

The Journey To Freedom

Rosie Philomena

I see you

**Domestic abuse is a problem
That is sadly quite often endured
In the silence, at home in the family
A dark secret behind some closed doors**

**So I'm giving a voice to the voiceless
For the people who cannot speak out
Hope my words give you hope, strength and comfort
And to prove that there is a way out**



*The Journey
To
Freedom*

*By
Rosie Philomena*

The Journey To Freedom

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This is a work of creative non-fiction. The events are portrayed to the best of the author's memory and are written from their perspective. No names have been used and the author has not referenced any identifying details, to protect the anonymity of those involved.

The opinions expressed are the author's own. They are merely a freedom of expression and are taken from their own personal experience.

The content is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any physical or mental health conditions. Readers should consult their healthcare provider or other relevant agencies for both support and/or possible diagnosis.

Contact the author: for-such-a-time-as-this@hotmail.com

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I am sending this book as a blessing
When you've finished, please do pass it on
If you feel you could give a donation
There are charities you can choose from

On the back page you'll find some suggestions
Based on themes I discuss in this book
If you can't though, it's fine, not a problem
Being blessed by it will be enough

Trigger warning:

I refer to emotional, psychological, financial, verbal, spiritual abuse and coercive control in this book. (I also briefly reference his accusation of marital rape, sexual violation and his reference to suicide, but do not go into detail.)

I have used a number of poems from my first book 'For Such A Time As This' which is my autobiography and testimony. (Written in 2020 and published in 2021)

Although domestic abuse is briefly referred to there, I wanted to explain in more detail the types of abuse and patterns of behaviour I experienced over a number of years, in the hope that it helps others to recognise the warning signs and to realise they are not alone.

I have received counselling and EMDR Trauma Therapy. I've also attended a number of courses through Women's Aid and various community groups which facilitated 'The Freedom Programme' and vital drop-in support sessions.

All of this resulted in regained confidence and a greater understanding of the cycle of abuse and how to recognise the 'red flags' in future relationships.

Now I feel ready to share in more detail how the abuser used many different tactics to exert power and control during our relationship and consequently throughout our marriage, separation and divorce.

I am not an expert and have no formal training. I am simply using my own lived experience to share my story, in the hope that others can also find freedom and healing.

As I continue to heal, join me on,

'The Journey To Freedom'

Rosie

x

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Dedication

To the families who lost precious loved ones
At the hands of a person they knew
And the angels themselves, you're acknowledged
Know this book's dedicated to you

Prologue

I was nineteen when married the first time
Then again when I turned forty-five
And although they were brief and so painful
I would learn how to heal and to thrive

In each marriage I thought I was settled
Furthest thing from my mind was divorce
So it came as a shock to the system
After vows, neither one ran the course

Change in direction

So the years spent in high school were not a success
Didn't fill my head with the right knowledge
Knowing lyrics to pop songs and quoting from films
Wasn't great prep for going to college!

I had three years at six form and learnt such a lot
But just not the things I was supposed to
I perfected my quiff and a striking red lip
And bid farewell to white high heeled court shoes!

More O levels I passed then A levels I sat
Despite studying through siblings loud noise
But the downfall for me, would be soon plain to see
With my first real encounter with boys

In my black bomber jacket and turn ups on jeans
I had chats with my friend through the week
And I mentioned this one boy who stood out for me
For the way that he dressed was unique

He would get on the bus wearing checked shirts and jeans
And he didn't live too far from me
In my diary I'd write I'd seen 'Checkers' that day
But the future I could not foresee

In a club late at night guess who came into sight
It was 'Checkers' across the dance floor
We chatted all night on that Friday the 13th
My first clue as to what lay in store!

And so that was the start of our budding romance
Then for six months we regularly dated
Being so much in love, and the good girl I was
I had saved myself and I had waited

When my exams were done it left time to have fun
And through summer this love felt like fate
I gave him my all body, mind and my soul
A month later though found I was late

But I still had my exam results on my mind
Because on them my future would hinge
A complete lack of effort and no uni place yet
God soon showed me His plans for the spring

The results are in

So for quite a few weeks at the calendar I'd peek
I had one burning thing on my mind
And with time passing by and not feeling too great
That one answer I'd soon have to find

Now the pregnancy tests that they had in those days
Had resembled a chemistry set
So I bought one with cash from my Saturday job
Almost sure of the result that I'd get

And once home in my bedroom I sat on my bed
Making sure no one else was around
Then I took out the box from the blue plastic bag
Hard to do without making a sound!

Having carefully placed the test tube in it's stand
Next stage was to read the instructions
Then I added my sample and thought my to myself
Wish I'd listened about reproduction!

So I left it a while and then opened the door
Of the wardrobe I'd hidden it in
Not remotely surprised when I opened my eyes
It confirmed new life now growing within

But then after the shock and when things settle down
Four months now this baby I'd carried
We planned for our future by getting engaged
And decided that we would get married

In winter that year we both walked down the aisle
Dressed in warm white my baby and me
And by making my vows, I felt safe and secure
Now official our family of three

Some weeks later we moved to a small council house
We'd five months before baby arrived
And so making the best of the little we had
Made a home for our family to thrive

Are you ever prepared?

Now working in kitchens my baby and me
Basic pot wash and serving of food
Almost seven months in, once I'd worked my last shift
I could nest safe at home as I brood

As my due was nearing I saw advertised
Parent classes and thought we should go
Learning breathing techniques and the rubbing of feet
There was so much we needed to know

The bathing of baby and what we should use
Also packing our bag we rehearsed
Told a 'Walkman', a nightie and lip balm I'd need
And with others like me I conversed

Straight after our chats, we then lay on our mats
And then draped in a blanket we'd rest
The midwife would play soothing music for us
Now that was the part I liked best!

A week past my due date I'd already gone
Then the big day it finally came
So excited to know I would meet him at last
And my life would forever be changed

Was already a Mrs at nineteen years old
Missed 'teen-mum' by three weeks and a day
With our family of three all I hoped it would be
Now I prayed this was how it would stay

If at first you don't succeed...

As she left, we moved into my great grandma's house
Once the council had granted permission
Where we lived, the back yard was infested with rats
And our home was in quite poor condition

When our son just turned two, I had started night school
My A levels I tried once again
Sociology being the subject of choice
And I passed, so it wasn't in vain!

And when he turned three, I would do it again
This time history, I gave it my best
And with discipline studied late into the night
I worked hard, there was no time to rest

By the time he was four, only needed one more
With my uni place almost in reach
Putting previous failures behind me for good
I could realise my ambition to teach

Archaeology exams by now were complete
And that summer I found out I'd passed
I proved perseverance was worth the reward
Such high hopes for our family at last

Applying through 'clearing' was offered a place
In a matter of weeks I would start
With my son settled down in a nursery nearby
I'd obtained all the dreams of my heart

Having it all

(Part one)

Well that is the way I'd have liked it to end
But then life's not always as we had planned
I was busy revising the best that I could
Only weeks to my final exam

Then came an event that changed all of our lives
Just four years being a family together
Such a huge shock, and my world it would rock
We were headed for grey stormy weather

Now the truth has a habit of coming to light
It will never stay hidden for long
In one single moment your whole life can change
And I knew that I'd have to stay strong

So a letter arrived, which came out of the blue
Was addressed to my husband you see
Concerning a child I knew nothing about
Who was born years before he met me

This just didn't seem true, what on earth could I do?
It had sadly been so underhand
More questions I asked, for the truth had been masked
This was hard for me to understand

Now you'd think that this news was enough of a shock
Of course, mother and child not to blame
So much more was to come, as the letter and revealed
Both boys' names were exactly the same!

We'd decided between us what he would be called
I was pleased with the choice for our son
Now to find that he shared his big brother's first name
That betrayal we would not overcome

(Part two)

But I still got to uni in spite of it all
Though our marriage had come to an end
And now more than ever I had to succeed
For on me now, my son would depend

Now you're thinking that this was an answer to prayer
But your body I found, keeps the score
Just three months at uni with all of that stress
Seems I just couldn't take any more

Diagnosed with M.E a few months down the line
Time at uni had not gone as planned
And my life from that day would forever be changed
What a life for my poor little man

Didn't want my young son knowing I was upset
So I held back my tears in the day
The plan was to cry in my bed late at night
But that isn't the healthiest way

Chronic illness is sad it takes over your life
And the worst bit about this would be
The sheer ignorance of the professionals involved
I was so ill, but no one believed me

Now I didn't know then that emotional shocks
Have effects thus related to trauma
Which resulted in burnout and chronic fatigue
But back then, there's no one who could warn you

Went from flying so high on my way to succeed
Now I'm sick, twenty-four and divorced
I was desperately trying each day to survive
Not the life I had previously thought

I must say my behaviour quite close to the end
Wasn't great since receiving the letter
But that's not an excuse for the way I behaved
I'm sure I could have handled things better

No matter what happened between both of us
We worked hard through the following years
To ensure that our son had his mum and his dad
Though at times, through some cross words and tears!

A year later we had our brief marriage annulled
Yes, it's sad when a partnership ends
But we tried to put any bad feelings aside
And respect one another as friends

My son seeing his dad was a regular thing
And was something on which we agreed
It would give him security and was vital he knew
He was loved and we met all his needs

My ex in-laws still featured in both of our lives
We would often meet up and have tea
And with genuine love and respect we would show
This was how divorced families could be

But I know that for others that isn't the case
And I've seen how some parents will use
Their own children as pawns as if part of a game
Like a weapon, to further abuse

(Part three)

Now still I had trusted in God's plans for me
Seems my dream wasn't too far from reach
As some twenty years on, I'd be given the chance
To realise my ambition to teach

But this time I'd teach about what I knew best
Chronic illness and its impact on you
I could empathise knowing the problems they faced
This I knew, having walked in their shoes

So what do you do?

Now when you first meet, there's one question they ask
"So tell me what is it you do?"
I dread those few words they strike fear into me
It would seem that your job defines you

But what do you do when there's no job for you
And for years you've been chronically ill?
I would so often hear "Well you look fine to me"
Some don't get it and they never will

"Hey, someone I know has the very same thing
They missed work for a couple of weeks
As I stand there and bite the inside of my lip
So my tears won't freefall down my cheeks

Now believe me I know that they don't understand
I can't count all the tears that I've cried
Graded exercise, vitamins, diets and rest
Just a few of the things I have tried

My son was so active, by then he'd turned four
Though I'm ill, I just can't let him see
Now I'm kicking a ball whilst I'm sat in a chair
Not the mum I had wanted to be

But then you meet others who do understand
They inhabit the same world as you
You feel you belong and don't have to explain
That you can't do what you used to do

I tried so hard to fight it for such a long time
But they're fleeting those hours of relief
There's no pattern it seems in whatever you do
For the old me I now had to grieve

Light at the end of the tunnel

Over time, I had other conditions
Which I won't discuss here at great length
With procedures and pain medication
I regained just a little more strength

Here we go again

This next poem will be a synopsis
Of my marriage much later in life
If I thought that my first was a challenge
This was worse, and it cut like a knife

The perpetrator

(Leave it to me)

“Once we’re married, I’ll make things much better
You have had such a terrible life
So just leave things to me in the future
After all, we are husband and wife”

“I’ll sort all of the bills so don’t worry
And the food shopping, I can do that
You have worked really hard for your family
And your health is an issue in fact”

“Now I know that you’re quite independent
But you need to take care of yourself
I insist, let me help you, I worry
All this impacts your poor general health”

But this wasn’t what I had signed up for
I presumed that we’d work as a team
But I’d soon realise to my horror
Things were not as they’d previously seemed....

(Well that didn't last long!)

His behaviour would change once we married
Whilst on honeymoon to be exact
I could see the disdain he had for me
With incessant, cruel verbal attacks

Now I knew by the stare there was trouble
But I never knew quite just what for
Oh! But guaranteed he would soon tell me
Then the silent treatment I'd endure

Now sometimes he'd just keep me waiting
"We will deal with this much later on"
Then days passed, he'd not mentioned the issue
But you knew the problem hadn't gone

Must admit, I was walking on eggshells
It seemed nothing I did would be right
He could keep any argument going
Through the day, often into the night

(Living in fear)

I'd grown used to the sound of the engine
Of our car pulling up to the house
Then the slam of the car door that followed
And the dreaded return of my spouse

I would count the four seconds that followed
As he walked from the car down the path
Almost taking the gate off its hinges
Fairly soon I'd encounter his wrath

In those moments my heart would be racing
I felt sick and my face would be flushed
But at least those occasions prepared me
Quite unlike the times he would ambush

As he entered the house, I'd be waiting
It was only a matter of time
Before I would be blamed for his anger
Well of course, all the fault would be mine!

I could tell by the sound of his footsteps
Long before he had entered the room
That the day wouldn't end on a high note
Such a feeling of impending doom

Nothing I did changed the outcome
Was too late when things got to this stage
I just knew I would have to stay silent
And I tried hard with him, not to engage

If I wasn't there when he arrived home
When I did, he would make a huge scene
The interrogation would be ruthless
"Tell me now, where the hell have you been?"

