

POEMS FROM A MOD

My Journey Through Trauma, Survival and Recovery



by Michael Byrne

My name is Michael. I'm 49, married and have been blessed with a beautiful boy who is two years old ... I also suffer from Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD).

My CPTSD is the result of an accumulation of many traumatic events in my life. Those traumatic events started when I was a young child when I was verbally, emotionally and physically abused by both my parents. This happened on a regular basis until I was sixteen. During this time I also witnessed physical abuse carried out by my parents against each other.

When I was twenty-six, my father was brutally murdered in his home when he woke up to a burglar stealing his television. My father was beaten to death by a man who turned out to be an ex army boxer. It was said my father's injuries were consistent with being hit by a bus.

In November 2013, along with my best mate, I was standing in a bar called The Clutha when unfortunately a helicopter crashed through the roof killing 10 people.

In 2014, I was diagnosed with PTSD. During that year I was extremely suicidal, had survivor guilt and I did not know how to deal with the feelings or the situation so I buried them. Later in 2014 it was discovered that I had a tumour in my throat which could potentially be cancerous and was required to be removed urgently. Surgery was scheduled for early December and a tumour the size of an orange, along with half of my thyroid, was removed from the throat. I was later given the news that the tumour was benign.

In 2015, after working a 14 hour day, I came home and went to the loo ... and blacked out. I woke up in a pool of blood with my head split open. I required to go to hospital for immediate attention to have the wound stitched.

In July 2016 my wife gave birth to our beautiful boy Blaine and, while this was clearly the highlight of my life, I had feelings of inadequacy, fear and catastrophising about the future.

In April 2017 I was involved in a car crash that resulted in me having a head injury and being admitted to hospital a few days later suffering from a suspected stroke. I begged the hospital staff to let me out as I didn't want to be in hospital. After an overnight stay and multiple tests I was released with medication.

From this date forward my breakdown began.

When I had flashbacks of the car crash, the bang of the crash reminded me of the noise of the helicopter crashing into The Clutha. The devastation and scenes in The Clutha reminded me of my father's dead body that I had to identify in the City Morgue. Coincidentally, my father was murdered when he was 48 and I turned 48 last year. All of these things just became too much to bear and I began to de-construct both my private life and professional life.

All these events came to a head in January 2018 where, through my actions as a result of my illness, I was suspended from work. This is critical to me as work had always been my avoidance mechanism for not dealing with all of my traumatic

events and now my work in itself has become a traumatic event due to the way I was treated by my employer. Since January 2018 I have had many dark days contemplating and planning suicide, but with the help of my wife, my son, my best friend and the many other people, including Audrey from Stigma Free Lanarkshire that I have made a meaningful connection with, I feel that I have reached a positive 'Turning Point' in my recovery.

