **screw** loose or just another **rebel** like all the  
 other **rebels** that are around me. I've tried to get that  
 transfer **bus** out of here but these **buses** are like the  
**buses** on the outside – they never show up.

Jake

## Speaking for myself

You find me **reduced**, reluctantly, very reduced.

**Old**, yes. But obstinately objective.

**Balanced** most of the time with a bizarre feeling of being beached.

Well **educated**, eager and enthusiastic.

**Reasonably** resilient, always reliable.

**Tantalising** tabaxi Talisman.

**Secretly** searching for substance.

**Happy** homosexual, hebrew

**Oddly** optimistically omniscient.

**Lonely** and last, longing not to be.

**Learning** to limit my labile

**An** overly observant outlier

The **monkees**, a mysterious cure when I'm morose.

A **warmly** wacky writer

**Angry** at being abandoned, willing to be affectionate.

An **isolated** inquiring idealist

**Naively** navigatable and noir. Yes, noir should be the last word, how appropriate. **Noir**.

**Robert**

## Untitled

**Jabber** a lot, I like to wear my jacket a lot and one day I would like to win a big jackpot.

**ABC** I'm good with my alphabet, I always abide to the prison rules and I always accept new challenges.

**Karaoke** I'm not very good at, keeping fit is my number one goal and I won't ever let anything knock me down again.

**Eager**, I'm always eager to try new things, early and never late and I always enthusiastic and I'm sure after practice I will become excellent at doing this.

**Jake**

## For Dad

In a few words, I just want to say how proud I am to have had you as my dad. Words will not be able to express or describe my gratitude to God. Your life, your character and personality was and is still so inspiring. I remember you as a quiet man with a great vision. Your deeds and actions until now, speak louder than your speech. You always had a positive opinion and view, even when things were very bad. You never gave up and always said – “It’s not over yet, because the referee is on our side (God).”

You always said, “Willing is the power to become or achieve goals in life.” You were taught by example, coming from a lower-class family and background with many obstacles. But you finally reached a place in society and will forever be remembered for serving your country and your people. I remember the nation calling you a man of the people and sometimes it was like a dream with your popularity. Having others talking about your good heart and deeds, realising that you are my dad – and we were living in the same house. I just realised who you really were in your funeral. The huge crowd of people that we never knew, giving their testimonies about how God used you to be a blessing for many. In the Bible (2 Timothy 4:7-8) it says:

***“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith.”***

Even if God gives us a second chance of rebirth and gives us the freedom to choose a parent, I will always ask to have you as my dad. Thanks for everything dad; I will always love and miss you. Forever in my heart, papa.

**Franck**

(An excerpt from)

## Percy's Fisher-King Wound

If asked why you are not paying attention, you might say.

"My mind wandered off."

Or, if you are feeling apologetic.

"Sorry, my mind was elsewhere."

But there is a third possibility, well for him anyway.

When I wander, I don't wander aimlessly, flitting from one reality to another. I know exactly where I'm going. Moving stealthily, to avoid unwanted scrutiny. With speed of purpose, I'll gain maximum reward.

A fisher-king wound is a wound of the mind, not the body. A psyche broken so long ago that you no longer realise, it hasn't healed. Everything you see today, was once nothing more than a dream, someone else's reality.

Is this what scares him?

I'm heading for my own fabulous empire, from which the sun will never vanish. An island of my own creation. Bathed in the golden light of the hour before sunset, that brings such vivid clarity to the colours.

Most often, whenever he's alone, I'll abandon him. But sometimes I'll run away when he's under siege. Retreating to that plague only I know

He knows I'm gone. I send him a postcard – wish you were here. But if I showed you paradise, you'd bring others.

If you were there, the first thing you'd notice is the gin clear air, so crisp and clean. By day, it carries a full-rich floral sweetness. By night, a saline aroma brings its own influence.

The sun, a coppery red ball on a delightfully azure sky, hangs just above the horizon. Seemingly reluctant to touch it, for fear of spoiling its perfect golden light. Its warmth touches my face, with all the gentleness of a mother's loving caress. That drives all anxieties into a flawed full flight.