If it was at home, he'd do the leaving
He'd go out without saying a word
But I wasn't to question his actions
The life that we lived was absurd

Soon the journeys by car were so frightening
Well, especially with him at the wheel
I would fear for my life in those moments
Made the life that I lived quite surreal

In the car, he'd find reasons to argue
He would speed up and slam on the brakes
And he'd turn just to see my reaction
Then he'd laugh as I'd cry, and I'd shake

He could weave in and out of the traffic
Or take chances and then overtake
I would pray for my life on those journeys
In that car I would rarely feel safe

"Don't they know who I am?" He would question
"I'm not waiting around in a queue"
Often revving the engine with fury
Or be gesturing in the rear view

Once, I reached for the radio's tuner
When he turned and he screamed in my face
"Who said *You* could decide on the station?"
Things like this were by now commonplace

Once on picking him up from a night shift
How he screamed at me, boy did he shout
As I reached for the door he was smirking
And he laughed when I tried to jump out

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Now I know it seems mad, that I'll grant you
Trying to leap from a car at high speed
But you think it's a normal reaction
Even though it sounds crazy indeed!

Seems impulsive, so risky and dangerous
But unless you've been trapped in that space
It's so hard to believe that's an option
How on earth did we get to this place?

Now a grandma to three, what a blessing
But he sure didn't feel the same way
With his jealousy reaching new levels
I removed all their car seats that day

In the weeks leading up to me fleeing
I vowed never to get in the car
As a passenger, I was in danger
I was done, things had gone way too far

(The beginning of the end)

He'd been seeing a counsellor weekly
And I thought it would do him some good
But he told her that *he* was the victim
And she'd documented those falsehoods

The divorce petition was enlightening
He portrayed himself as the abused
When I read it, I couldn't believe it
In these papers I was the accused!

I was told "Just don't bother appealing"
Didn't think this could get any worse
He'd been clever and laid the foundation
Made sure *he* got *his* version in first

When I told them how I had been living
They just said "Now it sounds tit for tat
So just fill in the forms, sign the papers
You can move on, and that will be that"

Soon discovered his plotting and scheming
In great depth, when I saw what he'd said
The unreasonable behaviour he'd quoted
Left me stunned with the lies that I read

"Showed no interest in household finances
All that burden was laid upon me
She did nothing for me as a partner
Well at least not as far as I see"

"I was scared to come back in the evening
Never knew what would greet me at home
Felt unloved, disrespected and fearful
In our marriage, I felt all alone"

He collected his evidence slowly
Must have thought it was worth the hard slog
It was clear he'd be playing the long game
And my word, did he do a good job!

Well-rehearsed

Now to give you a little more context
I will take you right back to the start
As abusers can follow a pattern
Which they have down to such a fine art

Blind to the truth

Now during a challenging time in my life
From my previous partner estranged
I met someone else, and we clicked from the start
And my life would forever be changed

I'm ashamed to say now, neither one of us free
Though our relationships were near the end
We both had a need that each other could fill
And we started as very good friends

Much talking of faith and discussing beliefs
Retreats and deep prayer time we shared
We were soon in the throes of a whirlwind romance
And this love caught us both unawares

But on this foundation how could we have built
Something that was both safe and secure
Having been so caught up, I was blind to the fact
That we both had our issues before

After dating exclusively four years by now
We took vows before family and friends
But unless it is something that God has ordained
On the outcome you cannot depend

So, the journey of healing for me would begin
As I started to deal with my past
I got so involved with behaviours of old
That I started to put myself last

I acknowledged this happened a few years before
But I'd hoped it had come to an end
I then witnessed the person I love lose themselves
Someone I'd spent trying time to mend

On return from our honeymoon I was confused
And some answers I needed to find
To an Al-anon meeting I took myself off
All those jumbled up thoughts in my mind

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It's a group people go to which offers support
And I found that it helped me a lot
There I'd learn about alcohol and its effects
Whether loved ones are drinking or not

I sat in the rooms and I listened at first
They described things deep down I had known
A place full of strangers just baring their souls
Which made me feel much less alone

The experience strength and the hope they all shared
All made sense, but yet sadly so true
Obsessing about them every hour that God sent
Means there's not much time left just for you

'The Courage To Change' and 'One Day At A Time'
Are the books that the group seemed to use
Upon reading them daily I soon realised
That a life for me, I had to choose

The group has a number of slogans that helped
The '3 C's' one example of these
Because you didn't Cause it, you can't be the Cure
And Control will bring you to your knees

The anger and rage that is often displayed
Is something you find hard to fathom
And sobriety isn't the end of it all
This in some, leaves a vacuous chasm

"You're not meant to save them" We're told early on
"You are actually making it worse"
All of this time you've been chasing your tail
Your intentions have worked in reverse

So after a while I decided to find
A sponsor and work on my steps
I had to jump off the old merry-go-round
And find new ways to cope with the stress

Take what you like, then you must leave the rest
That is what you're encouraged to do
The longer you go then the more it makes sense
And you slowly see glimpses of you

You have to surrender to your higher power
Which is God, and that works great for me
And you must keep your side of the street nice and clean
That is where all your focus should be

Codependency traits I would have to accept
And I'd learn about my past behaviour
It was time that I looked at who I had become
And my sponsor became a lifesaver

With nothing to numb all that pain for them now
It results in denial and blame
And no matter which tool they resorted to use
The results were exactly the same

Everyone else is to blame don't you see
There's no way now to hide what they feel
You're walking on eggshells avoiding their wrath
Which for some is a daily ordeal

The demons behind it wreak havoc you see
And there's little the onlooker can do
They take marriages, family, jobs, even friends
And then turn their attention to you

So four months since being a husband and wife
I did something I'd previously warned
I left for the first time to give us both space
Though I loved him I really felt torn

Now going cold turkey just isn't enough
I would learn, as the group shared their tales
To admit there's a problem without any help
Some could relapse and go off the rails

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At one open meeting I heard someone say
That the drink answered all of their prayers
But during sobriety they now had to find
More solutions to all of their cares

For eight weeks I stayed with my mum and my dad
Not the married life I had envisaged
But during that time, once again we would try
And we'd speak through email and text message

So through night and day, I would hope and I'd pray
I found meetings and readings both helped me
We both worked on ways to get back what we'd lost
This was not how things were meant to be

I returned as I thought things had slightly improved
Praying hard and not fearing the worst
Believing at last, we'd moved on from our past
Just weeks in though, my bubble would burst

My sister then asked would I help with my niece
At the time, for three nights of the week
This would help as by now we would argue a lot
Either that, or we just wouldn't speak

We found, over time, that the harder we tried
That things hadn't changed much, if at all
And the problems we faced were much worse than before
These were hard times, as I now recall

One step at a time

My steps would take me nine months
With my sponsor to complete
It would be a kind of birthing
After a soul-searching retreat

Safety first

I know working your steps is a process
But deep down I was really confused
All this time, I'd been making excuses
I'd no clue I was being abused

Can I say, if you're searching for answers
And in Google you're having to type
Someone else's behaviour towards you
Be assured, something isn't quite right

Just make sure that it's safe if you do though
And delete any searches you've made
Some abusers will check your devices
And your privacy, online invade

How could I have known?

But I didn't know then, his behaviour
Was abusive, I thought he was ill
Made allowances for the addiction
For some time, well now that was until..

Accusations

He was physically sober I'll grant you
But that summer, he reached a new low
Violent outbursts and strange allegations
Seemed emotionally sober, not so

I tried even harder to please him
Put his needs first when we were in bed
We'd engaged in some sexual contact
But then couldn't believe what he said

He accused me of being a rapist
And those words really messed with my head
I had always felt close as a couple
Whilst as one in our marital bed

Felt ashamed, and unclean since he said it
Then weeks later he wanted a 'chat'
When I mentioned his cruel allegations
Said "You're not still going on about that?"

"Just forget what I said now, it's over
As a couple, we have to move on"
(Minimising last month's accusations)
"So let bygones between us be gone!"

Love is patient, love is kind...

Now he knew that my faith was important
So he'd quote this one scriptural verse
If we'd argued he'd soon take the high ground
Which of course, would then make things much worse

"Remember it says, love is patient
Isn't prideful, won't envy or boast
Doesn't keep records of our wrongdoing"
(And that quote was the one he used most)

"It's not arrogant, rude or resentful
Not self-seeking or wants its own way"
These he'd quote in a bid to control me
I could hear them a few times a day

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

A living nightmare

It annoyed him if I started crying
Other times, it would give him a kick
Trying to live in this way was a nightmare
In our own ways, each one of us sick

I could see it formed part of a cycle
Which repeated itself over time
Since we married, it felt like a prison
I was trapped there, within its confines

The cycle of abuse

In the honeymoon phase they're attentive
They're so kind and considerate too
Seem so genuine, nothing's a problem
They are present when they are with you

Then the tension phase seems to be building
They're sarcastic or in a bad mood
Some express inner feelings of anger
Others negative emotions exude

The explosion phase follows the tension
Where they'll shout in an almighty rage
Use cruel words, make untrue accusations
Some could disappear too at this stage

And withdraw from their partner completely
Become distant and seem to implode
They'll ignore calls and texts from their loved one
Meanwhile some as I say will explode

It's intended to punish their partner
Who will question what they have done wrong?
They're confused and completely bewildered
And in shock, Oh! But then before long...

They'll apologise, beg for forgiveness
And then swear it won't happen again
For a time, they will change their behaviour
They were wrong and they take all the blame

They could buy you a gift or say sorry
Or arrange a nice weekend away
You make up and feel closer than ever
And you pray this is how things will stay

Life is calm for a while, things feel normal
You have peace and a clearer headspace
The relationship couldn't be better
You feel happy and in a good place

The Journey To Freedom

But this doesn't last long, you're unsettled
And the tension will build over time
They'll get angry or pull back completely
By this time, you'll be losing your mind

That's the cycle in all of its stages
Then quite soon you'll be back to stage one
This repeats, sadly over and over
What a rollercoaster you're now on

It's unnerving you're walking on eggshells
You could see every stage in one day
In my case, we'd have three weekly cycles
I'd predict both the time and the day

Not so jolly holiday

We would jet off to Spain late that summer
Now you'd think this would be such a treat
But away from my family and loved ones
His cruel actions and words would repeat

I would sit at the poolside whilst crying
Or on sunbeds whilst down at the beach
The sly comments and digs were relentless
Was done begging and trying to beseech

In this beautiful place he'd mistreat me
He would scoff, make remarks and deride
But thank God for my hat and sunglasses
For beneath them, my tears I could hide

With the heat of the sun, they dried quickly
So by nobody else they'd be seen
As I watched other couples relaxing
I wished he wasn't cruel and so mean

Then one day, he'd been at it for hours
More name calling and verbal abuse
Having said he was sorry, suggested
We forget it and thus called a truce!

Was confused with his crazy behaviour
But agreed that we'd go for a meal
I felt safer when we were in public
In the past, much less of an ordeal

So we walked down the hill to the restaurant
But once seated, was made more aware
He intended to spoil the whole evening
And was cross, I could tell by the stare

With the waiter approaching our table
I felt nauseous and really quite sick
But my husband, then proffered the menu
See, for strangers, the switch he could flip

The Journey To Freedom

His face was now open and smiling
As he gestured for me to go first
Oh, so charming in public arena's
But in secret he'd show me his worst

Once I'd ordered, I passed him the menu
And they brought me a cool Fanta drink
I'd had days of his awful behaviour
I was done, I'd been pushed to the brink

There was little or no conversation
We just sat there in silence, until
I leaned over and said I was leaving
And walked out and then off up the hill

As at home, here we had our own bedrooms
I undressed and I got into bed
As I lay there my head was still racing
His return I'd then started to dread

Sometime later, I heard the gate creaking
And I froze as I heard him approach
With the key in the door, I stayed silent
On my boundaries prayed he'd not encroach

I had learnt over time how he'd play this
And it ended in one of two ways
He would either kick off and he'd slam things
Or he'd sulk and it went on for days

As he made his way through the apartment
I just lay there whilst frozen with fear
Then he stopped in the hall near my bedroom
I felt sick knowing he was so near

And he stood there for what seemed a lifetime
My heart pounding inside of my chest
But then after a while he retreated
Now officially on house arrest

The next day, I would pay for my actions
Though he never once showed me his hand
He'd intimidate, frighten and threaten
For last night, I had taken a stand

At breakfast we sat there in silence
And the air you could cut with a knife
A tirade of abuse was soon to follow
Then descriptions of me as a wife

"You're an ingrate, you're selfish" He shouted
"It's my money that's brought us away
Can't believe the way I have been treated
Just stay out of my way for today"

Hindsight's a wonderful thing

(Part one)

Looking back, I can see it was crazy
Now recalling some things that I did
In reaction to his strange behaviour
And all this in a desperate bid

To protect myself from the abuser
And make sure that at home I was safe
I was now well aware of his actions
And believe me, I'd no time to waste

First of all, checked I had a clear exit
If his rage went from zero to ten
Things would escalate so very quickly
But was never quite sure where or when

In our house we had separate bedrooms
With the worst mind games due to begin
Fixed a chain to the door for my safety
Aimed to stop him from barging on in

Now I knew that this wouldn't deter him
I'd need something much stronger than that
So I placed chests of drawers up against it
And then sometimes behind them I sat

He would shout and he'd scream and he'd slam things
Like the cupboards and internal doors
I would jump and I'd flinch with the noises
But unfortunately there was more

I was starting to see he was dangerous
He'd accused me of marital rape
Whilst engaging in sexual contact
With my husband I didn't feel safe

(Part two)

We'd been given some large white initials
As a present on our wedding day
With an ampersand wall decoration
Many mind games with these he would play

In the lounge we decided to place them
Something different, we liked how they looked
But they moved up and down almost daily
Rearranged on their little brass hooks

First of all, my initial was foremost
But through March, it had moved many times
Was replaced by my husband's white letter
Believe me, all this messed with my mind

In the end they were moved altogether
Life by this time, was really absurd
Always walking on eggshells in silence
So I left it not saying a word

Any wall plaques and frames with nice wording
Such as joy, peace and love he would hate
One by one they had disappeared also
I'd ignore it not taking the bait

Soon the photos of me and my family
Were replaced with some pictures of him
Or his parents and children etcetera
It was bonkers that house I lived in!