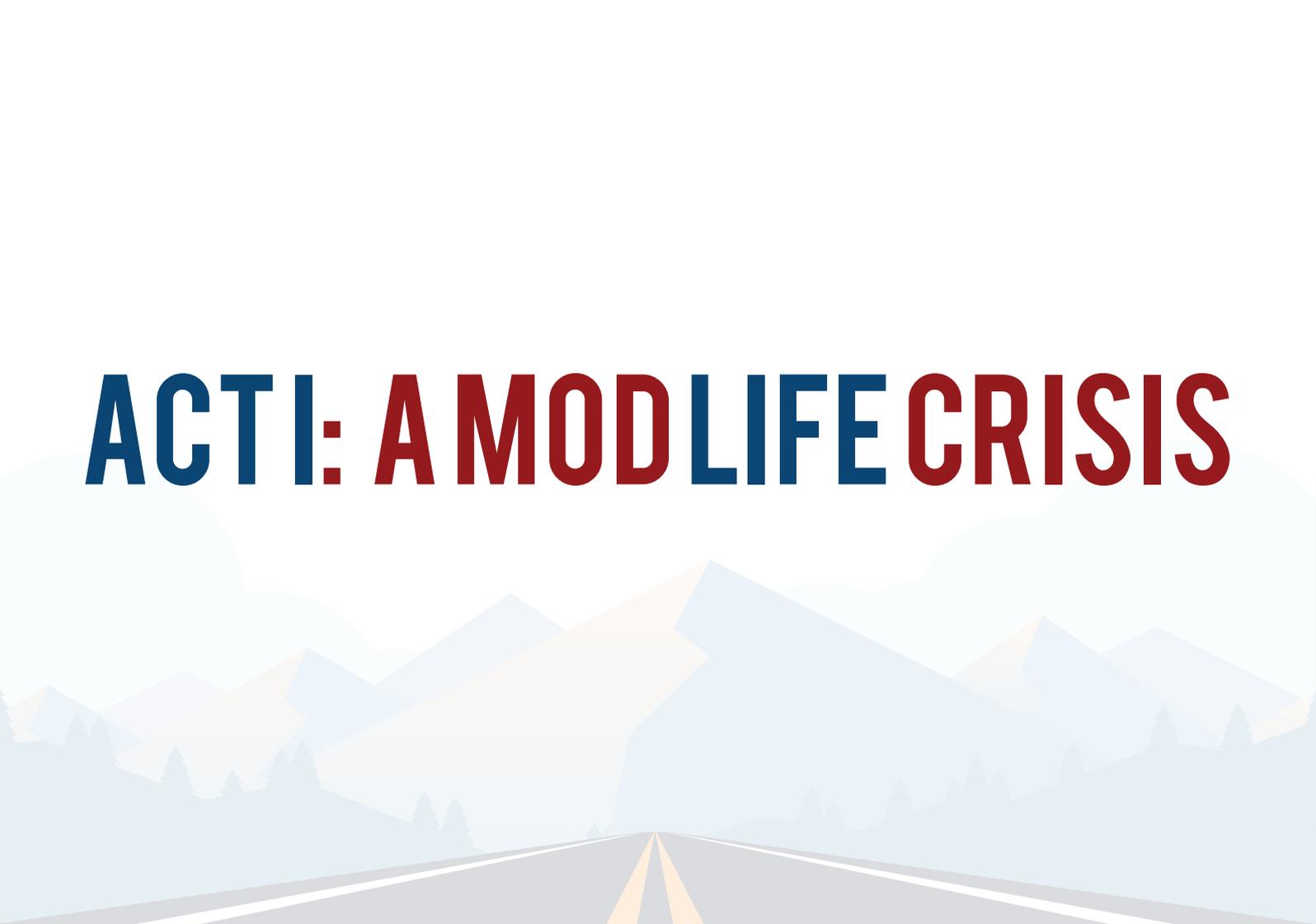
The enclosed poems are a descriptor of my journey since January 2018; a journey in which I am still travelling ... sometimes backwards but more often forwards.

Michael Byrne.

I'd like to thank Audrey, Rosie and Gerald at Stigma Free Lanarkshire for having the belief in me that my poems may help fellow survivors on their journey to recovery.

I'd also like to thank every single person who has helped me on my journey through recovery.

ACT I: A MOD LIFE CRISIS



The Final Chime

I just want to stop this pain
It falls on me like endless rain
Why why why each day I cry
So much so my tears are dry

All I want is joy and gladness
I've lived too long in the shadows of sadness
All I feel inside is numb
Knowing that I will succumb

My pain just never goes away
I realise now it's here to stay
No matter what I say, think or do
I'll never be normal, unlike you

I've worn this suit of armour all my life
Hidden pain from family, friends and my wife
I know now I can't go on
I pray each night I don't last until dawn

No-one really understands
My life now is in my hands
I live each day an hour at a time
But I know soon I'll hear the final chime.

Ember

I'm so filled with this sorrow
Can't get through today, can't bear to think about tomorrow
This pain, this pain, this pain
So indescribable I can't explain

Not part of this world nothing seems real
So numb with pain, I just can't feel
I'm the loneliest guy on this planet
This can't be all there is to life...can it?