I'm standing on a path. Worn to the nth degree from long use. That inclines gently down as it makes its way toward the distant coastline. Behind me there is a door, standing alone. With neither doorframe nor wall holding it in place. A sturdily constructed oak four-panel, it's furniture in brass. The handles filigree patterns worn almost smooth. The panels, patina polished from the passage of millennia.

On either side of the path, so many brightly coloured flowers: Violets, Snowdrops, Forget-me-nots, Daffodils and Tulips along with many more.

On one side, climbing Roses so old their trunks are nearly six inches thick, and in their turn the Roses support Honeysuckle. It's obvious that none have been planted with the uniformity of the cultivated garden. Rather with the chaotic randomness and mingling that nature intended.

Almost hidden by the Honeysuckle draped Roses, a finger signpost. In one direction, the beach. While in the other, Clarksville is a mere twelve miles away.

The pure white sand of the seashore gives the impression of being granulated coral. So fine it envelops then releases my feet with every step. Stirring up a soft, warm sensation.

Much like stepping on spun sugar. About mid-way down the shore, a green line of seaweed fashions a virtually straight line, the full width of a shoreline. Marking the high tide point. Below the seaweed the sand appears to have been ironed flat. By the perpetual motion of the surf, running up the littoral from every lazily breaking wave. Then zephyr like, being drawn back into the constantly revolving waters.

This is my island. There are many like it, but this one is mine. My island is my best friend; it is my life. Without me, my island is useless. Without my island, I am useless. I must defend Avalon –

I will!

**Robert**

## Cognito Ergo Sum

*I think, therefore, I am.*

I came across this while watching the TV in prison and it stuck in my brain like glue because, it is incredibly easy to lose a sense of self in prison, and you start to feel like you're nothing but a number of a pay check for the system in which you live. Just remembering this phrase and reciting this when you feel less than who you are, could be just enough to help.

It can mean many things; but for me, it means that I am enough to continue living, I am enough to be a dad – because if I wasn't, then I wouldn't have the ability of thought, I wouldn't be alive.

Therefore, *Cognito Ergo Sum*.

**Josh**

## Untitled

They are powerful, you may not know it, but they have the power to hurt, heal, connect, break apart and save. It can destroy countries or bring one together, separate people or unite them as one, it's used daily in every part of the globe, without it we would be lost.

How it first came about, I do not know, but it is the most powerful thing in the world. It is becoming lost more and more, soon we may not even use it, hopefully not in my lifetime.

I will never not use it, and I am eager to learn more forms to become more diverse, it is the most important thing in life. It is also beautiful in its own way.

No one realises just how much we need it.

**What is it?**

**Josh**

## Is it Time to Go Out?

When they say it's time to go, there are so many parts of you that can't face the community.

Maybe you've been in such a long time, that so many things may have changed. For me 20 years has left me shocked as everyone wanders around looking at screen in their hands,

No one seems to want to talk anymore, not even the dog walkers in the park,

After 6 months it's just a foggy mess again, and all too soon I am asking to come back to prison (twice now),

And now they want me to do more therapy (so it will be another 4 years)

How is that going to help me stay outside?

Still can't find a way out!

If only I could meet someone to keep me on track, or prison will be the end of me!

**Matthew**

## Angry

Adjective. Feeling of showing anger. Something my younger – less wise – self was all too familiar with feeling. Natural to feel angry as a kid, perhaps? But why was I? I had my reasons.

Peripheral as they were, they clearly mattered to me. But what did feeling angry achieve? Nothing in the long run. And in fact, nothing at the time, either. Nothing more than high blood pressure, a sore fist and on occasion, a sore bum. But have I grown out of feeling angry? Definitely not! However, with age came the ability to utilise this feeling. This emotion. When necessary, this tool. But that isn't the case all the time. More often than not, (and especially with my current situation), this five letter word floods my brain and body and becomes that well acquainted friend of mine. Despite my best efforts to become strangers, it moves like my shadow. Not always on show but easily found when looked for. Though our relationship has faded due to the relentless tick of the clock, I seem to have disguised this emotion with another close friend of mine. Sadness. But despite the intimate entanglement that these emotions have always had, Anger has taken the back seat, becoming more and more introverted with old age. But this is no farewell. Like my favourite screwdriver., anger remains reserved for the right time and place.

