

STORY OF RECOVERY



### SUNDAY

As the sun rose, the battle intensified. John was now fully awake, his thoughts raging inside him as he fought against the urge to pull the duvet cover closer around him and give up. I must get up, he thought to himself, today was going to be a good day. Finally, after another half hour of deliberation, he forced himself out of bed and dragged himself, half in hope and half in trepidation towards the bathroom. John stared at the mirror. A pale face, a bit saggy round the edges and flecked with red, stared back.

Damn, thought John, I've cut myself shaving. This was not a good start to the day. Dark clouds began to envelope his brain, vultures surrounding him, circling him from above daring him to move. He moaned inwardly, surrendering to the darkness, and retreated to the bed he often called home.

## MONDAY

Just after midnight, John dragged himself from the bed to get a glass of water. He felt like he was in a stupor. Total paralysis had overcome him, he could not think straight and he crawled almost gratefully back into the bed he often called his prison.





### **TUESDAY**

John awoke with a start. It was early. He was volunteering today at the bookshop and if he got up now he would easily make it. The darkness of yesterday; the nothingness of yesterday seemed to have dispersed. With a sigh he swung both legs simultaneously out of the bed and got up.

John's train arrived into Glasgow with enough time left over for him to grab a quick coffee before starting his shift at the bookshop. The coffee tasted bitter but in a good way and the hot liquid energised him as it flowed into his stomach.

In the bookshop, John's nerves started to get the better of him as he put the day's float into the till. He shut the till drawer swiftly and with effort crossed to the back exit to open the fire escape shutter. 'Just stop thinking,' he muttered. A couple of minutes later, the two other volunteers arrived and John, forcing a smile exchanged pleasantries before retreating downstairs to the computer room to research some books to establish their value for online sale. One book in particular caught his eye; a rare publication of the works of J.D. Salinger, one of his favourite authors. As he researched this book, he became increasingly unaware of time passing and the dark thoughts of Sunday and Monday slowly faded into the background. He valued the book at £120 and put it live on the system.

#### TUESDAY CONTINUED...

Just before lunch, as was routine, he checked to see if there had been any online orders. An email had arrived from Australia, of all places. The J.D. Salinger book was sold. John smiled to himself, knowing that his valuation had been correct and that the bookshop had just made £120 from the sale of just one book. As the money was going to charity, this small victory was made all the sweeter.

At lunch, John sat outside the café across from the bookshop and let the pale sunlight gently caress his face as he finished his coffee. Having connected a J.D. Salinger book with a customer in far-off lands, he felt a sense of achievement. Now he felt more readily able to mix with the customers and the other volunteers upstairs in the shop. As his afternoon shift at the bookshop progressed, John found the performance of being happy easier and easier to carry out and by the end of the shift he was laughing and joking with a customer about the merits of Charles Dickens without a care in the world.

Back home that evening, tired but not exhausted John took his medication with dinner as he normally did and then decided to phone his friend Phil in Brighton. Phil always had something going on; this time a trip to New York. 'How exciting,' John said genuinely feeling that Phil deserved his holiday rather than the bitter twinges of jealousy that friends' holidays often provoked. He then reminisced with Phil about the time the two of them had made a previous trip to the United States, Chicago, when they were much younger. After the phone call, which had left John in a good mood, he flicked channels for a bit and then went to the bed, this time just a bed to sleep in. A good day all in.





# WEDNESDAY

John woke early knowing that today he had made no plans. Could he phone somebody to see if they wanted to go for a coffee? Most of his friends worked so that ruled them out but one friend Cathy might be around. He tried her number without success. John shook himself down and reminded himself that as a grown man and an independent fellow to boot he didn't need anyone to go for coffee with. Or indeed lunch for that matter. An idea was creeping up on him in a strangely excited manner. He had worked hard yesterday at the bookshop and so deserved to treat himself to lunch. Money be damned!

He soon found himself back in Glasgow in a fancy restaurant perusing a menu he could ill afford whilst sipping a glass of white wine. A large glass of white wine. John smiled at the other customers surrounding him in the restaurant and he felt an incredible urge to talk to someone here. He ordered another glass of wine, his meal well over. A waiter glared at him as he attempted yet again to exchange pleasantries with the people at the next table. Why wouldn't these people talk to him? Perhaps if he got up on the table and introduced himself properly...

'Sir, we are going to have to ask you to pay your bill and then leave, please,' said a polite but firm waiter. John, mortified, did as he was told.

#### WEDNESDAY CONTINUED...

Back out on the street, in the city he had grown up in he took to wandering the streets tracing back old haunts and happy memories but as he walked the memories became darker and darker and as night fell he began to panic knowing that he needed to get home and now. He knew public transport was long gone, he had wandered for hours and so the only option was a taxi the ultimate extravagance at £30 and, with the meal included, nearly half his week's money gone.

Back home, he began to think again of his exit from the restaurant and became more and more ashamed as he crawled back into the bed he often called his fortress.





### THURSDAY

John was paralysed with fear. What if someone he knew or would meet in the future had been in that restaurant? Why hadn't he recognised signs that he was going to go high? Why hadn't he taken extra medication either before going out or taken some with him as his CPN had suggested? He cursed himself, knowing that another failure, as he saw it, had occurred. Haunted by the experience in the restaurant, he stayed in the bed he often called his tomb.

# FRIDAY

John awoke with a start. He knew he needed to do something. He couldn't take another day in this bed, this grave, where past failures and future horrors crashed incessantly around him as he lay on a freezing shore. He got up abruptly and in a panic and phoned Cathy again. This time she answered and, hallelujah, would be available for a coffee the very next day. John sighed with relief as Cathy suffered in many ways similar to him so meeting up for coffee to chat need not involve much explaining.

John sighed again feeling drained. He knew today, Friday, was going to be a write-off but that this was ok so long as he stayed up away from the bed. Just pottering about was going to be an achievement in itself. He went to the bed later that night a little less anxious as he knew he was meeting Cathy the next day.





## SATURDAY

Coffee with Cathy turned out better than he had anticipated. He didn't need to say that much, just that he had had a rough week and then they chatted over what had happened and whether to mention it to his CPN and then the conversation turned to other things - he listened to her terrible jokes and told her some stories of his time with Phil in Chicago that had been brought to life earlier in the week (Tuesday) that made her guffaw into her coffee.

'What's your plans for this week?' Cathy asked at one point.

'Well I have the charity bookshop on Tuesday,' said John, 'but that's about it really.'

'Is Tuesday usually a good day?' asked Cathy.

'As a matter of fact it usually is,' said John.

'Try to plan more of them then,' said Cathy, 'in whatever form they take.' She winked.

She is right, thought John. Planning ahead for more 'Tuesdays' and their like and everything will get a little bit better.

### A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF JOHN

- A STORY OF RECOVERY -

"This story is a snapshot in the life of John and his recovery journey from mental ill health.

John suffers from bipolar disorder as does the author. This story reflects a brief period in John's daily life as he faces the ups and downs of living with this illness.

For John and the author the importance of having hope for the future is key to everyone that suffers from mental ill health in whatever form it takes."