Decision made my path is chosen
My time on earth will soon be frozen
To those I've known I'll be a memory
Except perhaps for two or three

Plan to be made and a date to be set
It's nothing that I'll regret
When my last remain is a dying ember
I'll be nothing more to remember.

Forever Cynic

Diagnosed with Complex PTSD
Now I know why I've been Me
Living all the years with my torture
Never knowing if it was nature or nurture

Hoping that I'm still a man
But knowing you choose not to understand
Intent to punish and not to care
Ignoring all the years I've been there

Giving you everything for 7 years
Blood and sweat despite my tears
You have a real lack of understanding
Why on myself I'm so demanding

After 7 years to be cast aside
No regard for how I feel inside
No care, understanding or compassion
To play the victim is your passion

But I know what you're really like
A forever cynic with short sight
Who just can't see the bigger picture
That in your job you're not a permanent fixture.

Glass Head

I've repeatedly wished and said
If only I had a glass head
So when I'm unwell
You could look inside and see for yourself my Private Hell

Not wonder what was wrong
When I'm being 'Silent and Strong'
Then you could see my illness is true
And hope that in future it doesn't happen to you

Not doubt that I am unwell
Because unlike broken bones, from the outside you can't tell
My illness is real despite your ignorance
You need to discover compassion, love and tolerance

When you do you'll understand what you can't see
CPTSD and hopefully, why I am me.

The Black Dog

The black dog is back with it's bite
Chasing me through the day not resting at night
Baring it's teeth before it devours
My body, mind and soul for hours and hours

Returning to bite with a savage hunger
Not sure if I can hold on much longer
It feels like the pain will last forever
Teeth so sharp they cut like a razor

He bites and snarls and I'm so scared
Inside I scream but can't be heard
Knowing I can never run away
As he knows where to find me on any given day

Why does this dog seek me out?
Back for another lengthy bout
For a fight I might never win
Can I really ever defeat him?

I long for the time when this dog becomes my friend
And together we bring this pain to an end
But until the time I become his master
I'm terrified of the next disaster.

Devil's Chase

Every day I run the Devil's Chase
I stare into his dark and evil face
He stares back with his empty eyes
Telling me 'It's your time to die'

I run and run but can never escape
I'm always within his sight, his reach...his gape
He pulls me back by my shirt tail
Into every disaster without fail

Making me feel my time has come
Knowing the devil I cannot outrun
This is it now he has me in his grasp
I feel him close, I feel his breath...his rasp

I can feel the burning pain for the 7th time
Too many for anyone's life...but not mine
I've finally lost all my strength and power
I know this devil will feast for my final hours

He finally has my heart and soul
Since my birth it's been his goal
This is now my end
Into his deep dark grasp I finally descend.

A Matter of Time

I'm a dead man walking
I'm done with all of this talking
It's just a matter of time
Before I reach the end of my line

Bound by all the chains and shackles
Of my daily life and it's debacles
It's now just a matter of time
Now the light has gone out of my shine

Are all men really created equal
Why was I chosen for this lifetime of painful squall?
When others lead a happy and fulfilling life
Yet my pain is a forever stabbing knife

Why are the traumas of life so random?
It makes it difficult to understand them
Why has my life been so traumatic?
When others' lives have been so fantastic

Can I shake this dead man walking feeling?
Will I ever start believing?
That I can beat all my pain
And feel free to live my life again

I hope it's just a matter of time.

ACT II: A MODS REALISATION



A Beauty

A beauty in the sun
A beauty that is second to none
A beauty you can see as far as the eye
A beauty that can't be denied

A beauty that fills your life
A beauty in the strength of your wife
A beauty without compare
A beauty that can be seen everywhere

A beauty in everyone
A beauty in fathers and sons
A beauty as clear as the crystal waters
A beauty in mothers and daughters

A beauty that is all around
A beauty from the sky to the ground
A beauty that awaits to be found
A beauty in every sound

A beauty that you can't see but only feel
A beauty that you must believe is real
A beauty in the fire of desire
A beauty in the match that started my fire

A beauty that I must sustain
Through my dark clouds, wind and my rain
Through my storms, troubles and my strife
Only then will I see this beauty really is my
life.