In the well-known film 'Back To The Future'
There's a photo that fades over time
Now I felt I was part of the movie
But the photo in question was mine!

What lies beneath?

In the months leading up to me leaving
Further information I would glean
It would come to a head some time later
And I'll share with you just what I mean

The first hint of his latest betrayal
Was a letter that he had received
From the right to buy team at the council
And from this, further plans to deceive

Now according to this, he had emailed
As I slept, at about 1am
In his room he'd been planning his next move
But I found him out time and again!

With the right to buy scheme we had purchased
Then my home of some twenty-four years
As sole tenant, I'd get quite a discount
For a lifetime of blood sweat and tears

Fifty four percent was the reduction
And my husband he covered the rest
For a nominal cost were now owners
But the legal system was a test

Since the house had been bought in my sole name
Well it couldn't be sold just like that
He would have to inform me of changes
But just now, couldn't risk the combat

Seems he wanted to know his position
As he plotted at night as I slept
Further proof he'd been playing the long game
To ensure he'd know what to do next

Now the council replied to his email
And they said as it was in my name
If it were to be sold in the future
We would have to make contact again

Now he knew they would have first refusal
And he wondered if they bought it back
Could I stay there when he'd get his money
And if not, he would try a new tack

He was cool, he was calm and collected
An example of this I would find
Was a photo of our anniversary
I can honestly say blew my mind

We'd been married a year in the photo
Though I'd left after two months came back
This to me was a happy occasion
Unbeknownst to me way down the track

That the dates on that letter and photo
Were so chillingly at the same time
He'd been plotting and scheming in earnest
To my face though, pretended we're fine

I would also find some correspondence
From a company that I didn't know
And release of the equity queried
Goodness me, well it just goes to show!

He was lining his ducks up in secret
Late at night whilst I lay there in bed
Whether Jekyll or Hyde, he was dangerous
Quite surprised I'd not ended up dead

The Letter

In the nineties, whilst still a lone parent
I was due for an op and was scared
On the off chance that I didn't make it
For my son, a goodbye note prepared

"If you're reading this, I'll be in heaven"
Words of wisdom I tried to impart
"Now I know you can't see me, but listen
I still love you with all of my heart"

I survived the op but kept the letter
It was safe with my things, so I thought
But some weeks before fleeing, I found it
Now I'll cut quite a long story short

In his room he had kept the depiller
To remove all the bobbly bits
From our jumpers, our cardies and also
Every other conceivable knit!

That's the reason I went in his bedroom
And that letter was there in full view
I'd not seen it for years, so was thinking
What on earth is it doing with you?

In an argument later that evening
I remembered the letter I wrote
So I asked why he'd taken it from me
And he said, "Oh, your suicide note?"

Now it took a few seconds to process
It was written when my son was eight!
So I tried to put things into context
But he said "It's not up for debate"

He'd presumed what it was without asking
And was adamant that he was right
I was scared for my life in that moment
But was glad I'd been blessed with foresight

The discard

(Part one)

My health wasn't great to begin with
And he knew that for years I'd been ill
But he wasn't expected to nurse me
Or be mopping my brow, even still

As his wife thought I'd get some compassion
Afterall, I had done that for him
But the mind games he played were so wicked
And of course, so determined to win

I was due a consultant's appointment
To discuss the next steps we should take
I'd been going for over a decade
Had some treatment decisions to make

Now he usually came to appointments
But this day said he just couldn't come
He was fixing the walls in the bathroom
And the work really had to be done

I was hurt and I couldn't believe it
When I needed him, he wasn't there
He'd been distant with me for a while now
And this proved that he just didn't care

But that wasn't the end of the cruelty
As the following week he announced
He'd be taking his friend to the doctors
With a smile, this he gladly pronounced

And some days after that, he awoke me
Said his daughter was going for a scan
He was taking her to the appointment
Our whole marriage just felt like a sham

The Journey To Freedom

Now of course he should be there for family
Whilst still giving support to his friends
As a wife though, he treated me badly
The last person on whom I'd depend

In the March he announced his intentions
I was shocked, didn't know what to say
He had filed for divorce with a lawyer
And proceedings were now underway

(Part two)

Now he told me though living together
That financially I was alone
That he wasn't responsible for me
And from now on, I'd be on my own

He informed me of our separation
Which he said was in force straight away
He'd be doing his washing and cooking
And our marriage was over that day

"I have cancelled your phone's direct debit
That's in place and so as of today
You must find an alternative income
Now your mobile account's yours to pay"

I was stunned as we lived off his pension
My employment support was no more
All his plans had now come to fruition
Now my future looked far from secure

The next day he walked out with the printer
Had it tucked underneath his right arm
Said his friend needed help with an issue
All these people, he knew how to charm

So we lived in this way until May time
Every day had become an ordeal
Navigating his crazy behaviour
Meant our home life became more surreal

Angel in disguise

I had just been informed of his plans for divorce
There was nothing else left I could do
Having given two years to my Al-anon group
Now this news, it came out of the blue

It took a few days for the truth to sink in
I felt lost and completely confused
Having so many thoughts swirling round in my head
Since being told of this life-changing news

Now on that fine day in the last week of May
I went out to escape all the fuss
For some time now, I'd not been using the car
So decided to hop on a bus

I met with a neighbour and chatted awhile
And quite soon we were joined by her friend
Unaware that this stranger would turn out to be
The first angel to me God would send

In my naivety I thought I'd done well
And my emotions I'd managed to hide
All those private, embarrassing, horrible things
Which leave turmoil and fear deep inside

At first, we made small talk the weather and such
Then we spoke of the lives we were living
How we're often quite strict with the smallest of things
But with others, we're far too for giving

We chatted so freely and seemed to connect
Which was strange, as we'd not met before
I told her that we'd be divorcing quite soon
Not quite knowing what God had in store

She gave me her number before we reached town
Said she cared had no wish to offend
So desperate that night I would send her a text
Didn't know she'd become a good friend

She told me to come to her house and we'd chat
So I did, not much left I could lose
My home of some twenty plus years to be sold
And proceedings that I didn't choose

She said on the bus, just a few hours before
That I'd mentioned ill-health and seemed tired
Weeks later she shared when she met me that day
I looked worked up, quite nervous and wired

I told her my GP had been well informed
But my health had since sadly declined
And in light of the fact that they had some concerns
They had followed official guidelines

Now it seems she had acted on what she had seen
And observing the behaviour displayed
It would lead to receiving a call the next day
From a team member from Women's Aid

Save yourself

"We are following up on a call we have had
First of all are you able to speak?"
She continued to ask a few questions of me
With the shock, I began to feel weak

"So based on the things that you're sharing just now
For your safety, it's best that you leave"
In a strange way I felt a huge sense of relief
But it was equally hard to believe

I answered the questions as best as I could
Then they asked had I somewhere to go
I assured them I did, and on ending the call
I would then let my soul sister know

Now after I'd married, my soul sister shared
That she had some concerns about me
So just on the off-chance and if I was in need
She had given me her front door key

They seemed to be happy with what I had said
This would be such a life-changing day
Then she ended the phone call by letting me know
She'd ring later and check I was ok

You've been told very clearly, "It's best that you go"
And the world as you know it now ends
But knowing you've tried and you've done all you could
Means there's no way of making amends

So you're trying to think of the sensible things
All the stuff that you're going to use
What I ended up grabbing in actual fact
Two faux fur coats and four random shoes!

Next there comes 'Thingy' how could I leave him?
He had been with me since I was twelve
So I rushed to the garden and crouched by the shed
And then into the border I delved

And so I moved 'Thingy' from where he had been
That pet rock I'd brought home from the beach
So I placed him in dense shrubs just by the front gate
"Just wait there now please, safe out of reach"

As I'd had some concerns for a few of my things
All my journals, my photos and frames
Had been left for safe keeping with family and friends
Weeks before this had been prearranged

Then I grabbed and I shoved what I could of my things
Into bin bags and suitcases galore
It was all going well, but quite soon my heart fell
As I heard his key turn in the door

I had seconds to shove my things under the bed
Then he shouted "Hello" up the stairs
So I said "Hello" back as I covered my tracks
Now for leaving felt quite ill-prepared

So I was unable to get my things out
Since I wasn't at home on my own
But experience taught me for quite some time now
If I left, then he wouldn't stay home

So I picked up my coat and I shouted "Goodbye"
As I saw my soul sister arrive
Then we drove to a friend's a few minutes away
Life would change after that brief car ride

And of course, sure enough, by the time we returned
Found the car wasn't there any more
So I walked down the path with my keys in my hand
Took a deep breath and opened the door

I rang two more friends and I asked for their help
And by now we were in quite a hurry
But not knowing exactly how long we had left
I was starting to get slightly worried

The Journey To Freedom

We took what we could, and I locked the front door
Then I walked down the path to the shrubs
And to honour my promise I picked up my rock
“Come on Thingy, you're coming with us”

I would later need therapy in order to heal
And take in the events of that day
But not once did I doubt the decision I made
I know God had prepared me a way

Pastures new

So I moved in with my dear soul sister
And it hers, I felt self and at home
I had no idea what I would be facing
But through it I wasn't alone

Now that wasn't the end of my problems
Well in fact, it was only the start
And since more was becoming apparent
I'd no time to be falling apart

When we married, I'd lost any income
I'd received from DWP
As a wife, was no longer entitled
This was not such a great place to be

I'd been told by him weeks before leaving
I was on my own financially
Once divorced and the house sale completed
I'd be paid with the Final Decree

In the meantime, I'd have to make phone calls
Get advice as to what I'd do next
Seems my case would present quite a challenge
Those who helped me were often perplexed

Took eight weeks to receive any income
Sickness payments, I'd have to reclaim
As our bank account had been held jointly
I would now need one in my own name

I eventually got all my clothes back
Some weeks later I went to the house
I was told I could go to collect them
With the brief absence there of my spouse

Then on Thursday the 10th of November
It had been six long months after leaving
I had met with my two faithful prayer friends
And I told them that I was believing

The Journey To Freedom

That God wouldn't leave me forsaken
And for me He had always provided
This was all in His plan and I trusted
That by His safe hands I'd be guided

So on Friday the 11th of November
With my soul sister, I went for a walk
We sat on a bench, and we rested awhile
When a man came and started to talk

Now it wasn't so comfortable being near men
So I left her to do all the speaking
And the prophecy given the evening before
Proved that this would be no random meeting

So just like the angel I met on the bus
A divine meeting arranged just for me
He spoke about work and his plans for the day
For the local estate agency

My soul sister told him what I had gone through
And as soon as they'd finished their chat
He picked up his phone and then passed it to me
In three days, I'd be viewing a flat!

Now let us rewind and just think about this
I'd a house I'd been told I must leave
With no reference, no job and no prospects at all
A new home was so hard to believe

My family and friends rallied round to help me
With the bond and to cover the rent
They could all be repaid once the house had been sold
A real lifeline had been heaven sent

I had more than a year then until I was free
With the legal stuff and the divorce
But now I was blessed with a place of my own
When God moves, He's an almighty force

All is not lost

Now remember in life things are temporary
Like possessions, your job or your home
With one letter, or phone call, your whole life can change
Then your future's far from set in stone

But remember the things you take with you
Are the ones with a lasting impact
Such as honesty, dignity, courage and truth
And integrity to be exact

A new chapter

Then on to the next real-life chapter
A fresh start for me in my new flat
I knew no-one where I was going
Might seem strange, I found comfort in that

I would have very little to start with
My bed frame, wardrobe and TV
Had been brought from the house with some glassware
As permission was granted to me

In the six months that followed my leaving
I would buy things from my bottom drawer
Such as pans, towels, a kettle and toaster
And under my bed these were stored

Didn't have much so had to be thrifty
Looked in charity shop's bargain bins
Although starting from scratch was a challenge
My new life would now have to begin

Buying things for home you don't have yet
Was surreal but it had to be done
But I always believed and I trusted
In God's time I would find the right one

By the time the God incident happened
With the man that I met in the park
I already had things that I needed
On my new life I could now embark

I signed for the flat two weeks later
And I moved the first week of December
I felt blessed and was very excited
A feeling I vaguely remembered!