But anger should not be misconceived with his younger brothers annoyance and frustration. For they remain prominent throughout my daily life, working tirelessly in the shadow of their predecessor.

**Josh**

## Mum

Mum,

With all of the times you made me cry,  
 And how you made me feel like I wanted to die  
 Sometimes I don't know how I even survived,  
 Or how I didn't die inside  
 It was always me, myself and I  
 But I didn't even get to say goodbye,  
 Even with all this pain  
 I still managed to stay in the right lane  
 I don't need you in my amazing life  
 The only thing that meant something to me was a knife  
 So you used to be my loving mum,  
 But now all you are to me is someone.

## Untitled

Disappointing  
 Yesterdays  
 Lead to  
 Aches and  
 Numbness.  
 Crushed  
 Under  
 Lost  
 Love's  
 Everlasting  
 Necrosis.

**SWS**

## Untitled

I am what I am.  
I am where I am because of love.  
Was it love or was it lust?  
They say love is beautiful, but love can also be blinding –  
For the most extremist form of love is to kill, yet love can  
also mend broken hearts.  
Is love only perceived as pure?

I am where I am because of faith.  
Last year, I lost a close mate.  
We were brothers uno; brothers from another mother is  
what we used to say.  
It hit different knowing I'm never gonna see his face,  
but faith is what keeps me going.  
Knowing its not the last time I'm gonna see him again.

I am where I am because of me.  
Because I chose to rise when falling felt easier.  
Because I stayed when running called my name  
I faced the mirror in my darkest hours.  
Owning my faults, carrying my pain.  
I learned that healing starts within,  
That strength is built through every scar.  
No one walked my steps but me alone,  
Every lesson shaped the man I am today.

I am where I am because of my family.  
 They are the roots that hold me steady.  
 The quiet whispers in stormy nights,  
 The hands that lifted me when I was weary.  
 Through the toughest years, they stood unshaken.  
 Their faith a light when mine was taken.  
 They showed me love, not loud but true.  
 In every scar, they helped me through.  
 The purest form of love they gave,  
 A gift no measure could enslave.  
 For every prayer, each call,  
 I am who I am – because they gave their all.  
 And so with every breath I take,  
 Gratitude my soul will make;  
 For in their arms I found my place.  
 My family, my strength, my grace.  
 A bond that can never break.

**Cuz**

## The Self behind bars.

One voice says, stay hard, survive, don't let them glimpse  
 the cracks.  
 The other whispers, I'm drained of carrying this  
 weight alone.  
 Both dwell in the same body.  
 Both battle the same invisible war.  
 Between them, the mind finds ways to endure.  
 One urges control – hold anger, hold fear, hold tears  
 The other encourages release.  
 Let some go, let it breath, let it matter.  
 We navigate this balance daily.  
 Learning which voice preserves life and which confines it.  
 The true self is neither the hardest mask nor the shadows  
 of the past.  
 It is the part that listens,  
 That reaches out, that believes life continues beyond  
 these bars.  
 When these voices meet, even in confinement.  
 Healing beings softly and steadily grows.

**Cuz**

## The Lost Boy

There was once a boy so tall and so strong  
 Who'd cry at night, he just wanted to belong  
 People thought he was scary but I know I know he  
 was misunderstood  
 And though he'd done bad things his heart his heart  
 was good  
 For years he travelled the country looking for a home  
 He'd watched friends die and children grow  
 Now this part may sound like a story but its all true  
 He'd been in a coma, had pneumonia but smiled all the  
 way through  
 How could someone smile through all these things?  
 Well God had gave him a talent and o boy could this  
 boy sing!  
 So that's what he'd do everyday to get through  
 Until he found 2 special people, that's you and you!  
 Every time he'd smile when he'd go to love road  
 You see for so long this boy was lost but he'd finally  
 found home

## Untitled

Our Sky  
 I love you just as I love I  
 Everyday tell yourself  
 'I am strong, I am important, I am kind'  
 And though I am a child of man, I am child of god  
 And real love real love is never lost  
 There is love in my heart and love in the sky  
 I am worthy of all I can dream and I'll always try'  
 You'll never be forgot  
 You're super special, super loving  
 You are the light in our sky