Overcome

I am in the middle of my journey through depression
Hence the reason I'm at this session
On this journey I've met new friends
Who knows where this journey ends

I am on a journey of discovery
About my life and why I am me
The good and the bad
And the reasons why I'm so sad

Having recently met my mentor
I now understand what he is meant for
To perhaps be my father figure
And teach me how to live my life better, fulfilling and bigger

I now know I have Complex PTSD
I now know it has defined me
But all of this is in the past
And I want to learn how to live my life and fast

To be able to enjoy the simple things
The beautiful clouds or hearing the birds sing
But I now know that I can overcome
By taking each day one by one.

Surfing

My illness comes in waves
It's strange how it behaves
The waves arrive and turn things upside down
Turning my smiles into frowns

It arrives without warning
Noon, night or the morning
It seems to have its own high tide
Forcing me to run and hide

When the waves go out I can rest
If I've managed to ride their crest
But as the waves return I can taste their bitter
salt
As I hope to survive the waves assault

The waves are deep and full of turmoil
To their master, Depression, they are loyal
They very rarely turn out to be shallow
I feel like a sentenced man going to the
gallows

As each wave comes I brace myself
Will I be able to preserve my mental health?
Will I be able to keep myself afloat?
I'm lost at sea without a lifeboat

When the waves finally calm
I know that I'm a changed man
Left for dead on a shipwrecked island
Can I drag myself up for one more stand?

I try and catch my breath and breathe
As at last the waves leave
I can feel them run from my body
It seems to me that wave surfing is my new
hobby.

Hope

What is life without hope?
It's like a shower without soap
Without hope there is nothing
We all need to want something

What is life without hope?
It's like the sea without boats
Without hope there is nothing
We all need to love something

What is life without hope?
It's like freezing in winter without a coat
Without hope there is nothing
We all need to need something

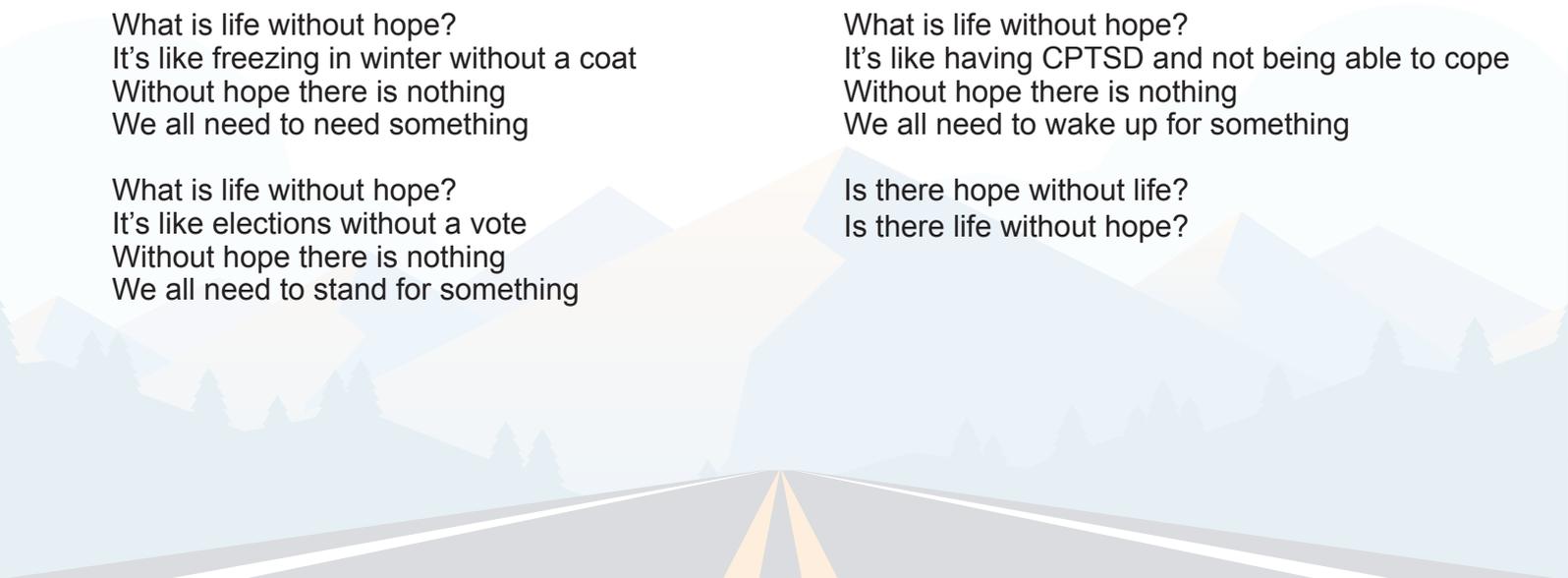
What is life without hope?
It's like elections without a vote
Without hope there is nothing
We all need to stand for something