So having collected essentials
I would soon make it feel like my home
One bedroom, lounge, kitchen and bathroom
It was bliss, this new home of my own

I was blessed with chairs, table and sofa
Other the items would just have to wait
I'd the use of a portable gas stove
And with this, cheap meals I'd create

I could make a good meal out of nothing
I'd buy cheap soup and savoury rice
It was tasty and also quite filling
If you added herbs, pepper or spice!

I had neither a washer or freezer
Now you can't always have everything
But with family and friends there to help me
I knew I could face anything

My previous life was just awful
Drove to car parks and cried late at night
But now, there was such a big difference
In this home, I could put those things right

I found different ways I could do things
I'd wash clothes in the bath and the sink
For bedding and towels this was tricky
Having tried, I would need a rethink

So I bundled them in my wheeled suitcase
And would go to a launderette close by
With no garden or yard for my washing
At least then, they would all come home dry

I'd no car but I still needed shopping
So out came my trusty wheeled case
My pain wasn't great to be honest
But I managed it at my own pace

Now God had already prepared me
I had lived in this way years before
I was constantly watching the pennies
So I knew I could do this once more

The Journey To Freedom

Now I had direct debits to think of
And to keep personal credit intact
Sold my wedding rings and broken jewellery
So that I could pay my council tax

I would hide the way I was now living
Having always been private and proud
Independent and too self-reliant
Don't tell others I'd secretly vowed

But why then if I was a helper
Would I stop people from helping me?
Now this would be part of my healing
And from my old ways I had to be freed

My parents called just before Christmas
And they saw my distinct lack of food
God bless them, from then on, they brought me
An amount that could feed our old brood!

This new home was a calm, tranquil haven
Where this peace could be fully exploited
I had time for reflection and healing
A safe place where I made my own choices

I would sit in the silence for hours
From the world for a while disappear
Unlike living with him, this was peaceful
Such a cosy and warm atmosphere

I'd have baths in the day at my leisure
And could eat my main meal at half three!
Singing and laughing and resting
Basically, trying to find the old me

I already had many health issues
Now add stress and divorce in as well
There was so much involved in the process
Of the house I'd been trying to sell

I still had the legal proceedings
These would run for at least one more year
Representing myself through the process
All this time though, I knew God was near

Shuttle mediation

Was required to attend mediation
And was told it would have to be soon
They assured me they'd make the arrangements
So we wouldn't be in the same room

I agreed to this form of the process
Shuttle mediation would be used
As it's common for some perpetrators
To use this to extend the abuse

Mum and dad took me to the appointment
And were there for some moral support
As they were later on in the process
They came with me as I went to court

I'd been told they would stagger arrivals
When I got there, I'd go to a room
He'd arrive then a little time later
But I'd find that he got there too soon

Now the office was next to a café
That I wasn't aware of before
And as mum and I got a bit closer
Saw a face that we knew by the door

He'd been waiting inside till we got there
When he saw us, he calmly walked out
And he sat at a small corner table
Now his presence confirmed all my doubts

With his eyes dead and black he was staring
Then of course came the narcissist's smirk
I was right to have voiced my suspicions
And I'd known that this just wouldn't work

I repeatedly pressed on the buzzer
Whilst my blood red face trying to hide
And then after what seems like a lifetime
Gave my name and we both rushed inside

The Journey To Freedom

I was flustered and couldn't stop shaking
And mum told them what happened next door
So they gave me a cool glass of water
Then left mum there as I was assured

That I wouldn't see him at the office
And was shown to a colourful room
But just then heard the intercoms buzzer
Such a feeling of impending doom

Now my advocate said I could call her
But I rang and she didn't pick up
She like me, knew he couldn't be trusted
And I thought, no, enough is enough

I could hear his voice down in reception
So polite, quite unlike the real him
I could feel my heart rate was increasing
The adrenalin pumping within

(Looking back and with no diagnosis
Didn't know what had happened to me
But years later I'd learn about trauma
How this triggered my PTSD)

Well by now I was sweating profusely
And I knew that I had to get out
I could still leave the paperwork with them
I'd had years of this messing about

I reached into my bag for the folder
And just then, someone opened the door
As the mediator walked towards me
I looked up and I saw him once more

In the opposite room I could see him
He was leaning right back on his chair
Once again, he was smirking and laughing
Through the slim pane of glass his eyes glared

He'd been told that I wasn't to see him
And he knew that, but did it in spite
Of the recommendations put forward
Thus, displaying the 'duper's delight'

Now I hadn't seen him since the Wednesday
Women's Aid recommended I flee
Psychologically I was still healing
And this wasn't a good place for me

Having gone quite a while with no contact
In one day, I'd encountered him twice
By this time, feeling numb, sick and dizzy
Staying here was too much of a price

So I stood to my feet when she entered
And I told her that I had to go
"I'll exchange both the files as we promised
But I don't feel safe here, so you know"

Then she asked would I not reconsider
I resisted the urge not to shout
And I rushed to the rear of the building
Found a door and I thrust myself out

Wait a minute!

He had cited unreasonable behaviour
And was “frightened and scared to come home”
But this wasn’t the case though, far from it
And one Sunday, those lies would be shown

Now explain to me why, in October
He decided to turn up at church?
I’d been going there weekly since leaving
When I saw him, it made my heart lurch

Mediation was such a debacle
But this time, so determined to stay
And surrounded by friends and my family
I’d be brave and I’d not run away

It was almost the start of the service
So I shuffled along the church bench
And once seated now feeling quite nervous
Back and shoulders and jaw were so tense

From the back of the church, he now entered
And he sat on the end of our row
I felt sick and hemmed in, but I stayed there
As this time, knew I wasn’t to go

Through the service, throat clearing and coughing
Could be heard from the end of the bench
But I sat there ignoring his presence
More continued pathetic attempts

To intimidate, frighten and scare me
Now in public, was losing his grip
He was getting quite desperate to see me
And the mask was beginning to slip

The big issue

I'll go back just a bit to explain things
Now the law is an ass so they say
I would find, to my cost, many loopholes
That have changed since, I'm so pleased to say

Bought the house two days after we married
Whilst on honeymoon, all signed and sealed
This would later become a big issue
And those problems would soon be revealed

After four months I left the first time
As I said, to my dad and my mum's
On the house had been registered 'home rights'
Implications of this still to come

Sixteen months after us getting married
Was the time that he filed for divorce
Though I'd left, we would still be connected
Which would leave me with little recourse

So the marital home was in my name
But since rights had been placed on the house
Until the divorce stuff was over
It was still occupied by my spouse

By leaving, it had its own problems
I was safe as I lived with a friend
But trying to get other housing
Seemed a nightmare that would never end

Years before I'd been told of a story
Which involved a great grandma of mine
This poor soul had been orphaned in childhood
Sadly, that wasn't rare at the time

She was sent to live with distant family
So at least she was given a home
But the jobs that she did were just awful
And she must have felt very alone

The Journey To Freedom

She would sit on the steps of the town hall
Now remember, they were quite deprived
And her job was to pluck scores of chickens
It's a wonder she ever survived

I was blessed that I wasn't left homeless
There were people much worse off than me
But I knew that I had to get answers
And find out what my next step should be

So I went to the small council office
And was signposted to the town hall
Said I'd have to tell them of the issue
As this was quite unique after all

They were sadly unable to help me
As I was an unusual case
And by now, since I'd run out of options
I just had to get out of that place

So I walked out of there so discouraged
And I wondered what I could do next
Then I thought of my own poor great grandma
Who had sat on those same town hall steps

To be named after her was an honour
I have photos with her as a child
She was such a remarkable woman
In the way her past she'd reconciled

So I couldn't declare myself homeless
As I actually co-owned our home
The divorce was a difficult process
But with God I was never alone

I had legal help in the beginning
But denied help as we went to court
The house being a marital asset
Legal aid would not give me support

In the absence of legal assistance
And defending myself as the accused
I would have to prepare my own papers
Which of course, wasn't something I'd choose

For some years I had cognitive issues
Due to fibro and of course the M.E
I just couldn't retain information
Comprehension was so hard for me

I now had to research the process
And just how to fill out all the forms
As preparing the many court bundles
In my life this had not been the norm

With no wi-fi or access to printing
I spent months in the local library
Preparing the packs that were needed
One for him, one for court, one for me

I was offered some help by my dear friends
To type up the work I'd collated
Working blind with no clue how to do it
We worked late and were often frustrated

It appeared the whole thing was ill-fated
But my case filled with its anomalies
Would expose many flaws in the system
I was exactly where God wanted me

And my experiences wouldn't be wasted
As the information was going to be used
For a change in the law some years later
To ensure legal aid's not refused

Things you take for granted

I had a fridge but not a freezer
It was already in the flat
But that wasn't such a problem
I could sure make do with that

You take some things for granted
But now unable to freeze food
You're restricted in your purchases
And many things you must exclude

If you're buying some fish fingers
You have to cook them in one go
There's no buying tubs of ice cream
That was an absolute no no!

It means that you can't batch cook
You have to eat the same all week
You buy more herbs and spices
And start to love bubble and squeak

Had no room for a fridge freezer
The kitchen being short on space
Would be described as small or bijou
But I loved my little place

Mum and dad bought me a freezer
After months was not too soon
I found the perfect place for it
There in my living room!

It would live under the table
And you'd have to watch your head!
But this was a small price to pay
To ensure I was well fed

The freezer was a small one
It was a little table-top
This for me, was a game changer
As it changed the way I shopped

I'd now buy myself cheap lollies
And not have to eat a box of six!
I could now make a whole loaf last
And buy some frozen stir fry mix

For such things as I was so grateful
I couldn't think of what I'd lost
When you're taken back to basics
There's no time to count the cost

Blessings

Over time, as I was still adjusting
I was blessed by a number of friends
With some items I desperately needed
In their own ways, each was a God send

Friends and family to help made a difference
All my problems I knew I'd surmount
They gave household and electrical items
Even blessings in my bank account

Stay true

I signed all the papers, the house would complete
In the spring of the following year
The end of an era, no longer the home
Bought and paid for with blood sweat and tears

Now feeling exhausted I got on the bus
And I made my way back into town
I decided I needed some time to myself
And my sorrows I needed to drown

Not being a drinker that wouldn't go well!
So a coffee shop I had to find
I needed to try and make sense of it all
Lots of jumbled up thoughts in my mind

I've shared the sad reason for selling the house
And I've mentioned it here in this book
But facing the facts, I would have to move on
To the future I'd now have to look

The process was lengthy and really not fair
But despite all the things that were said
I knew I'd been honest and told the whole truth
And I'd now have to put it to bed

The bus reached the Arndale and so I got off
Then I made my way down the main street
My boots were quite old, so they rubbed at the heel
So I needed to rest my poor feet

I saw a small coffee shop up by the bank
Fairly quiet, just beyond the main square
I needed to sit and just gather my thoughts
And I knew I'd be able to there

I entered the shop, and I stood in the queue
Then I ordered and went to sit down
But the words on the back of a young person's shirt
Caught my eye and I had to turn round

The Journey To Freedom

Now God will use signs when he's speaking to you
And the lad didn't know when he dressed
That God would be using the clothes that he wore
As a message, so I would be blessed

Two words were emblazoned in white on his back
When I saw it, I smiled, and I knew
And in spite of it all, I had done the right thing
For the back of his shirt said, '**Stay true!**'

I will bloom where I am planted

One year in I had a problem
In the flat with lots of flies
These blue bottles were just awful
And further problems would arise

There was an issue in the cellar
Which was the place of origin
They were coming through the floorboards
I had to stop them coming in

My flat was on the first floor
So the only thing to do
Was put a sheet across the stairway
To try and stop them coming through

Not a pleasant place to live in
I'd use whole cans of fly spray
And I'd have to do the limbo
With the stair sheet in the way!

With my painful neck and shoulders
Believe you me, was no mean feat
I knew I'd have to move soon
This place no longer my retreat

Then my friends again, so kindly
Offered me a place to stay
So I put my things in storage
"Where to next?" To God I prayed

We had finalised the court stuff
And the house would soon complete
I could start to look in earnest
For my next cosy retreat

So I browsed the online pages
Of all the places I could rent
And I prayed for God to show me
Where I'd be safe, but still content

The Journey To Freedom

I had made just one inquiry
And when I went along to look
The person booked before me
Didn't show and I just knew

As I wasn't in employment
I didn't have wage slips to show
So six months' rent I paid them
I didn't want the place to go

My friend lent me the whole sum
And God bless her saved my skin
Once again, this bid for freedom
Meant my new life could begin

This place was meant just for me
I knew God had made away
And it wouldn't be much longer
Before my friends I could repay

When the house sale was completed
In the spring I'd move again
I'd continue with my healing
And work on all my hurt and pain

For the first time I had choices
And enough to pay my bills
Believe you me that feeling
Is really one of life's great thrills

I continued with my courses
In my trauma therapy
Now feeling safe and settled
I could really work on me

Through this time of introspection
I would work on self-respect
And I'm still a work in progress
After years of self-neglect

I have been on quite a journey
But I'm the best I have been
And I'll bloom where I am planted
Now that my life has been redeemed

Feeling at home

Now as you might remember
When I was living in the flat
I had a freezer in my living room
What on earth was wrong with that?