## Prison

Prison is time spent gathering positive thoughts  
 Viewing the things that lead to change  
 Trapped in a cage, praying for better days.  
 Watching my hair and beard turn grey.  
 So many chances to put things right.  
 So many experiences to go forward  
 Still aware of my current situations  
 Physically my debt to society could never be paid  
 Do I dare say I will make a payment spiritually?  
 Mind-set upgraded towards doing what's right and  
 Knowing how to behave.  
 Spiritually I am aware,  
 Eyes open into the un-seen with the eyes  
 Silence before you felt it  
 Faith, hope and love. My journey towards the light,  
 That leads me to my grave  
 My lifetime in prison was great.  
 I've changed.  
 Big Bold and Brave

**Marvellous**

## I see

Understand myself like a light in a dark room, revealed to a  
 blind man who was given sight again.  
 The wonderful world and its wonders, early morning  
 bird songs, singing harmony and timing their calls to fall,  
 between the notes of others.  
 At night I hear voices, other inmates' conversation bringing  
 out a whole different orchestra.  
 My story and positive outcome is only uncertain for those  
 who don't believe. Thoughts that drift away like a thin pale  
 white smoke, forgotten like broken statues in a graveyard.  
 Silence and late night madness without the moon, knowing  
 that a man not justified by the works of law, but by the  
 Most High  
 Viewing the things that lead to change, story of my life –  
 Big Bold and Brave

**Marvellous**

## Untitled

Even though we all go through pain, struggle and stress  
in prison  
Remember we all have a choice  
People want to change  
People can change  
We can change  
We all have a choice

**MSB**

## Untitled

Everyone of us has had something the past that has been  
bad or happened to us. And it's  
blocking us right now and stopping us from being the person  
we want to become.

All we gotta do is face it, face the fear and overcome it to  
achieve and be who we wanna be.

**MSB**

## (title coming soon)

You are my witness, and I am what you hold  
For one not held, there's comfort in the embrace.

Stripped back by your gaze,  
I begin to confide,  
No one knows me like you,  
You bury my secrets in unmarked graves.

You don't judge,  
You were raised by heavy hands,  
So malevolence lurks in you like belts hidden in wardrobes

And though, I lean on you when I can't stand  
You can't stand when I lean on you  
I can't be made of what you're made.

You bite the bitter lemon,  
Eyes closed from it's sour, stinging from my truth.

You've seen a boy and a man contemplate,  
Existence,  
Battle himself a thousand times to remain  
In existence  
Whose fault is not yours,  
That this,  
Is his existence

I once lashed out  
Your stare now red,  
Knuckles weeping,  
How easy I become the devil you were made for.

If these watchful walls could talk,  
They would choke on the blood and tears I've painted  
on them.

C.T

## Block Life (Part One)

Big whips, big chains  
 Pretty women, sexy month  
 This is what you're sold when you're told about the road.  
 So you buy a ticket, who wouldn't want to live the dream?  
 Life!  
 Big breasts, fat ass  
 Nice bling, fast cars.  
 You want that prize, so you buy a ticket  
 No one told you, you could die from a knife

Welcome to the block life #roadman #shitlife  
 He killed your friend, so you want revenge  
 It all got too deep, really peak.  
 The bullet ricocheted and hit an innocent bystander  
 No revenge for your mate  
 And you're still full of hate.  
 Now you're on the wing, but you will never sing  
 Your mum, his mum and your dogz mum  
 Have one thing in common: they've lost a son

This is not the dream you were sold or told

You want a refund, but that's not the way of the road son  
 His myum and your mates mum said goodbye to their son  
 You tell your mum it's not her fault

That does not help, she still feels like a bad mum  
 #FTHEBLOCKLIFE  
 It's funny how it goes, the man who wrote this loved the  
 road and his bros  
 Don't act like he don't know or like he never his bros  
 He just wants to you know the life is no life  
 I would know because I bought a ticket.