What is life without hope?
It's like swimming and not staying afloat
Without hope there is nothing
We all need to believe in something

What is life without hope?
It's like hanging without a rope
Without hope there is nothing
We all need to love something

What is life without hope?
It's like having PTSD and not being able to cope
Without hope there is nothing
We all need to wake up for something

Is there hope without life?
Is there life without hope?



Destiny

What is my destiny?
What is to become of me?
Is destiny a thing to be desired?
Or something to watch and admire?

Will I be able to write my own story?
Or will I be defined by my history?
Will I be able to look positively to the future?
Or be lost in the past...I'm just not sure?

I didn't come this far to come this far
But it's like a rear view mirror in your car
Do you keep looking behind you to check if you're safe?
Or look forward believing you're going to a safe place?

How do you determine your destiny?
Does it really set you free?
Is it possible to have a great life and laugh?
Or is it better to throw in the towel and take an early bath?

Is it possible to control my emotions?
And my subsequent deadly notions?
Is it possible to control my destiny?
Is it really down to me?

Veneer

Back then I thought everything was clear
But in reflection it was a well crafted veneer
It was a sane reaction to insane circumstances
But I took a chance with frequent romances

Til the time it broke my heart
And I just couldn't see a brand new start
I'd never felt pain like that before
And always have, since she closed that door

You try to float off into the distance
But you know your heart is resistant
But everyone makes a fatal mistake
Sometimes we do it for our own sake

But I know I have a psychic civil war
I now know what it is for
The most angry voices come from the darkest place
To the point in the mirror I can't look at my face

But I am a survivor
I want to learn what my life is for
I will listen to the voices
But ultimately I will make my own choices.

ACT III: A MOD ABROAD



Sha-La-La-La-La-Jo

People pretend they don't know
But for the most of them it shows
They will ask the questions and pretend to understand
But I know they don't, as no-one can

Iain and Jo have been great
Told me their experiences and their fate
And it's been good to share
And see that there are people who care

I try and see the beauty of every day
The stunning views and the sunshine's rays
To try and live in the moment
And not to worry about things that haven't happened yet

To bring myself back to the present
And the things that are meant
To not have the feelings and fear
And just enjoy being here

But I think I'm doing well
I hope it shows and people can tell
I didn't expect people to understand
As I know they don't...but I now know there are a few who can.