Now I love where I am living
But just to make me feel at home
The washer's in the bathroom
At least I've got one, I won't moan!

Seasons

For everything there is a season
And a time that it was done
You can't rush or try to stop it
It will come when it will come

Courses

Once I realised how I'd been living
And how life had got so out of hand
I needed to find explanations
And find others who would understand

I found Al-anon gave me some answers
For my healing it opened a door
But that was the start of my journey
Unaware of what else lay in store

When I left, I was fully supported
By Women's Aid and they understood me
I attended a number of courses
And met my advocate regularly

Validation from her was important
She explained things and gave me support
She could signpost to other resources
And was with me as we went to court

Online courses would help with my healing
So determined was I to get well
These are the things that I learnt there
From the stories that people would tell

Some explained on their journey of healing
They were left with a myriad of woes
But now they had time to work through this
Moving on with their lives was the goal

Control was a subject they spoke of
Minimisation, denial and blame
Are the tactics some used to control them
Perpetrated as part of a game

They said some used intimidation
Coercion or violence and threats
And of course, these are very disturbing
Which had caused a great deal of distress

There were various ways they abused them
By emotionally draining their soul
Using physical, verbal, financial abuse
Or by means of coercive control

It's all psychologically draining
A whole host of traumatic events
With some, sexually abusing their victims
Whilst others use spiritual content

They would use their religion against them
Quoting scripture, whatever their faith
These too, could be used to abuse them
Once again on control this is based

With some they involved their poor children
Like a game they had used them as pawns
But these poor human shields don't deserve this
Things like this, by group members you're warned

And some turned their children against them
They were fed complete pack of lies
If successful with this alienation
It leaves one of the parents despised

With many, their employer was toxic
And their boss had exerted control
Some passed over for every promotion
Leaving others then facing the dole

As they turned up for work, they'd be guessing
Just what kind of mood they'd be in
This for some, was a daily occurrence
They'd prepare for the games to begin

I would learn about feelings of shellshock
How the life that they lived seemed surreal
And following psychological trauma
They were now left unable to feel

For protection through this time of crazy
It was common to dissociate
As they tried to discover what happened
Their emotions would dysregulate

The Journey To Freedom

Feeling numb and spaced out was quite frightening
In response to these puzzling events
By removing themselves from the problem
They could cope and things weren't so intense

And these people for their own protection
Had retreated inside their own head
With reality being too much to cope with
They created their own world instead

I related to being an observer
I looked down on myself from above
Detached from the world all around me
And from everything I had once loved

There were several things they had mentioned
Hypervigilance (being jumpy and scared)
Some were isolated from their own family
For real life they felt so ill-prepared

They all went through a period of doubting
As they questioned what they had recalled
Through this period of realisation
They had now come to question it all

With prolonged psychological warfare
Some were left with CPTSD
It was something they needed some help with
Which is why they were in therapy

Post traumatic distress can result from
A particularly horrific event
It can leave you with flashbacks and memories
And you're living in daily torment

With complex distress it is different
This is due to repeated exposure
And the long-term effects can be harmful
So from these things, you have to find closure

Words

Sticks and stones may break my bones
But names will never hurt me
Well words cut deep so that's not true
They leave wounds the heart and mind see

Validation

Being bullied is not just a school thing
There are bullies in all walks of life
They don't have to be physically violent
For their cruel words to cut like a knife

Some people need help for past trauma
Things from childhood they've carried too long
They've been silenced, dismissed and forsaken
And some things they have seen were so wrong

If doubted, that really is harmful
They're perceived as mad, even insane
But with this cruel invalidation
They're reliving the trauma again

Now I know if you're not a professional
Some disclosures are hard to conceive
And the things that they're trying to tell you
Are so awful, it's hard to believe

With some things you're not able to help them
Like the horrors that they've shared with you
These disclosures can be very shocking
But it doesn't mean that they're not true

There are people out there who can help them
Their GP, Women's Aid for a start
And for men, Mankind's very supportive
They have knowledge they'll gladly impart

At their workplace they should have some recourse
Human resources should offer help
Don't be fobbed off, it all needs reporting
You can't deal with it all by yourself

Schools and colleges all have resources
And they all provide some pastoral care
They can signpost to other departments
If they can't solve the problem right there

Validation is very important
In this safe place their voice can be heard
This is often the beginning of healing
As their feelings they put into words

Something's off

(Part one)

A word that was frequently mentioned
Was something I'd heard of before
About the narcissist and their behaviour
On these courses, I'd learn so much more

When you meet them, they're ever so charming
And in love, you fall head over heels
You feel loved right at last, unaware of their past
Whilst the wolf in sheep's clothing's concealed

'Love bombing' will start, in pursuit of your heart
Many love notes or letters and verse
Enjoying the fuss believing promises of us
Unaware that you're being coerced

You don't know it's a mask they are wearing
They despise their true selves through and through
So to fill the black hole in their dark empty soul
They'll require the host that is you

You're confused by the way they are acting
You know love shouldn't take this much work
But then you're unnerved by a look on their face
And you watch as the narcissist smirks

'Gaslighting's' a term you get used to
Now you're doubting the things they have said
You will question your memory quite often
Since the narcissist's messed with your head

With gaslighting you think you've gone crazy
Sheer despair and confusion it brings
You're starting to question, "Am I going mad?"
Whilst they're busy now moving your things

(Part two)

'Devaluing' you is the next thing they do
Never sure if you're in or you're out
They're slowly erasing the essence of you
And you're left with much fear and self-doubt

Then they'll accuse you of the things they are doing
'Projection' it seems is its name
"You're lying, you're cheating you're spending too much"
But it's all an elaborate game

For some time, you've been walking on eggshells
And attempting to cope with their moods
You're confused and completely bewildered
As discontentment they start to exude

You're starting to watch what you're saying
And you're trying to censor each word
They'll be twisted and cruelly distorted
This results in you not being heard

They're two people in one it's confusing
Never knowing with which you reside
Catching brief glimpse of the horrors beneath
Unaware if it's Jekyll or Hyde

And by now you have changed your behaviour
It seems they're not the person you knew
But the sad truth's they never existed
Their whole outlook on life's become skewed

And you must give them all your attention
They're so wonderful, why would you not?
If you don't, they get ever so jealous
And against you they'll stage a boycott

You will pay for ignoring their presence
And the backlash can be quite severe
So you try even harder to please them
As you wonder, how did I get here?

The Journey To Freedom

You'll soon notice a pattern repeating
They're enjoying it when you're upset
Now this is just one of the narcissists cruel traits
And they'll show not one ounce of regret

Don't expect them to care when you're poorly
Grieving or facing a mountain of debt
For these are the times when they care least of all
And your emotional needs they'll neglect

They will ruin your special occasions
And many other important events
Christmas, your birthday, a promotion or birth
Revealing they're sad malcontents

At home jobs are rarely completed
Most half done then they are on to the next
Leaving a trail of destruction behind
Then they wonder why you're feeling vexed!

And there's something they neglected to tell you
This relationship to them is a game
There are rules, but they are constantly changing
Trying to win though will drive you insane

There's a tactic that's called 'future faking'
"We'll get married just give me some time"
Or "We'll try for a baby the year after next"
All these promises way down the line

They're constantly moving the goal posts
These rules change at the drop of a hat
Very often there's no rhyme or no reason
And this uncertainty has an impact

They will act like emotional vampires
And their need is for power and control
You've already lost all of your sparkle
If you stay, you risk losing your soul

They love feeding off chaos and drama
You try 'grey rock' and 'medium chill'
To avoid them provoking reactions
It is vital you master this skill

Now they want you to get cross and angry
So they'll push you until you erupt
But if you can stay calm and collected
You will find your head's not so messed up

Not reacting to their bad behaviour
Is so hard you must learn to 'JADE'
Don't Justify, Argue, Defend or Explain
And then into their hands you've not played

So you give this a go for a season
Praying peace with them has been restored
This might work for a while, but be cautious
They could act even worse than before

Well you're lost to them now so completely
Showed them love and your endless devotion
Now you're not even sure how you're feeling
As you're numb and devoid of emotions

You stayed though because you were waiting
For the person you love to return
You're conditioned to think this is normal
'Trauma bonding' you're starting to learn

So now that you're so trauma bonded
Inconsistent behaviour you'll find
They'll be cruel with their words and their actions
Then revert to being loving and kind

Their behaviour will keep you off balance
And you've already paid such a cost
Once you realise the price isn't worth it
And the person you were is now lost

You'll be told you're the one with the problem
You're confused, so expect less and less
This addiction you have to the good times
Will ensure to this life you're enmeshed

The Journey To Freedom

They will throw you a handful of bread crumbs
Keep you sweet for a very short time
But quite soon they'll ignore or upset you
And then act as if things are just fine

Another term used was 'word salad'
You'll engage in another mad game
Conversations will just keep repeating
And you feel like you're going insane

They'll confuse you with what they are saying
Random words you find don't make much sense
But they say them with such great conviction
You're left baffled, but daren't take offence

"They love me, I don't think they like me"
'Cognitive dissonance' is what it is named
Where two thoughts in your head are conflicting
When this happens, you think you're to blame

On the outside they're funny and charming
And you feel like you've struck gold with them
But you know it's for show and you're thinking
It will change, but you're not quite sure when

You spent so long believing excuses
Stress at work makes them act out this way
Their childhood, could even be something you said
And the reasons could change every day

It could even result in them 'ghosting'
The silent treatment as they disappear
And then you're left wondering, what could I have said?
Then without warning they deign to appear

Now another tactic is called 'hoovering'
You might leave, get your life back on track
And then they'll deploy a variety of schemes
With the intention of luring you back

They will promise the earth to get round you
Agree to therapy, counselling and more
Mediation or perhaps marriage guidance
But be wary, you've heard this before

They could also use 'triangulation'
And invite someone else into the game
With the intention of making you jealous
Which produces a feeling of shame

Your reputation could also be tarnished
As they attempt to destroy your good name
In a bid to control others' opinions of you
This is known as the 'smear campaign'

When the narcissist can no longer control you
They control how other people treat you
These 'flying monkeys' you thought were your friends
Now believe all their scandalous untruths

They will follow the pattern of 'DARVO'
At this process they're now quite rehearsed
Deny, Attack, Reverse, Victim / Offender
The whole process now works in reverse

(Part three)

And then there's the cruel 'final discard'
It will come like a bolt from the blue
And this phase will reveal all their scheming
When they claim the abuser is you!

They'll announce to the world you're the bully
When you attempt to stick up for yourself
This 'blame shifting' or so-called 'reactive abuse'
Will wreak havoc with your mental health

If you can, once you leave, go no contact
This will give you much needed headspace
By removing yourself from the drama
All that chaos with peace is replaced

At first you don't see how this happened
Once you're out though, you see you've been groomed
The slow process of manipulation
Has ensured that the whole thing was doomed

They'll require new supply when they've drained you
Once they've given their final encore
Then the cycle repeats in the stages we've seen
As they tell their sob story once more

One step ahead

A classic way to gaslight
Which abusers often do
Is move worldly possessions
Causing more distress for you

I'll give a brief example
When I couldn't find my purse
I'd get that sinking feeling
And of course, I thought the worst

"I bet I've gone and dropped it"
(In my head retraced my steps)
"I had it whilst in Tesco
"Oh! But where did I go next?"

"It might be in the footwell
I'll just go and check the car
It's happening far too often
When did life get so bizarre?"

You realise much later
That of course, it's all a con
The person that you live with
Knows exactly where it's gone

It shows up on the table
But it wasn't there before
You think you're going crazy
As it happens more and more

For nine months prior to leaving
After losing half my stuff
Fed up and so frustrated
By this time, I'd had enough

My driving licence, passport
Many documents galore
Were hidden in my handbag
Birth certificate and more

The Journey To Freedom

I always had them with me
So they wouldn't disappear
This crazy way of living
Meant I lived in constant fear

That A4 polypocket
Would then follow me to bed
Was placed beneath my pillow
And then on it laid my head

We didn't share a bedroom
So I had a place to keep
Those documents and bank cards
All close by me as I'd sleep

So when I got the phone call
Saying I should up and flee
I didn't have to worry
As I had those things with me

Things aren't always what they seem

Now there's not always physical violence
They can scare you with actions and words
The frustrating part with this behaviour
Is it's not very often observed

The street angel, house devil is crafty
They make sure no one sees what they do
So when you tried confiding in others
It's no wonder they don't believe you!

Girl power

I come from a long line of women
Who are strong and they never gave in
But in spite of their issues or problems
They had faith and a strength deep within

Having said that, we all have those moments
When despair or depression sets in
So reach out, get some help and acknowledge
That a new way of life must begin

It's not weak to admit there's a problem
You can't always be upbeat and strong
When you're low, it's the best indicator
That you've held it together too long

Therapy

(Part one)

The effects of abuse and of trauma
Can have long lasting effects upon you
You're left anxious, distressed maybe fearful
Or depressed, what on earth can you do?

