

**WHAT TO
DO IF
TRAPPED IN
A LIFT WITH
A DENTIST**

**A COLLECTION OF
POEMS**

by

MARK LEWIS

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CONFESSION

Hello, my name is Mark and I'm a poet.
Before you ask, yes, I do know it
for how could one be a poet and not know what one was?

It sounds like a confession I know:
Hello my name is Mark and I'm an alcoholic
Hello my name is Mark and I'm a drug addict.
Hello my name is Mark and I'm guilty of fraud, perjury,
insider trading and perverting the course of justice.
Oh no, that wasn't me, that was Jeffery Archer.

Hello, I'm Mark and this is a poem.
I'm not quite sure where it's going
I'm not quite sure where it's been
or if it's ever been heard or seen.
Does it exist as I write this line?
Will I finish this poem in time?
Will I accidentally commit a crime?
If I did would it help the rhyme?
What is this poem all about?
Will I read it in a whisper or shout?
In constructing the verse will I flout
the acceptable forms of linguistic structure, rhythm and rhyming scheme?
I still don't know what I'm writing about
so therefore I can't do an about turn

until I learn
to discern
between transitory, incoherent ideas that flit through my mind and those that are actually suitable for inclusion
in poetry.
Sorry.

THINGS I WAS PROMISED BY 'TOMORROW'S WORLD' WHEN I WAS A CHILD AND HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN DISAPPOINTED BY THE ABSENCE OF

Where are my x-ray specs?
Where is my hovercraft?
Where are my silver trousers?
I know it may sound daft
but I was promised these things
when I was in school
perhaps all those presenters
were playing me for a fool
I realise that making a spaceship
is probably quite hard
but I expected to have my own by now
thanks to William Woolard
All these things were promised
to me and all of us
but when I want to go somewhere
I still have to take the bus
I don't have a teleport bracelet
I don't have a hover car
I've never seen robot slaves
or a titanium bra

I don't have a time machine
or a personal dinosaur farm
I don't have my meals in a tablet
or a bionic arm
It's not that we need these things
they are not necessary
but we were promised them all
by those people on the telly
Still they have not materialised
within the world at large
but I suppose if we all had jetpacs
there'd be an airborne congestion charge

10 THINGS YOU WOULDN'T WANT FOR CHRISTMAS

A dead robin in a sock, a relaxation CD
that appears to be voiced by Ian Paisley
A pair of trainers pickled in bree
A vague sense of inadequacy
A perambulating hamster nailed to the knee
of a disgruntled member of a select committee
A piano where every single key
has been replaced by a rotting flea
A rotating vicar nailed to a tree
A swarm of traffic wardens exploding with glee
The bill for Elton John's latest spending spree
Some feces in a hammock I think you will agree
You wouldn't want these presents and neither would me

THE IDIOT'S GUIDE TO RELIGION

Old and wrong ideas, superstitious fears
killing in the name all gods are the same
none of them exist just ghosts in the mist
that fall across a mind and say that death is kind
'they're in a better place'? Come say that to my face

Empirically you're wrong, another empty song
it's gone on for too long no faith can be that strong
god's boot stamps on your face yet still there is no trace
of doubt within your heart that you still stand apart
from those who don't believe and those who don't receive
god's guidance and love and all those myths from up above

Just wake up and see, it's wrong logically
you are just like me, a random entity
the universe has no soul and neither do we
we're just byproducts of chemistry
Impersonal laws, no purpose here
but this is not a cause for fear
we're all free to decide
our own will so choose with pride
choosing gives you life you see
don't abdicate responsibility

there's no need to subjugate
your freewill or live by fate
wake up and define yourself
seize your essence live your life

it's not nihilism, it's just realism
it's just real
it's just truth
it's just life

WHY I DON'T WATCH TELEVISION

Death and destruction, another new faction
warring religions, old superstitions
too much bad science and too much reliance
on opinion polls by who alone knows
I can't watch the news, the bigoted views
the stupidity it terrifies me
here's what to think and how much to drink
then expect me to vote it's beyond a joke
my intelligence insulted each day
I cannot believe anything you say
daily the lies burn into my eyes
all of your fears burn into my ears
opinion as fact tell me how to act
tell me what to think push me to the brink