FD18

Fathers Day
What a way
To spend with my son
And his beautiful mum

To wake up in the sunshine
And realise what is mine
To be loved by them both
More than Blaine loves his toast

We went for brunch at Posadonia
And it rained like it does in Caledonia
The streets were filled with deep puddles
And in shop doorways we would huddle

Upto the bakery for some crepes and chocolate cake
Some chocolate mint ice cream Blaine would take
Teasing me with his thoughts of sharing
But instead spilling it down the clothes he was wearing

Off to The Kool Pool and time to relax
With Blaine enjoying the baby pool to the max
Jumping and splashing as he jumps in and out
Then a nice long sleep afterward was never in doubt

Next we went for the carvery at Ellie's
The rain had cleared so no need for wellies
We finished the meal with 3 empty plates
This is one place the 3 of us rate

Back to the room and not far to go
I went to watch the 2nd half of the Germany game against
Mexico
Afterwards up in the room I put on some Northern Soul
And a wee dance with Blaine and mum made me whole

The weeguy and I headed to Pavlos while mum got ready
The both of us dressed in our new Fred Perry's
The both of us really looking the part
As mum made sure we looked ultra smart

We stayed in Pavlos until closing time
With Blaine shouting on Dougie until it wasn't fine
We all walked back to the room and reflected on the day
I had a perfect Father's Day in every way.

I would like to thank my wife
For coming into my life
And for making today such a special time
And for making memories that will always be mine.

Boat

Fishing with Peter early on Thursday
What a beautiful sunrise to start the day
I sat admiring the view on the pier
Trying to contain my excitement and fear

The sunrise was such a beautiful sight
It must give hope at the end of each night
Everything was quiet and calm
It's like a peaceful shot in the arm

The sea was as still as ice
A view I simply can't describe
Moving at speed along the surface
Amazement written all over my face

Stopping to throw in our lines
Both talking of harder times
The time moved so fast
As we spoke about our pasts

Almost immediately I caught a bite
A small flat fish with little fight
Peter caught another flat fish too
We were optimistic this was the start of a few

Despite our best attempts we caught no more
Our egos bruised, battered and sore

A few other areas were tried
But none provided more fish to fry

So we dropped the anchor and went in for a dip
Tops off and off the boat I slip
My heart stops as I hit the depths
Trying hard to get my breath

We swim onto the shore
And we both chat some more
About the pressure of life
And about our troubles and strife

Discussing that less is more and more is less
And how life judges on how people dress
What kind of world we're living in
And will we really ever win

Back on the boat to return to dry land
Whilst docking the boat I give Peter a hand
Making sure the boat is docked correctly in it's space
With concentration on our face

The trip ends back at the harbour
I really couldn't have asked for more
The views, the catch, the chat and the hope
A perfect trip on Peter's boat.

Knockout

I'm going to be the best fighter ever
I've fought and beaten all my challengers
In my 49 year career
I've nothing now left to fear

Some I've knocked out in the early rounds
Some gave me problems and put me down
But I've picked myself up from the canvas
Even when I've been knocked on my ass

When I got up groggy and sore
I dragged myself up off the floor
Met the challenger full head on
And showed them all I was strong

Of my opponents there were many
Who would've knocked out lesser men than me
My record so far is 49 and 0
And I'm determined my 0 won't go

I've got the biggest fight on my hands right now
It might be a long 12 rounds
But I believe I can knock this contender out
And give this one the full 10 count

I'll maintain my unbeaten record
Because I believe in the words of Henry Ford
If you believe you can or can't either way you're right
And I believe I'm going to win all my fights.