I was put on the list for some counselling
For the trauma and its lasting effects
I thought once I'd left, I'd be flying
But your head finds it hard to forget

It was clear I'd been merely existing
With my mind in a state of confusion
Since adjusting to life on the outside
After leaving that life of delusion

I didn't present with a single event
But a list of a number of things
Once diagnosed with CPTSD
Now my healing would be everything

In the early days I would feel nothing
Just observing myself from above
Not feeling or even reacting
For protection, an act of self-love

I was finally given some counselling
Was beginning to think and to feel
And that's when things came into focus
I could then start to see what was real

For me, quite a while after leaving
Small things would then act as a trigger
I would sweat and was easily startled
Many issues I now had to figure

I needed some help to get through this
Trauma sits in your body and mind
Events in your head are repeating
Things you thought you'd left so far behind

The Journey To Freedom

You must get to the root of the trauma
In my healing so keen to advance
I was then offered therapy sessions
Of EMDR, thought I'd give it a chance

Eye movement desensitisation
Reprocesses the trauma within
I'd heard good things about this strange process
And I felt my healing could begin

Now the waiting lists can be quite lengthy
But eventually it was my turn
Monthly sessions were run at a clinic
With that process, so much I would learn

After paperwork and an assessment
We discussed moving forward from here
I felt safe and I knew I could do this
And at last, I could face all my fears

The therapist asked me some questions
And though feeling quite distant and numb
Feeling safe, I could look at my issues
And I knew my past I'd overcome

Some use lights on a screen for the process
Others, sounds on some headphones for this
But in my case hand tapping was best though
(It sounds crazy and is often dismissed)

I was asked to go back to a moment
I remembered, that caused me such pain
And by talking and thinking about it
The feelings I had were reframed

Now what happens when you have a 'flashback'
You're transported right back to that place
They're often in bright technicolour
Many things you would rather not face

It is physically and mentally draining
All those things that you tried to erase
In the sessions, you process your feelings
Over time your reactions replaced

With an understanding of what happened
You observe and you see the whole thing
It is hard, if you can though, work through it
Peace and hope to your life it can bring

For years I had written a journal
I'd make brief notes on what I was feeling
They would help me when writing my poems
Which helped with the process of healing

(Part two)

In my sessions I had noticed
That all kinds of things came up
I went right back to childhood
And would take a closer look

I teased my younger siblings
Looking back now I can see
I upset them and I'm sorry
That wasn't very kind of me

At fourteen I was bullied
Not long after changing schools
It was hard enough adjusting
To a new place and their rules

So when I had some issues
In my adult relationships
It triggered childhood trauma
Back then I wasn't well equipped

To recognise what happened
And how this affected me
So when I found it was repeated
It could be faced through therapy

It came from different sources
All seemed positive at first
But I found in the beginning
That they don't reveal their worst

I had people who would copy
Every single thing I'd wear
With some I let my guard down
And many private things I'd share

Then you hear the local gossip
Telling stories new and old
And you realise quite quickly
What you shared has been retold

Now betrayal is such a killer
You just lose all sense of trust
And because you wouldn't do it
It can feel much more unjust

Before I started dating
I had hangups of my own
I didn't have a great self-image
Then the seeds of doubt were sown

Not everyone who bullies
Is a lover or a friend
It can be bosses or co-workers
Just on whom can you depend?

It could even be much closer
Like a parent or a child
And by speaking out about it
You could find yourself exiled

This can all lead to self-harming
Doing things to ease the pain
By creating a distraction
So you won't feel hurt again

And with some it goes much deeper
They will cut until they bleed
They might hate their own reflection
This can be worrying indeed

Or self-deprecating humour
Could be something that we use
We don't wait for others comments
A subtle form of self-abuse

For me it was my eyebrows
I would rub till they were sore
This remains a major issue
And it still needs work for sure

I didn't know it had a name
Just new by eyebrows were quite bald
And 'trichotillomania'
It seems, is what this thing is called

The Journey To Freedom

I also live with bruxism
Where I clench and grind my teeth
I thought these were just habits
But there's so much more beneath

They're all things we use to soothe us
For we're not always aware
That deep down on the inside
Who could be lonely, sad or scared

Recovery's a process
One step forward three steps back
But it's definitely worth it
To get you back on the right track

You begin to notice patterns
You've dismissed them in the past
Once they're seen you can't ignore them
And you can deal with them at last

These red flags can be a warning
And you'll see them more and more
But ignore them at your peril
And bigger things you'll have in store

Recovery from surgery
Is the analogy I'd use
You've been out of it for ages
And you wake up sore and bruised

You slowly start to wake up
The anaesthetics wearing off
Now you're painfully reminded
Of the many years you've lost

But once you're fully conscious
You can start to do the work
All these years you have been sleeping
In the shadows things have lurked

(Part three)

I found a Christian counsellor
She was the last piece in the puzzle
With my faith now at the centre
I could face those years of trouble

I would recognise behaviours
As I started to recover
I'd find answers deep within me
And in no amount of lovers

Now I'm not victim blaming
I'm just speaking for myself
To find the reasons for my choices
Would mean much more than life itself

I would have a revelation
Because I didn't hold a grudge
I'd forgive things far too quickly
Something I regularly misjudged

I would say that I was sorry
In a bid to keep the peace
Even if it wasn't my fault
In the hope they were appeased

But if people are not sorry
And you forgive them anyway
You're allowing some behaviours
That will inevitably replay

The hardest prison to escape from
Is the one within your mind
But emerging from its confines
A life of freedom you will find

In speaking to your inner child
You can see how they've been hurt
And if unresolved in adulthood
This can render you inert

The Journey To Freedom

And some with childhood trauma
Find their emotions are affected
So the aim is to control them
Just to keep themselves protected

This process is so harmful
It can stunt emotional growth
If your feelings aren't maturing
This can lead to you self-loathe

And for many they will listen
To the nagging voice within
So, to silence our inner critic
That's where the healing must begin

Trauma

You're not crazy, you're living with trauma
In survival mode you're feeling numb
Either that, or you're constantly edgy
But these feelings you can overcome

You need somewhere to vent all your feelings
Because sometimes, we don't even know
We've suppressed how we feel for a while now
It's not easy to simply let go

Validation is very important
Someone knowing just what's in your head
You can say out loud things you've been thinking
And then finally put them to bed

They explain things you just haven't thought of
Reasons why you've been acting this way
You been living this like this for some time now
And the same thoughts your head has replayed

There's a number of trauma responses
'Fight' or 'flight' and the one way you 'freeze'
'Friend' and 'fawn' to diffuse any conflict
And the aim of these is to appease

We'll start with the first on our list here
'Fight' response means exactly just that
You're becoming aggressive or angry
And you're now in defensive combat

'Flight' response means you're running to safety
To escape from the dangers you're in
By removing yourself you feel safer
And you're not in a crazy tailspin

'Freeze' response is related to trauma
When you can't 'friend' or just runaway
You can't move or much less make decisions
You're just trying to keep stress at bay

The Journey To Freedom

Now with 'freeze' you are hoping it's working
They'll lose interest and just go away
Others 'flop' as a form of protection
Playing dead could be the only way

As I said, 'friend' or 'fawn' are some options
Where you try to keep them on your side
Making friends with them despite the issues
Means by now all your needs are denied

And retreating within is an option
This might work for a very short time
It's conducive to peace and it's useful
But make sure that it has a deadline

Keeping busy is also a tactic
To escape from the trauma or fear
Always cleaning or changing the decor
Of a room that's been done twice this year!

We do all these things for protection
And we might try them all, each in turn
As we're searching for peace and contentment
This is something for which we all yearn

You won't heal with a couple of sessions
It's a process, so just take your time
Now it took years to arrive where you are now
Just be patient, you're doing just fine

I'm no expert, there just observations
Things I've seen on my journey so far
In myself and quite often in others
Our responses can be quite bizarre

It's not a problem

(Part one)

Life's a challenge, there's no doubt about it
We might feel that we're losing control
And resort to a number of vices
To find peace for mind, body and soul

Now sometimes we'll question our choices
Things we did or decisions we made
It can also be things we neglected
Or situations that made us afraid

You might have lost someone dear to you
Since they're passing, you find that your lost
You try everything to fill the gap left
But that could come at such a great cost

Some events in our lives were so shocking
We relive them again and again
And we all have our own way of numbing
Thinking we can escape from the pain

Now there are the things that we know of
Like alcohol, gambling and drugs
Used to mask our abandonment issues
If from childhood, we never felt loved

Drink can cater to everyone's palate
From the strong stuff to cheap liquid gold
It relaxes or gives you Dutch courage
But it's dangerous if it's taken hold

The Journey To Freedom

“Oh, I don't have an issue with gambling
A few bets on my tablet or phone
The odd scratch card or few games of bingo
Won't be losing my family home”

It can start with sweet smelling tobacco
Then from weed, other things you might try
This could lead to full Class A addiction
You need more as you're chasing that high

(Part two)

Then there are the things we don't think of
They're just pastimes and not a big deal
Watching porn, going shopping or eating
Are much easier for us to conceal

You can hide watching porn it's a secret
"They all do it, I'm hardly a sleaze"
Even working long hours for your family
Surely there's no real issue with these?

You think shopping will make you feel better
After all, you deserve a small treat
But retail therapy can be addictive
So be wise when you're on the high Street

It's so easy to buy on a store card
Using credit when shopping online
But just paying the minimum payment
You pay twice what it's worth over time!

Some develop an eating disorder
It could be the one thing they control
They might binge, then be sick or try starving
In a desperate bid to feel whole

And for those who dislike their appearance
Plastic surgery can be the cure
But for some, these cosmetic procedures
Aren't the end, they're left craving one more

And some are addicted to caffeine
Craving coffee and energy drinks
But the high that's produced can be dangerous
And further into addiction they sink

And for others addicted to smoking
Nicotine starts affecting their brain
Which produces a warm, relaxed feelings
So they reach for it time and again

The Journey To Freedom

Some addictions we don't even notice
Like becoming obsessed with our phone
They provide us with various functions
So being glued to them we are more prone

And online some create a persona
Make a profile that's nothing like them
Too frightened to reveal their own image
From an inferiority complex it stems

And for others who need validation
Social media becomes their best friend
Always checking their likes and the comments
As if on it their life will depend

For some, they'll relax using gaming
And for downtime this can be ideal
But for others, this virtual Kingdom
Is a safe place, because it's not real

Some enjoy their collections or hobbies
Various interests can all be such fun
But perhaps they're becoming obsessive
If buy stuff, now their homes overrun!

And some are addicted to poetry
Many verses going round in their head
They must scribble them down onto paper
Before they can climb into bed!

Now it's good to be physically active
Have a sport that we're good at or like
But you know it's a little excessive
If you're the owner of six mountain bikes!

And some are 'adrenaline junkies'
They take risks, which will give them a thrill
Whilst others will push their poor bodies
Using exercise and steroid pills

And then there are some who are hoarders
Safe at home from the world they escape
Slowly buried beneath their possessions
Like magazines and old video tapes

They can't part with one solitary item
These possessions, a wall of defence
They're attached to their things and not people
And the fallout from this is immense

"On these tablets I feel nice and fuzzy
I've been given them by my GP"
But reliance on prescribed medication
Is for some, such a hard place to be

(Part three)

Or perhaps it's approval addiction
It's not easy for you to say "No"
Of this need for other's affirmation
And people pleasing you'll have to let go

And some need a constant companion
They're not happy with being alone
Needing company or constantly dating
Or enjoying the cosy 'friend zone'

While others need a long line of partners
They're obsessed with desires of the flesh
Oh, the thrill of the chase is exciting
But once sated, then they're on to the next

Then others are addicted to thinking
Many thoughts in their mind spinning fast
Leaves them anxious to look to the future
Or depressed if they dwell on the past

This can all lead to full blown addiction
Aimed at hiding our hurts or mistakes
And we'll use them to keep ourselves busy
Then those feelings we don't have to face

Many things if done in moderation
And if legal! Can help us to chill
But if used as a means of avoidance
They can't do that and they never will

In the past we had video rentals
Choosing films once a week as a treat
But now with free access to box sets
A whole series in one night's complete

In the old days, when watching soap operas
And an episode came to an end
You were left with a gripping cliff-hanger
And all week in anticipation you'd spend

The world we now live in is instant
Want our needs met like never before
But by delaying our gratification
We could find we enjoy things much more

I have found in my journey of healing
From some things, you just can't run away
I would have to look back to go forward
And trust God would then show me the way

The process

(Part one)

When I left that was just the beginning
And I still had a long way to go
It would take quite some time to acknowledge
I was lost, but I didn't yet know

At first, I was numb and felt nothing
I was walking around in a daze
Found the life I'd been living was crazy
It was time to get out of that maze

In the silence I'd sit there for hours
With no tv or radio on
Now away from the chaos and drama
From my head though, that yet hadn't yet gone

And then slowly with time, I discovered
There were people who wanted to help
I reached out and I took what was offered
I just couldn't do this by myself

I began to recover from shellshock
Had to deal with the things I'd been through
It had felt like a dream I'd been living
And I couldn't believe it was true

Then I started to recognise patterns
As I've said, in both me and in them
I soon realised just what had happened
I'd ignored warnings time and again

I developed a real understanding
And the reasons I'd acted this way
As an empath I felt other's feelings
And years later, for this I would pay

(Part two)

And so finding myself was the next step
In the search for who I really am
I would go right back to the beginning
To discover where this first began

As the eldest, I'd been quite the carer
Now this wasn't a problem at all
More than happy to help other people
But this trait was to be my downfall

And so loving myself was the next step
I'd neglected my own needs too long
I could love other people no problem
But to love myself, now that felt wrong

Setting boundaries, now that was a strange one
This is something I'd not had in place
Saying "No" was an alien concept
Now this stage for me was hard to face

All these steps though, would lead me to freedom
A long process I'd have to work through
I had counselling and sessions for trauma
And support from my advocate too

True forgiveness would be an eye opener
As I hadn't quite known what that meant
Such a difficult part of the process
Many hours on this subject I spent

In some verses I cover this issue
And how I would forgive things too soon
With no change in the others' behaviour
On the horizon more problems would loom

I wrote poems to those who have hurt me
And I also wrote some to myself
These would be my most sorrowful verses
But they'd help with my emotional health

The Journey To Freedom

And I had to stop chasing perfection
This was hard and I like things just so
But I'd have to make some drastic changes
And would have to learn how to let go

(Part three)

Then surrender came next what a blessing
I could give all my problems to God
Having carried so much for too long now
The relief was quite pleasant but odd!