That's why I don't watch television
because I hold you in derision
a media prompt for every decision
politics and truth a mighty collision
statistics are lies the government tries
as they patronise with wool over eyes
democracy fake they're all on the take
for their own sake election mistake

Entertainment stultifies, paint drying before your eyes
watch the news absorb the lies as media opinion tries
to make you scared of everyone feel the fear as you succumb
to their desire for fear and hate divide and rule so they create
an enemy for everyone to be against so we become
a nation scared to move or breathe and government can rule with ease
cos frightened voters don't protest when they know government knows best
so don't accept what you are told and don't believe the lies you're sold
think for yourself be smart and proud don't just do what is allowed
by men in suits who live for power stand firm and we will have our hour

5 THINGS YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO READ IN A TEXT MESSAGE

1

Hope you're enjoying your evening out, I've just burgled your house,
I've left the fridge and cooker and a squashed, dead mouse.
Other than those three items, I've taken the bloody lot
oh, and your tooth brush has been up my arse

yours sincerely, John Prescott.

2

I saw you last week on the train, you noticed me I think
I wore a loin cloth and trilby can I take you out for a drink?
I followed you home that night so I already know your address
I also went through your wardrobe can you please wear that bright red dress?

3

I've just been checking my list and it's time to come for you
I'll call to collect you tomorrow at around half past two
if you could please be ready to take your last breath
I'll be wearing a cloak and scythe
Yours sincerely, Death.

4

You don't know me but I'm your real father

5

Your phone isn't working, you must be imagining this sentence.

CLONING AROUND

I heard on the news today they've cloned a sniffer dog
and now there's global panic that they'll go the whole hog
and clone a human being for some nefarious reason
which to the unscientific is tantamount to treason
“They'll be cloning Hitler next, or Stalin or Hussain,”
the ignorant will cry without trying to explain
why anyone would want to clone a dead dictator
or *who* they actually think would be the instigator
of such a pointless act, who would even bother?
One Hitler was bad enough we do not need another
But that's okay because it's all impossible
you'd have to copy everything, experience and all
You can't copy someones life revive their history
so even a genetic clone has a new personality
so, you see, there'll be no new Hitler or Stalin or Hussain
so let's get some perspective, back to normality again

EARLY LEARNING

When I was five I almost ran into the middle of the road
My mother held me back, or else I'd have become a squashed-flat toad
She said to me “If you'd done that then there would have been no more Mark”
This hit me like a firing squad and suddenly I saw the dark
the place called death where we all go when time is up and it's our turn
a lesson I did not want to hear but one that we all have to learn
that life is so ephemeral, one small mistake, it disappears
I know it's unavoidable, but it's haunted me these thirty years
that one day I just won't exist, I'll disappear into the mist
and there'll be nothing left of me except a bit of poetry

EMPIRIC DILEMMA

Sometimes the corner of my eye deceives me into seeing things
that are not there, do not exist. What is this falseness my eye brings?
If we can't trust the evidence of our own eyes then where are we?

Do we believe in anything in this world that we think we see?
Some people think that they've seen ghosts or aliens and UFOs;
some people think they've talked to god who tells them how to solve their woes.
Are any of us really here or are we figments in a dream?
Descartes thought he really was but are things as they really seem?
Can we be sure of anything? Is life just one big massive lie
that we don't get an answer to at any time, and then we die?