R.C

## Block Life (Part Two)

Yes boss, no boss, do I have to squat boss?  
 You want to cry but you have to try not to  
 Pad mate asked you if you have any drugs before he asked  
 your name.  
 Yes boss, no boss, do I have to get padded up again?  
 You see your first jail fight and now you're scared  
 The govs could not help of save that by

Yes boss, no boss, do I have to shower with other  
 naked men?  
 You had your first and got rushed but hold your own  
 Man on the wing, rate you now, no longer your city but your  
 name now.  
 No more yes boss, no boss, you're one of the lads but still  
 not topdog yet  
 Call connecting, call connecting 10pm down and still  
 no answer  
 You have your first visit and like the phone call you  
 get ghosted.  
 All your boys have forgot you after all the love you  
 have them  
 You try your mums number after some weeks and she is the  
 only one who misses you  
 She see's happy to see her son, sad he's in jail, not made just

disappointed in her son.  
 Bun you boss, keep it moving miss, no longer see them  
 as people  
 You put in a shift and mash up boss, no more home time  
 23 hour bang up life that's really block life  
 You start to think if it was all worth it?  
 You lie, and say yes, inside you cry out in pain, welcome to 23  
 hour band up  
 You can not fight the tears back all you want is your mum  
 So you smoke spice  
 Now you want a refund more than ever yet once again the  
 roads said no  
 Your girl had your yout 3 years ago and she does not know  
 her dad  
 Your princess cries on the visit and that gets you mad  
 Why mummy why, who is that man? She asked for the  
 whole visit  
 No you're a space girl, where did it all go wrong  
 The number one question is will you come home to say bye  
 to your mum  
 Yes boss, no boss, you're lying I spoke to her last night  
 You should have said love you mum instead you said you  
 hate her  
 Because she said no I will not buy you spice  
 10 year in your half the man you was and all you want is to  
 go home and see your mum  
 Goodbye mum, I love you and sorry for being a bad son.

**R.C**

## Angel

Have you ever met an angel?  
 I'm sure I've met one before.  
 I've met a lot of women, but none come close to her.  
 She was perfect, she was flawless, she was gorgeous.  
 Her personality was enormous.  
 She educated me, but not just on women.  
 She opened up my eyes to all my sinning.  
 Told me if I changed my ways I can be forgiven  
 For all my life, I will remember her kindness.  
 She taught me not to forget the power of The Almighty.  
 There's billions of women on this planet but she would  
 stand out amongst them all.  
 I'm telling the truth when I say I met an angel.  
 And she was only small.

**Tommy**

## NHS

Let me take a minute to thank the NHS, I know times are  
 hard right now, but we all know you try to do your best,  
 rushed off your feet with hardly no rest.  
 I've needed your help on multiple occasions; I wouldn't be  
 here if it wasn't for your patience.  
 We could all learn a lot from the kindness you show, the  
 dedication you show to your job when you still turn up for  
 work in the snow.  
 You've made us believe that miracles can be true, you and  
 bring the dead back alive and for that I thank you so does  
 our nation too  
 I'm in power so I can't fix the budget, but if I was, your pay  
 checks would have six zeros on it  
 I would just like to you my appreciation, I've got a little girl  
 and she's a nurse in the making.  
 I love the NHS, we all need the NHS, all the clinical workers  
 hands down the best.