I found peace and contentment then followed
These were wonderfully worth the long wait
No reliance on people or things now
And revealed not a moment too late

Now I'd always been grateful for blessings
I would list them each night with my prayers
At least ten things for which I was thankful
And each one I would proudly declare

Found my purpose through this healing process
As I wrote my whole life down in verse
I've been there, so I get it believe me
I thought life couldn't get any worse

But I always knew God had been with me
And I'd learn from the people I met
Each one had a purpose or lesson
And I've not finished meeting them yet!

Out of the fog

Now you're free, so you think you can brush yourself off
And just simply move on with your life
For so long though, you've been someone's mum or best friend
Or a partner, or husband or wife

Then well-meaning people will give you advice
"Don't look back, do what you want to do!"
But the fact is you're numb and feel nothing at all
You're no longer the person you knew

So you're out of the fog, but you're still feeling lost
And you don't know which way's left to turn
Now this is the time you must sit yourself down
There are things it's important to learn

You've been so busy caring for everyone else
There's a pattern if only you'd see
That ignoring your wants and your needs for too long
You're no longer who you're meant to be

This insidious behaviour will creep up on you
No idea when it really took hold
But unless you make changes and put yourself first
You'll repeat those behaviours of old

Now working on you will be hard it is true
But you're really worth all of that time
And once you have loved and accepted yourself
Then it's finally your time to shine

Insomnia

Although you're exhausted you just cannot sleep
And insomnia for me was a struggle
I spent hours in my bed, all alone with my thoughts
Which confused me and left my head muddled

Some therapists teach you to write these things down
This can help get them out of your head
For psychologists say it is good for your health
You can say things that need to be said

After therapy I'd learn to let go and let God
Once surrendered, I'd work on myself
Now I still have to really look after my needs
But I live with improved mental health

Emotions

Although I believed, I am human
And some days were a challenge it's true
I would learn to acknowledge my feelings
That would sometimes come out of the blue

I didn't feel the emotion of anger
For me I was much more frustrated
These feelings presented a challenge
Which I had to make sure were placated

Relationships had to be dealt with
For both marriages I had to grieve
I had lost hopes and dreams for the future
As I said, this was hard to believe

You are told "We are in this together"
And you feel that you're part of a team
But for various reasons that not so
Sometimes things aren't always what they might seem

I would have to learn how to surrender
This was painful and so hard to do
As my plans hadn't come to fruition
With surrender though, came my breakthrough

Rescue mission

I can now see how all of this started
As I took on the role of a mum
And by helping at home with my siblings
It prepared me for what was to come

So assuming the role of the helper
That became my whole lifetime's ambition
To support with a shoulder to lean on
Which had long been a family tradition

With not working, I felt less than useless
Never feeling that I was enough
As an empath I felt other's feelings
And got far too involved with their stuff

But for people to learn their own lessons
They must work some things out on their own
It builds character, strength and resilience
They won't learn if they're already shown

If you're not careful you become an enabler
On a mission to rescue and save
And forgiving as mere misdemeanours
All the ways in which people behave

You can set yourself up for mistreatment
Make excuses, then doubts can be dismissed
It is done with the best of intentions
But that's how the red flags can be missed

Finding myself

I lost myself some time ago
Without a backward glance
I just carried on regardless
And I didn't stand a chance

Preoccupied with helping
And illnesses galore
It left no room for who I was
Or who I'd been before

The favourite colour, food or place
Of most people I had known
I took great care to learn them all
Yet didn't know my own!

Quite happy giving all of me
I love with all my heart
Then came the time to love myself
But where was I to start?

So now my nest was empty
What on earth was I to do?
No timetables and lists for them
Leaves all this time for you

But when I learned to love myself
I began to see my worth
Time for me was strange at first
But I found I'd been rebirthed

I guard the peace I found within
It has been a worthwhile quest
This life is so worth living
And I'm ready for what's next

The power of a single word

Now loving your neighbour as much as yourself
Is what we're encouraged to do
But it's altered by changing just one single word
And that's something that I never knew

I loved everybody *instead* of myself
Which became a huge issue for me
Giving family and friends nearly all of my time
Codependent is what I would be

Encouraged at brownies to love people first
Also taught I should put myself last
These influences shaped who I was to become
And they'd started way back in my past

This behaviour ensures your denying yourself
And ignoring your wants and your needs
Happy to cater to everyone else
With a host of well-meaning good deeds

I learnt late in life to acknowledge my worth
It's ok if I want to say "No"
Now don't get me wrong, it has taken some time
And I still have a long way to go!

All the clues were there

I was frequently admitted
To the ward for kidney stuff
But still I failed to notice
I just couldn't do enough

I remember once on discharge
The sister's words were so heartfelt
"I'm sorry that you're leaving
You really have been such a help!"

I'd walk patients to the toilet
And with some I'd have a chat
Or help others move their pillows
If they wanted to lie flat

When a neighbour had a baby
Was more than glad to give my time
But it left me so exhausted
The midwife thought the child was mine!

Now it's only when I look back
And see how crazy I'd become
A lifetime in the making
But by now the deed was done

A servant heart

I'm not saying you mustn't be helpful
It's important we all play our part
Our communities desperately need those
Who are blessed with a pure servant heart

Just remember sometimes put yourself first
You are precious and you still have needs
You're still able to bless other people
Just include yourself in those good deeds

Who am I?

I've had so many different names
I can't remember who I am!
It started with my birth name
Which is where this thing began

Two would be my husbands' names
I followed that tradition
But over time that wasn't all
I'd have some more additions

They all hold different memories
Of another time and place
Once more a change of signature
But still the same old face!

I never felt quite settled
And was left somewhat bemused
The names I liked the best though
Were the ones I got to choose

I needed inspiration
So to find the one for me
I perused the many pages
Of the phone directory

Then there comes your title
Is it Mrs, Ms or Miss?
I'd decide upon my favourite
From the ever-growing list!

No matter which I'd chosen
To declare my identity
Even a double-barrelled surname
They are all still simply me

It's not you, it's me

In all of my relationships
I had my part to play
I made some dreadful choices
And for that I'd have to pay

Having been mistreated
I lived life now on my terms
But didn't guard my heart enough
And still had so much to learn

Some people that I dated
Weren't completely free
I had no business doing that
As they didn't belong to me

If I felt it wasn't working
And I knew I'd had enough
Not long before it finished
I would have the next lined up!

I was constantly surrounded
Always had somebody there
With families and relationships
My whole life I'd always shared

I hadn't healed from trauma
For which I needed time
CPTSD took hold
As my mental health declined

I thought that I'd be lonely
Doing life all on my own
But with prayer and therapy I found
I needed time alone

I'm responsible for my choices
And I fully take the blame
Some I'm not too proud of
And it led to guilt and shame

The Journey To Freedom

I began my healing journey
And took time to work my steps
I had to look at who I was
High time this was addressed

I'm enjoying being single
And spending time with me
For the first time in a long time
I'm at peace and living free

Pandora's box

How often have we done things
That we weren't supposed to do
We think we have the answers
And bite off more than we can chew!

Like even Eden's garden
She had just one thing to do
Leave the apple well alone
It wasn't meant for you!

The same with Miss Pandora
She was told "Don't touch the chest"
You'd think it would be simple
But she thought that she knew best

Through curiosity she opened
Out came sickness, greed and hate
No way to put them back now
Silly girl, it's far too late

In life I've opened boxes
I'd no right to even touch
Two other people's partners
Who weren't quite free as such

Not every box you open
Will be filled with lovely things
More often your worst nightmare
And such unhappiness it brings

How did I think some choices
Would then lead to better days?
They'd lead to disappointment
In a hundred different ways

But in Pandora's story
It would seem, not all was lost
When she looked once more inside it
She found hope still in the box

Moving on

I was grieving the loss of that marriage
All the hopes and the dreams that I had
But I found the real me in the process
The ugly, the good and the bad!

Now this isn't what I had signed up for
It's a good job I didn't know then
That the journey would have many detours
And I'd question them time and again

Moving on from the past is a challenge
And this isn't where I thought I'd be
But we all have our own personal journey
To embrace it I found is the key

The journey

Looking for love in all the wrong places
Giving your heart but feeling it's wasted

From the moment you meet
You're keeping them sweet

Soon you're hushing the noise
And tidying away toys

Then shouting and balling
To nasty name-calling

Now they're in control
And you're losing your soul

Knowing you've had enough
And you're grabbing your stuff

But God's ordering your steps
And you're escaping the mess

Then the freedom to choose
Over everything you lose

All this time and still healing
And honouring your feelings

Enjoying the peace
And being released

All at sea

Your life voyage will have many high points
When you're riding the crest of a wave
In the storms though, be wary of people
Who are drowning that you're trying to save

You might not be best placed to save them
As quite often, you won't be equipped
You must leave it to fully trained experts
Or you'll both find yourselves set adrift

Remember, don't give them your life-vest
You can't help if they sink or they swim
We're responsible for our own actions
There's a chance that they could pull you in

To some, we should never grant passage
With their sweet talk you're easily lulled
So beware of these silver-tongued lovers
They're the ones drilling holes in the hull!

Just make sure that your boat has a life-raft
You will then have the option to jump
But the timing of this will be vital
Take too long and your boat will be sunk

It takes time and a great deal of effort
To find out where you're meant to be
Since this voyage that you've undertaken
You feel shipwrecked and lost out at sea

Since your boat has been laden with cargo
It's high time it was thrown overboard
For a while now, your boat has been sinking
Your main aim is to safely reach shore

You're allowed to consider your options
When you're lost out at sea in distress
For we're all on our own personal journey
And we don't want a life filled with stress

If the time ever comes in the future
When you're sinking, then send up a flare
In the distance you'll notice a lifeboat
And you'll know God has answered your prayer

On some journeys you have to sail solo
Feeling free with the wind in your hair
And healing for me will be like this
A blessed time for much needed self-care

If I'm blessed, I'll find my perfect shipmate
We'll be rowing as part of a team
With our oars in a smooth steady rhythm
We can set off in search of our dreams

Love

Not everyone's supposed to stay
And share their life with you
Some stay awhile and teach you things
Then head off out of view

They give their love for that short time
It's needed for that season
But then completely disappear
And there's no rhyme or reason

Some people just don't make you tick
However nice they are
Say "Thank you, next!" And let them go
Stay friends but from afar

Your 'tribe' though will just get you
They will love you as a whole
They're already on your wavelength
And they truly feed your soul

Insignificant

Self-esteem had been such a big issue
Didn't think being me was enough
So I listened to others' opinions
And believed all that critical stuff

An example, if I was out shopping
And if someone had bumped into me
I would be the first one to say sorry
And for years that's the way it would be

Being confident wasn't so easy
I saw that as being big-headed
So I had to change patterns of thinking
As negative thoughts were embedded

But I've learnt that I'm just as important
Though I don't like to take centre stage
I can now put that chapter behind me
And look forward as I turn the page

Worth

We can spend so much time in a tizzy
Wondering what other people may think
You're trying to meet an impossible task
As your sanity's pushed to the brink

You can lose who you are in the process
Change yourself, as you try to fit in
But your worth's not determined by others
It begins as you love what's within

You will find on this journey of healing
That you must love the person you are
You are kind, empathetic and caring
But you too, have your wounds and your scars

Now you didn't deserve to go through this
And yes, some of it was down to them
But some of it's due to your soul wound
And they triggered it time and again

You might have abandonment issues
Or a complete inability to trust
Some will pinpoint your innermost weakness
And to exploit it for them is a must

It's a problem if you don't have boundaries
Being there at the drop of a hat
You're expected to stop what you're doing
Then you're treated just like a door mat

Setting boundaries is something you work on
And at first it seems alien to you
You can still be of help, but on your terms
And now *you* choose what *you* want to do

Taking compliments was a big problem
Boy did I have an issue with that!
Being shy, thought I didn't deserve them
Was embarrassed in actual fact

I would learn I could state my own preference
And I didn't just have to make do
I had choices and I should now voice them
But this took me some time to work through!