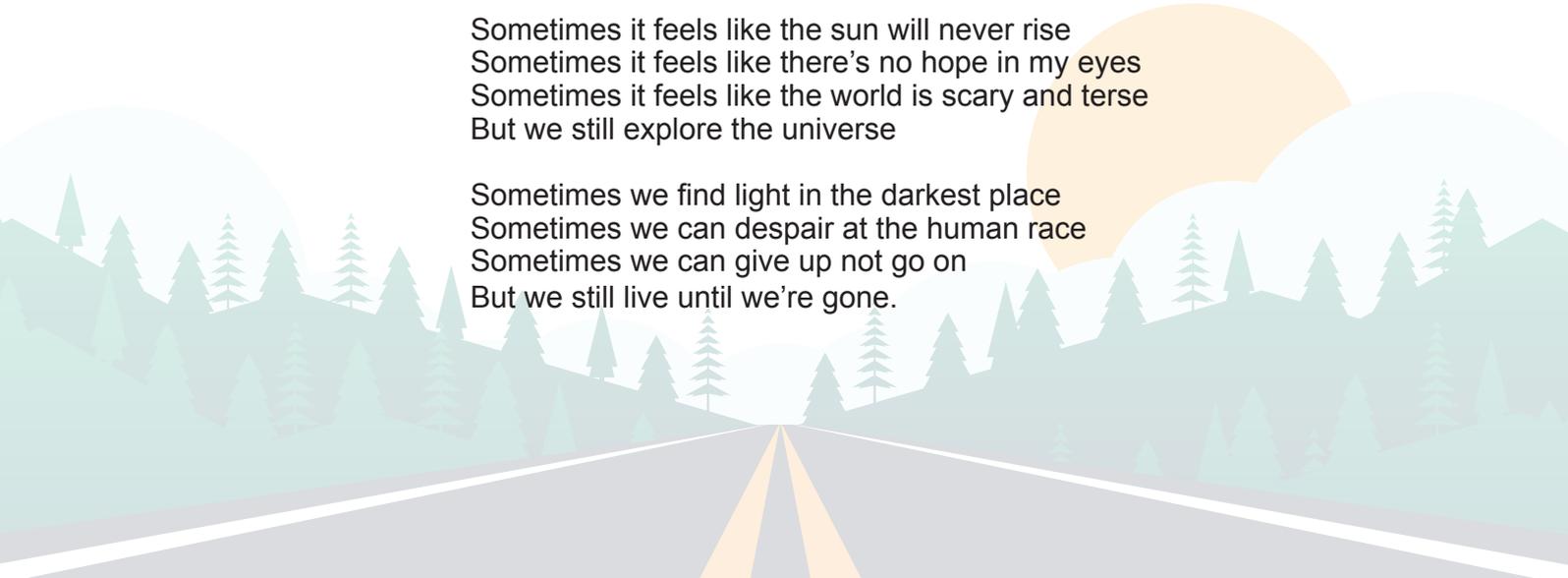
Sometimes

Sometimes it snows in May but summer always comes
Sometimes it feels like the world has stopped but it always turns
Sometimes it feels like mountains can't be climbed
But Everest gets conquered all the time

Sometimes it feels like hope and despair
Sometimes I never want to go there
Sometimes I think I will never overcome
But men with no legs can still run

Sometimes it feels like the sun will never rise
Sometimes it feels like there's no hope in my eyes
Sometimes it feels like the world is scary and terse
But we still explore the universe

Sometimes we find light in the darkest place
Sometimes we can despair at the human race
Sometimes we can give up not go on
But we still live until we're gone.



ACTIV: A CHANGING MOD



Leap of Faith

Leaving my job may be my biggest leap of faith
Will I be able to fill the space?
Leaving behind all the responsibility
And believing in my future ability

Will I still have a value?
In everything I say or do?
I always let my job define me
Will I be able to let it be?

Will I cope with what the future brings?
I look at the past and see how I've handled things
Will I miss the stress and fear?
Or will I simply enjoy each day I'm here?

I long for the intrinsic value
And not the things I thought I knew
The car, the house and the status
I now see it for the bullshit it is

So a leap of faith it has to be
I want to see and find and find what I see
I just want to be content
And live my life the way it was meant.

Moving on

On the edge of the precipice
I suppose I always knew it would come to this
Overtaken by the fear
Of exactly what has brought me here

Not knowing what the future holds
I suppose it depends on what I'm told
Will I decide to walk away
Or will I fight for another day

I've had almost 5 years of the unknown
Never been able to figure out where I'm going
I've always been engulfed by the cloud
Wrapped around me like the Turin Shroud

I've had to deal with the visions of The Clutha
And the horrors of my father's murder
All my traumas have come to the fore
These past 5 years or more

Why am I continually punished by life's traumas?
There are so many I've forgotten how many there are
Why have so many things happened to me?
Why have I never been set free?