**Tommy**

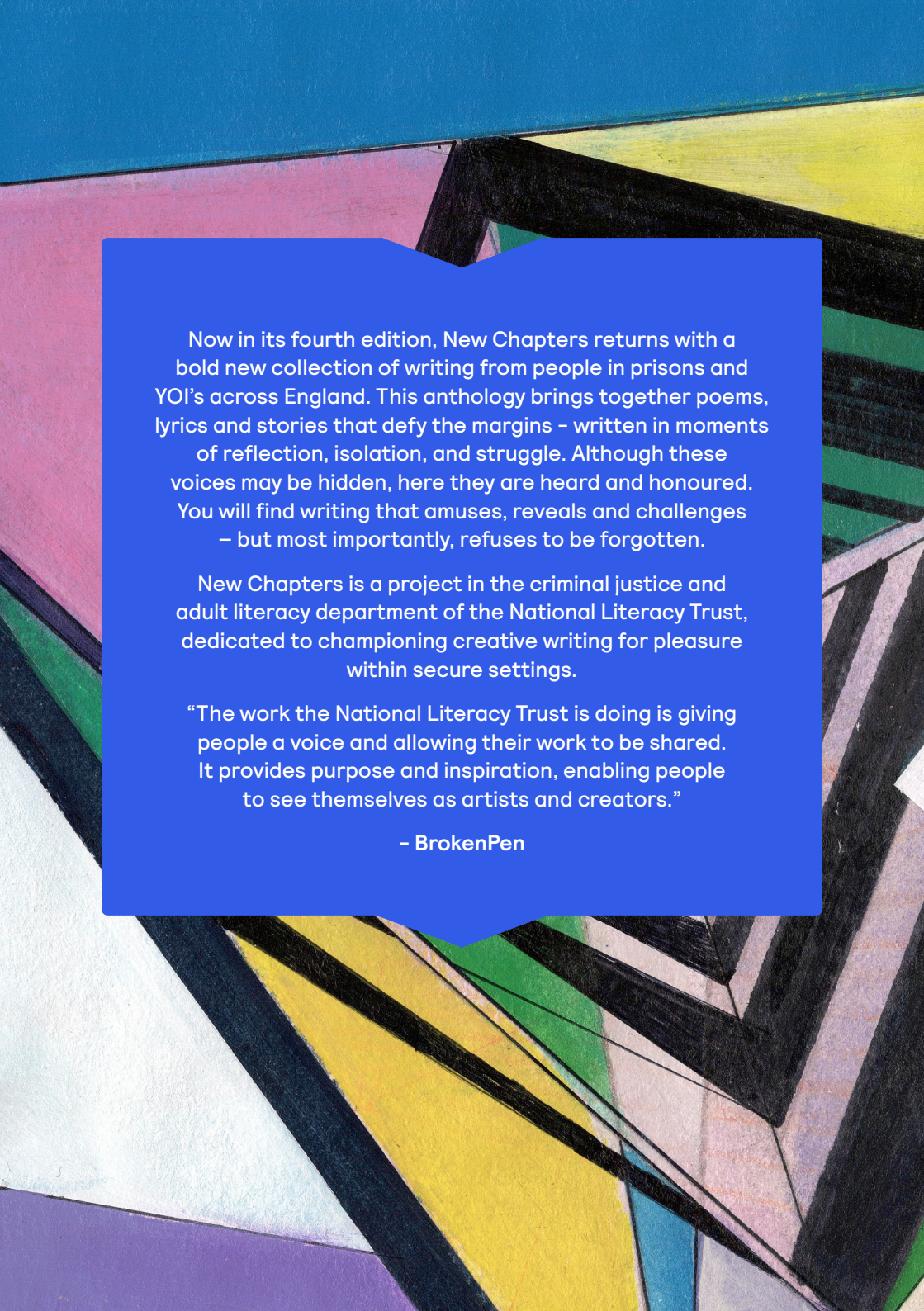
**SLM**

## Untitled

I remember seeing the big gates for  
The  
First time.  
I remember driving through the big gates  
For the last time.  
I remember thinking there's no chance of escape  
Now it really was too late.  
I remember getting off the bus,  
The guards weren't in no rush.  
I remember seeing their faces for  
The first time  
Now wasn't the time to whine.  
I remember first seeing my cell.  
This is now my living hell!  
I remember first looking at my new  
Bed.  
I really would rather live in a  
Shed.  
I remember hearing the door slam  
Shut.  
I  
Really am in a  
Rut!

**Nicholas**



An abstract geometric artwork featuring bold, thick black outlines that create a sense of depth and perspective. The composition is filled with large, flat areas of color, including a vibrant blue at the top, a bright yellow on the right, a deep red on the left, and various shades of green and purple at the bottom. The lines intersect to form a complex, multi-dimensional structure that resembles a stylized architectural space or a series of overlapping planes.

Now in its fourth edition, New Chapters returns with a bold new collection of writing from people in prisons and YOI's across England. This anthology brings together poems, lyrics and stories that defy the margins – written in moments of reflection, isolation, and struggle. Although these voices may be hidden, here they are heard and honoured. You will find writing that amuses, reveals and challenges – but most importantly, refuses to be forgotten.

New Chapters is a project in the criminal justice and adult literacy department of the National Literacy Trust, dedicated to championing creative writing for pleasure within secure settings.

“The work the National Literacy Trust is doing is giving people a voice and allowing their work to be shared. It provides purpose and inspiration, enabling people to see themselves as artists and creators.”

– BrokenPen