JUST CHANGE YOURSELF

It's not going to happen
You want to save the world
nice idea but you'll still fail
You can never change anything
except yourself just change yourself
The world is too big and complex
everything runs on chaos theory
No one can predict the outcome
of their actions we can never
kill the planet only ourselves
We are not that important
and the universe doesn't know we're here
mother earth is as anthropomorphic
as the big guy sitting on a cloud
We must all wake up and accept
that we're nothing more than random chemical events
In humanity there is no divinity
just a lot of stupidity
and that's what calls the shots
cos the guys who run the world
all want the fools gold
which they covet so much
that they stamp on us all to get to it
but we'll have the last laugh because

None of them rule the world
we are not the world
we only move in our own tiny circles
and it's time to adjust our view

It's not going to happen
We can't change the world
only ourselves
so let's do it and make the world
a better place for *all* by removing the stupidity
and false values that blind our minds

If all the people in the world
starting thinking for just five minutes
each day then we will have
markedly improved our lot
and someone like Bush can never rise again

Just change yourself

Repeat as necessary

JUST LOOK UP

Sometimes at night I look up to the sky
the infinity of stars makes me want to cry
not from unhappiness but out of sheer awe
at the sense of infinity the sky is big, for sure.

Some of those distant lights are bigger than our Earth
yet still people think there's something special in their birth
that they are so important when they are patently not
cos even our whole planet is a dot upon a dot
An infinity of space-time should give us pause for thought
and make us quick to question the huge arrogance we're taught
so look up at the night sky and just take in the view
there's nothing special about me and nothing special about you

But that's not a cause for heartache cos we're here and it is now
so let's crack on with living
before we take our final bow

WHAT TO DO IF TRAPPED IN A LIFT WITH A DENTIST

If you have brought your own wolf with you then obviously all is well.
If you have forgotten your wolf you will understandably start to panic.
However, providing the dentist is in agreement, an adequate substitute
is to whistle the chorus of 'Too Shy' by Kajagoogoo
until the emergency services arrive.

WHAT TO DO IF TRAPPED IN A LIFT WITH A DOCTOR

The procedure for wolf replacement is similar to that outlined above
but involves playing the theme to 'Test Match Special'
with spoons and matchsticks.

If you have forgotten to bring your spoons and matchsticks with you
then a comb and paper will just about do, but be warned that whistling will have no effect.

WHAT TO DO IF TRAPPED IN A KIOSK WITH A CABINET MINISTER

If you have forgotten your tear gas then it is legally permissible
after ten minutes has elapsed to release your wolf.
Anyone foolish enough to enter an enclosed space with a cabinet minister
without adequate wolf protection deserves everything they get.
It is, however, advisable to ascertain their exact cabinet position.
If you discover that they are only a junior minister
then you must wait twenty minutes before releasing the wolf.

WHAT TO DO IF TRAPPED IN A KIOSK WITH MICHAEL HESSLETINE

Run like fuck.
The wolf will be of no use.

HOW DO THEY DO IT?

How do they do it the murderers, the rapists and bully boys?
Inflicting pain and violence treating people just like toys.
I don't know how they sleep at night or what could motivate
a human being to become such an incessant ball of hate.
What do they think they've achieved? Is it something they enjoy?
Does it fill their hearts with glee when they seek out and destroy?
Do they think they're better than the people they abuse and kill
and will they just go on and on never having had their fill?
It mystifies me every day that somebody gets such a thrill
from ruining and taking lives it must be such a special skill.
The politicians aren't exempt I don't know how they sleep at all
after each and every busy day of shoving us against the wall
of intransigence, low intelligence, no recompense, on the fence.

I've always wanted a quiet life and those I meet are much the same
they seem to realise that life is merely an absurdist game
that nothing is worth dying for and nobody's worth killing
that we're all equal in this game nobody has top billing
but still I see that I'm obliged to do no harm to others
and not to bully or harass my sisters or my brothers
so why can't everybody see that this is just the way to be?
Why is there so much penury so many inflicting misery?

How do they do it? Why do they do it?
What are we going to do about it?