I try to see the beauty in the sky
I try to see a different world from my eyes
It's a constant struggle every day
But I have to overcome...it's the only way

Is it fate that Weller releases a song called Moving
On?
After how my life had gone
I'm now at the crossroads of me
Will Weller and The Universe let me see?

The signs of which way to go
Show me the way so I know
Let me make this final decision
Without fear and hesitation but with a clarity of vision

I will move on
I will keep on
I will keep on keeping on
I will keep on moving on.

Signs

'My time is now' was the sign
A girls smile that met mine
The guys t-shirt said 'Dream'
All the positive things today I've seen

The difference is I've seen the signs and understood
They really have lifted my mood
Today I feel really positive
This is the way I want to live

In my car I listened to 'The Power'
I can listen to that for hours and hours
All the positive messages from Rhonda
They make me see life's many wonders

Things are so different when your eyes are open
You can see and capture so many things with them
Rather than look down you look up
Half full not empty, my life's cup

It's the feeling within my chest
It gives life flavour with its zest
The flavour of life that can fulfil
My hopes and dreams, I know it will

It's a feeling you can't buy
It's a feeling like the highest high
It's the feeling that makes me feel real
It makes me believe I will heal.

Turning Point

Today I've seen my turning point
I've seen it before but today it was meant
I believe today it was a metaphor
To make me realise what life is for

Today will be a brand new start
Of following my heart
And not letting my mind take control
And going to its rocks and rolls

I will stop feeling uptight and tense
I will control and see sense
It's not the situation that determines how you feel
But how you feel that makes it real

I will see things differently every day
I will give everything with my new energy
I will throw negativity in the purple fire
And get believing again in something higher

I believed before and I will again
I believed strongly before this pain
But I intend to rise above
And try and feel this life's love

A love that is unique to me
A love that means I can 'Be'
I've never felt love like this before
But I intend to open up the door

I intend to fully receive
I intend to fully believe
All I need to do is ask
And The Universe will provide its task

I will use my energy like a light
That will guide me through the darkest night
I can now see what I really want
I have now reached my turning point.

Recovery Stories Projects

This project gives people with lived experience of mental health issues and their carers the opportunity to share their story of recovery. It is understood that individual stories of recovery can not only enhance the storyteller's healing process and convey the reality of recovery but can also contribute to tackling stigma and discrimination.

Whether the storyteller wishes to use the written word, film, photography, poetry, or other, we want to offer people the chance to tell their story in a way that reflects their uniqueness.

To find out more or get involved, whether that means telling your story or supporting someone to tell their story, please get in touch:

Audrey.Irn@lanarkshirelinks.org.uk
Gerald@lanarkshirelinks.org.uk

or Telephone: **01698 265232**

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If you need to speak to someone now you can contact:

Samaritans

offer a safe place for you to talk any time you like, in your own way – about whatever's getting to you. You don't have to be suicidal. The service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. This number is FREE to call.

Phone: **116 123**

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Breathing Space

A free, confidential phone and web based service for people in Scotland experiencing low mood, depression or anxiety. Call an advisor on **0800 83 85 87**. The phone line is available 24 hours at weekends (6pm Friday - 6am Monday) and 6pm to 2am on weekdays (Monday - Thursday).

NHS 24

A call centre operated by the NHS to provide health advice and help over the phone when your GP services aren't available.

Call: **111**

eLament

Lanarkshire's first stop for online mental health and well-being resources providing information for people seeking assistance with mental health issues. Our service directory provides listings of key organisations in North and South Lanarkshire and nationally who can offer help and support with mental health issues.

www.elament.org.uk

“Many times even the smallest words of encouragement have helped me since my breakdown, you will never know how much it has helped me and for that kindness I am eternally grateful.”

Michael Byrne