I started quite small to begin with
So when they asked, how did I take my tea
I would say "Oh, I'm not really bothered"
Now it's "Strong with no sugar for me"

You adapt to this new way of living
It takes time, but you must do the work
Once you learn though, there's no going back there
You won't settle, now you know your worth

Time for me

Whatever I do in the future
Must suit me and not everyone else
I'll be happy to help if I'm able
But I have to look after myself

Now I don't want to feel obligated
Or resentful that I have no time
To do things that honour and please me
And that none of my spare time is mine

Healing

From years of grief and so much pain
You brought me back to life again

You challenged me to go way back
And painful memories I'd unpack

You chose your words with such great care
As I was slowly made aware

Of the damage that was done to me
And with time and work, you made me see

By others I'd been cruelly used
Which left my heart so hurt and bruised

I came to you and bared my soul
And over time I was made whole

Despite the things that had gone wrong
With therapy I became strong

This healing helped to mend my heart
My new life now can finally start

The cage is open now I'm free
To live the life God meant for me

(Written for my EMDR therapist.
God sent the right person at the right time)

Forgiveness

Forgiveness I found was a blessing
Was a gift that I gave to myself
A balm for my soul that was needed
For my emotional and spiritual health

Now it doesn't excuse their behaviour
And it certainly wasn't ok
It just means they no longer control you
And this freedom for you I will pray

Unforgiveness can lead to resentment
It will poison your heart and your soul
This unresolved anger within you
Is then rampant and out of control

It's so easy to hold on to grudges
We can choose to, when all said and done
But if that's how we deal with injustice
Then the issue will just run and run

And for some, they choose retaliation
Want revenge, have to get their own back
But they're harming themselves in the long run
As they wait for the counterattack

To be bitter, frustrated and angry
Has a negative effect on your health
To be free from emotional burdens
Means that you can now work on yourself

But first, I would have to acknowledge
The whole process and how I got here
I'd accepted some awful behaviour
Due to ignorance, denial and fear

As I said, I was part of the problem
I forgave at the drop of a hat
But forgiveness is much more of a process
And it doesn't just happen like that

I would try to avoid confrontation
Although this was an impossible feat
I would strive to keep everyone happy
And my own needs would take a back seat

I discovered I had many issues
All these things I had learnt over time
It would then be a process of healing
My emotions, my will and my mind

I would have to dig deep to recover
From the depths of the pit, I would climb
And I'd learn I reacted to people
With the knowledge I had at the time

In due time though, I saw things more clearly
And with therapy I could now see
Due to trauma, I'd been too forgiving
And this 'fawn' response had hindered me

Undeserving

Throughout life I have noticed a pattern
Though we all have a right to be loved
There are those who don't think they deserve it
And they feel that they're never enough

As you were

Over time, you have built your own prison
Feeling safe as you live behind glass
Means you keep everyone at a distance
And it's worked very well in the past

It is safe and it's of your own making
Your emotions are under control
It's a method of self-preservation
Don't need anyone else to feel whole

Then someone flies under your radar
And you find your defences are breached
It's unnerving and quite unexpected
Since you've kept your heart way beyond reach

They ignite something warm deep inside you
You'd forgotten or never had there
It feels strange, but you secretly like it
And this person they actually care

So you let them advance very slowly
You're conflicted as this feels so good
In your mind though a battle is raging
You feel happy, but don't think you should

Even though love was there for the taking
And you wanted that lover or friend
You built up those walls as defences
And made sure this love came to an end

Self-sabotage

In you they have found the real love that they craved
Say you made them feel safe and content
But it soon becomes clear that this isn't the case
And on destroying it now their intent

They love you but actually hate themselves more
The orphan spirit's deceiving their heart
Destroying the thing they want most in the world
Not content till they've ripped it apart

They know what they're doing but can't help themselves
Being emotionally neglected for too long
Not a feeling they've had for some time, if it all
Now your love and affection feels wrong

Rejection it leaves a deep wound in their soul
Of self-loathing and deep-rooted despair
They're suffering the effects of emotional neglect
And this hurt's something you can't repair

Abandoned by people who should have been there
They don't know who will stay and who'll leave
So they push you away because that's all they know
And for love and acceptance they grieve

The person you love is now slipping away
And the worst bit? You can't do a thing
So you watch from the side-lines as they self-destruct
And much heartache and pain it will bring

The only thing left is to give them to God
And detaching with love you must do
You gave him your all that it wasn't enough
Stepping back now is long over-due

My prayer for you

To be loved is all you wanted
And in time I hope you'll see
That it's really worth investing
As it's something we all need

It's more valuable than riches
Longer lasting than any wealth
But by far the hardest lesson
Is to learn to love yourself

So my prayer for you is simple
And I pray to God above
That you live a life of perfect peace
And learn to give and receive love

Surrender

True freedom for me came in stages
By releasing one thing at a time
My whole life I dutifully carried
Many burdens not meant to be mine

This feeling of complete surrender
Followed many dark nights of the soul
I was slowly becoming unshackled
Whilst learning I'm not in control

Compassion and patience are virtues
As our loyalty, honour and trust
I needed these things for myself now
And through healing I'd learned to adjust

Growing

Neglect from a spouse is so hurtful
As is being ignored by your friends
You're invisible, that's how you feeling
And a negative message it sends

It tells us that we have no value
Insignificant is the emotion we feel
This isn't the truth though, far from it
But we end up believing it's real

What's wrong with me? Why don't they like me?
You're beginning to question yourself
And withdrawing from people around you
Has an impact on your mental health

With some, it's because you've outgrown them
Things in common you have them no more
Perhaps you became a young parent
And for some you have lost your allure

Or perhaps you're no longer of value
They got bored and they wanted a change
Whether swift or a long-drawn-out process
In the end though, you find you're estranged

But don't be too down, it's a blessing
It was temporary, they weren't meant to stay
Just be grateful for what they have taught you
God has new friends He's sending your way

And with time you become more discerning
Finding who brings the best out in you
You're more choosy with who's in your friend group
And your character starts to break through

Just remember though, how you arrived here you
You allowed things you shouldn't have done
But since growing, you came to discover
A new chapter for you has begun

Beauty for ashes

I've been planted for this season
Where I am to write this book
I have to say it's not at all
How I thought my life would look

Ever since I was a little girl
I had dreams and ideas
But my, it's been a journey
As I ventured to get here

So my therapy had ended
And I found I had the time
To pull it all together
And get it all out of my mind

Your head can carry all sorts
Mine was full to overflow
But by talking and now writing
It has found a place to go

Processing my feelings
After years of being dumb
Believe me was a full time job
But now that work is done

Some things will never leave me
They all made me who I am
But now I have that knowledge
I'll move on as best I can

I feel I've come full circle
With the optimism of youth
But learning from the lessons
And accepting some home truths

Hope

The past has made me who I am
And I wouldn't change a thing
It's not been a bed of roses
But after winter comes the spring

Contentment

Now I live in a place of contentment
Geographically and in my head
I'm at peace with the person I am now
And look forward to what lies ahead

Purpose

We all have a reason to be here
It's no accident or a mistake
Each of us has our own story
And the best of this life we should make

For some 'doing life' it's so easy
It seems, things just drop into their lap
But for others it's not quite that simple
They'll encounter so many mishaps

These experiences are never wasted
They will make you who you're meant to be
For God has a plan and a purpose
That you're not always willing to see

With free will then we follow our own path
This quite often the leads astray
But the lessons we learn on that journey
Are not wasted, there with us to stay

We can use them to help other people
Who are going through things just like us
They feel safe with you knowing you've been there
And their intimate thoughts they entrust

I believe we can use what we've been through
I bear witness and I'm in no doubt
From the safety of where we are standing
We can reach in and pull others out

Just ask

If today you have lived by some new rules
And you've put away things of the past
Then let me be perfectly honest
You can make all those new habits last

It's not easy, I know that, but listen
If you're repeating those habits of old
They won't help you now where you are going
Moving on means you have to be bold

It's not weak if you need help to do it
There's support, but you might need to ask
If you've tried for too long on your own now
That has been such an almighty task

For a time, you might need medication
Biologically things could have changed
But please speak to your GP about this
And they'll see just what can be arranged

Talking therapies are very useful
But I found it must be the right one
You'll be baring your soul to this person
Many things that you thought were long gone

All in all it took years to recover
And I searched out some groups for myself
Online courses, support groups and meetings
Would all help with my poor mental health

Tailored workshops I found were so helpful
Also small groups who met face to face
Here I'd learn so much more about trauma
And that wisdom and knowledge embrace

Lived experience I found was a comfort
Meeting others exactly like me
They related to what I had been through
And at last, a way out I could see

Transition

Endings are often beginnings
As you move from the old to the new
Yes it's painful, but trust in the process
There's a life out there waiting for you

Epilogue

Once victim, survivor, now thriver
I've been freed from guilt, shame and self-doubt
Hope my story can be proof to others
From this prison, there is a way out

To You

To the reader who's yet to find freedom
There are agencies out there to help
Make a safety plan, give you some guidance
You don't need to do this by yourself

Acknowledgements

First, I'd like to thank my parents
For their unwavering support
Since I left, we got much closer
Especially when we went to court

And an even bigger thank you
Goes to my one and only son
He has been the inspiration
For everything I've ever done

And to my darling grandchildren
I couldn't fail to mention them
They all make my life worth living
And bless me time and time again

And I'd like to thank the mummies
Of my grandchildren you see
They're a huge part of my story
And if you knew them, you'd agree

Next, I'd like to thank my husbands'
With whom I shared my solemn vows
Because without that life experience
I wouldn't be who I'm right now

And to my extended family
For all their help throughout the years
They have listened to my problems
And helped to wipe away my tears

Then all the friends who helped me
In so many different ways
And the agencies I worked with
Who gave me hope for better days

And I have to thank the strangers
I know we didn't meet by chance
God placed them there to help me
It wasn't merely happenstance

And I'd like to thank my dear friend
Him being grammatically adept
Taught me there's no need for commas
After every single breath!

And my friend who helped with tech stuff
Both on my laptop and PC
As I had no clue would lay out
He was there to support me

But by far the biggest thank you
Goes to God for being there
He has been right there beside me
And with him all my fears I've shared

Appendix

Codependency - Involves sacrificing one's personal needs to try to meet the needs of others.

(www.goodtherapy.org)

Coercive control - Emotional abuse uses negative feelings like fear, guilt and shame to control another person. Common tactics include insults, threats, coercion and criticism.

(www.goodtherapy.org)

Cognitive distortions - Are irrational, inflated thoughts or beliefs that distort a person's perception of reality, usually in a negative way. They can take a serious toll on one's mental health, leading to increased stress, depression and anxiety.

(www.goodtherapy.org)

Complex PTSD - (Post-traumatic stress disorder) - Caused by repeated exposure to traumatic events as a child or an adult. (www.nhs.uk)

Domestic Abuse - Is a pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading, violent behaviour including sexual violence. In the majority of cases by a partner, or ex-partner but also by a family member or carer.

Fibromyalgia - Is a long term condition that causes widespread pain of the body, extreme tiredness, issues with mental processes such as problems with memory and concentration. ('fibro fog')

(www.nhs.uk)

Malcontent - A person who is not satisfied with the way things are; who complains a lot and is unreasonable and difficult to deal with.

(www.dictionary.cambridge.org)

M.E. - (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis) - Is a long term condition with fatigue being the main symptom.

(www.nhs.uk)

Narcissistic abuse - Happens when a person with narcissism or narcissistic personality disorder uses another person as a source of validation, self-esteem or as a way to get their needs met. It can lead to abuse and neglect of the other person.

(www.goodtherapy.org)

PTSD - (Post-traumatic stress disorder) - Is an anxiety disorder caused by very stressful, frightening or distressing events. (www.nhs.uk)

Trichotillomania - Is a body focused compulsive and harmful self-grooming behaviour, involving powerful compulsions to pull hair from ones' body. The most common sites are the scalp, eyebrows and eyelashes.

(www.goodtherapy.org)

Twelve Step Programmes - Consist of a set of uniform steps that attempt to support individuals who wish to address a variety of addictions and behavioural concerns.

(www.goodtherapy.org)

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ManKind Initiative, Registered Charity No. 1089547
www.mankind.org.uk

Rape Crisis England and Wales
www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Suicide Prevention
www.spuk.org.uk

Women's Aid, Registered Charity No. 1054154
www.womensaid.org.uk

Other resources

Alcoholics Anonymous

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 226745

“Clare’s Law” - The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme

www.clares-law.com

Co-Dependants Anonymous,

www.coda.org

EMDR Association UK

www.emdrassociation.org.uk

Fibromyalgia Action UK

www.fmauk.org

ME Association

www.meassociation.org.uk

Narcotics Anonymous

uk.na.org

National Domestic Abuse Helpline 08082000247

www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk

Refuge

www.refuge.org.uk

Restored

www.restored-uk.org

Salford Survivor Project

www.thesurvivorproject.co.uk

The Freedom Programme

help@freedomprogramme.co.uk

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help@freedomprogramme.co.uk

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www.ydom.co.uk