WHITE COFFINS

When I was twelve a friend of mine died. He was eleven and I went to his funeral.
In the back row of the chapel I ogled the girls from his school
and thought how nice they all were even though they were visibly distraught.
The dreary, depressing music piped up and we all stood up.
I became aware of movement behind me and four men came in
carrying a wooden box.
I'd never been to a funeral before and I'd never been two feet away from a coffin.
As it passed slowly by my head a horrible thought leapt unbidden into my mind:
"Oh shit! Mark's in there!" Then I thought "Hang on, no he isn't."
Then I thought "If *he's* not in there, what *is* in the coffin?"
I was suddenly stuck in a metaphysical paradox
and as a man chanted the meaningless liturgies and platitudes
my mind was racing in all directions at once.
At the end of the pointless service of empty words and false comforts
I realised that I'd cried enough to leave a large puddle on the stone floor
and it struck me as odd that my face could contain that much liquid
and also, absurdly, that perhaps I should offer to clear it up.
Throughout the service I looked fixedly at the back of the pew in front - anywhere but the coffin.
Why do they put kids in white coffins? It's a fucking horrible thing to do.
It seems to say "This person never had a life".
Small coffins are bad enough anyway but *don't* use white ones.

Afterwards, all the adults were stuffing their faces with food and drink,
and laughing and joking. I was really puzzled and angry.

“Hang on,” I wanted to shout, “we've just cremated an eleven year old boy,
what the fuck are you doing?”

Now I understand: they ate and drank to *experience* something
to use their senses, to feel *alive*.

They laughed and joked about trivial things
because nobody wanted to talk about why we were gathered there and what had just happened
because there were no words to speak.

Now I understand - it's known as displacement.

Twenty three years later I understand all too well.

At the time I didn't, couldn't, didn't want to, delete as applicable.

So I went outside and sat alone in the middle of a large field.

It seemed like days, that half an hour, and it changed me forever.

Never such innocence again.

I looked up at the sky and shouted aloud

“Okay, you bastard, explain this one.”

I closed my eyes and sarcastically awaited a reply. None arrived, of course:

no answer to my anthropomorphic gesture of desperation

because there are no gods, no angels, no heaven, no hell, no answer.

The only things in the universe are physical matter and abstract concepts
and you can't have the latter without the former because ideas only exist in the mind
and a mind is only a metaphysical abstraction of a physical brain.

Consciousness is electricity and chemicals and nothing else
and so is the universe.

Therefore I received no answer, but I never expected to

so eventually I got up and rejoined the party

In one sense, but never in the other.

WHO BRED ALL THE REPUBLICANS?

Who bred all the Republicans? Let's see if we can find out.

Which pharmaceutical laboratory or government agency was responsible?

They certainly can't have arisen by the process

we've come to know as natural selection

Cos they're all twisted and wrong

and most definitely *unnatural*.

They're very much the duck-billed-platypus of the political world;
ugly and pointless.

In any case, Republicans are mostly bible-bashers

who don't believe in natural selection

Despite the fact that we all have fish bones

in our necks from our evolutionary past.

They really should have stopped breeding a long time ago

even before Reagan began to appear in cowboy films

Where did all the Republicans come from?

Who was responsible?

Please tell us so we can find them

and beat them around the knees and ankles

with sticks and raw sewage.

Oh dear, now we come to the Bush family?

Such an abomination of nature

they're even more twisted and wrong than the previous lot.

They're so faulty and inbred

they could even be members of our very own royal family.

What sort of a gene pool do they have in Texas?

It's so small it may even be *subatomic*
Similar in size to a quark or even a Higgs-Boson
and that's a very small particle/gene pool.

REPETITION

Life consists of experiences
That's all we have
except memories of previous experiences
Why do we seem to prefer to live in memories
rather than experiencing something new?
And how much of our experience
is genuinely new anyway?
So much of what we do and think
is merely repetition
of a previous action or thought
Memories are inherently unreliable
they are not an accurate record
they are coloured and shaped by our present mood
If memories aren't really memories
and experience and thought is mostly repetitious
then what do we actually have?
What does human existence really consist of?
Ah, there's the question
The one that poets and philosophers
have been begging for years
begging for an answer
May I posit that, like matter
what we have is Potential Difference
We all have the capacity to reach above the mundane
to transcend the daily grind of anxiety and doubt
to silence the incessant, futile chatter of our fragmented minds.
So why don't we?
Why do so few even try?
There's no indication that this will cease to be the case any time soon
and therefore no indication that the chaotic mess of human society
will be resolved any time soon.
Until then, we will always have poets and philosophers.
I've been a slave to poetry and philosophy all my life
I don't mean that I look to poets and philosophers for answers
though that used to be the case
but rather that I write in order to understand
I now have most of the answers I always sought
If I had all of them, would I still write?
Sarte said that people write in order to understand life
Does that mean that when you understand life you stop writing?
Writing *is* my life
I don't really do anything else
nothing that interests me anyway
So if I ever had all the answers and was completely content
would I actually be worse off?
If you can pass each day happily
without thinking about all this stuff

then be thankful you're not a poet
It's a filthy job
But somebody's got to do it

Well
I have to

PORNIFICATION

Some of us men have sense
Don't stereotype us all
I personally hate violence
and porn and football.
I'm deeply disturbed by adverts
with women in revealing tops
clearly dressed as schoolgirls
displayed on our bus stops.
What message should I take from this
and does it matter much?
Does it bother other people
or am I out of touch?
Is it a post modern joke
I wasn't invited to?
I don't want porn at bus stops
But some obviously do.
I once saw a girl of twenty
and written on her t-shirt
was 'I'm gagging for an F.C.U.K.'
is that how modern girls flirt?
For half a horrid second
a primeval side of me
pictured what I'd do to her
up against a tree.
I'm a gentleman
I'd never cross the line
but others often do
not just from time to time.

The bus stops are bad enough
but this was so much worse
I felt physically ill
at my testosterone curse.
I wanted to warn her about
what had flashed through my head
but it would doubtless be
a tricky path to tread.
I loathe this kind of branding
that doubtless comes from men
provoking my libido
again and again and again.
You may think I'm overreacting
but listen to the next verse
and then tell me that
this isn't all a terrible curse.

Once I saw a girl of eight
with mini-skirted hips
her hair all in bunches
and scarlet painted lips
the image of a prostitute
she walked with her mother
I wanted to punch that woman
but of course I didn't bother.
Instead I bottled up my anger
and a violent urge to cry
'when did this start happening
and someone tell me why?'
Why would a mother do that
does she think it's fancy dress?
Where do you buy those clothes from
who are they meant to impress?
All they did to me
was leave me in distress
what did the future hold
for this junior mistress?
Not to mention the 'Playboy' skirts
And 'porn star' t shirts
Is that what people now aspire to?
I really wish I had a clue.

This isn't unconnected
to the adverts using sex
to sell me everything from razors
to Vitamin B Complex.
It's all so disturbing
I don't know where to turn
from the provoking images
into my eyes they burn.
I don't know where to go now
but I thought I'd write this poem
Cos if you're a woman
these things are all worth knowing.
They may not have occurred to you
but here's my point of view
is this how things should be?
Is there anything we can do?
That woman with the t-shirt
is of course not to blame
and part of me liked it
to my everlasting shame
but I wouldn't be surprised
if she thinks a suffragette
was an early 80s punk band
that's how bad things can get.
Emancipation isn't
getting your tits out
and drinking tons of lager
and behaving like a lout.

Being a man isn't
competing in stupidity
so grow up now
And find some lucidity
And stop the post-modern rape jokes
And stop acting like blokes
And act like a human being instead
Start thinking with your head
We all need higher ideals
To feel what our neighbour feels
Embracing humanism
Isn't high idealism
It's just realism.

PACKED LUNCH

Once in junior school
I couldn't stomach the food
my mother had given me
cos it wasn't very good
sandwiches I didn't like
filled my tupperware
every day at lunchtime
I wished that they weren't there
I tried to eat a bit of them
but couldn't manage a sliver
so on the way home
I threw them in the river

The next day once again
I had some similar muck
packed up in tin foil
just my rotten luck
I don't know what was in them
whether it was fish or hog
and so it was, when I got home
I flushed them down the bog
Sadly, though they floated
and were soon discovered
and therefore I was punished
they locked me in the cupboard

That last line was a lie
but I couldn't find a rhyme
for the events that actually happened
when I was told to apologise but wouldn't
and ended up standing on the landing for an hour
looking at my fish tank
They had a weird idea of punishment in my family

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4 hundred times
I wish you'd shut your face

I cannot stand your idle thoughts
I wish you knew your place
It's further down the food chain
than a human should reside
but that's your place cos you're
something amobeas can deride

1 2 3 4 thousand times
I cringe at things you say
you never cease to amaze me
it just gets worse each day
Ideas drip from your mind
I just wish they were fewer
cos everything you say is
like the outflow of a sewer

1 2 3 4 million times
my skin crawls when you speak
it makes me questions Darwin
that a mind can be so weak
If you see a book it frightens you
and science is a far off land
there was nothing natural in your selection
you cannot have been planned

1 2 3 4 billion times
you fail to think each day
a life of hate and ignorance
is your moronic way
you're pointless and redundant
there is nothing you can do
however many times I try
I can't see the point of you
Forgive me if you think
this is just bitter polemic
I wish you were just one person
but you're now an epidemic

WI-FLI

I wonder
if a mayfly
ever thinks
about the good old days,
when it was only lunchtime?

8 THINGS YOU CAN DO ON A TRAIN

1

Go to the toilets and rub
a dead fox across your face
it may just possibly
improve the smell of the place.

2

Sellotape a photo of Hitler
onto a beer mat
and then smear his face
with a gallon of pig fat.

3

Pretend you're using a laptop
by folding some cardboard in half
and writing a windows error message
to make the Mac users laugh.

4

Pretend you're using an i-pod
by placing a bee in each ear
and holding a gaudy pencil case
to be in a pain in everyone's rear.

5

Entertain the passengers
stretch your legs for a while
by frantically goose stepping
up and down the aisle.

6

Pretend to be tory,
read the Daily Mail and smile
and, to be extra convincing,
goose step down the aisle.

7

Creep up behind Michael Portillo
while he is unaware
put his elbows in a soda stream
and just leave him there.

8

When the guard comes around
pretend to be asleep
refuse to produce your ticket
as a protest against the extortionate prices and poor service.

15 YEARS

I should've been here 15 years ago
but I sat and wasted so much time
on self doubt and pointless misery
I never stood to claim what's mine

Now I'm where I always wanted
living on my own happy and free
others' opinions no longer fill my head
I've climbed out of the family tree

To a land where my mind is clear
free of doubt and pressure from outside
now I carry out plans successfully
walk forward through my life with pride

The rules say I should be dead by now
and I would be if others had their say

the world did its' best to get rid of me
but now I'm stronger and here to stay

You can still doubt me if you want to
for not having a mortgage or a car
but I can do without those encumbrances
I know where I'm going and that's far

So far away from you, you can't conceive
of where I am already at
cos now I am no longer holding back
I'm running free and that is that

A fact you cannot even comprehend
cos you don't know what freedom means
you're just a drone who plays the lottery
perpetuating recessive genes

Success to you is living hell to me
I wouldn't go there for any price
No one can ever buy me now
I see straight through you in a trice

So from now on it is my life
To do with whatever I choose
I won't ever see things your way
or walk a millimeter in your shoes

Cos I am self perpetuating
I make my choices for myself
Now my path is clear in front of me
I've got down from the dusty shelf

Where people sit and waste a lifetime
being a drone or sheep or clone
I don't need your advice or platitudes
I can succeed now on my own

Cos it's my rules, my terms, my strategy
I'm playing now in my own game
Don't you dare to try and copy me
cos you and I are not the same

You must decide upon your own path
don't look to me or anyone
It's not society you should look to
think for yourself, that's lesson done

21st CENTURY BLUES

I've got the 21st century blues
I'm a man out of his time
I've got the 21st century blues
Politicians lies and crime

Everywhere things going wrong
Does the human race have long?
We haven't evolved
in the last 40,000 years
Perhaps that explains
all our confusions and fears
Still fighting tribal battles
internecine strife and hate
Outdated racial conflict
battles between church and state
Archaic superstition
Informs political decision
religious contradiction
leads us all into perdition

I've got the 21st century blues
a planet swallowed by the internet
I've got the 21st century blues
So many things we just forget
Like how to speak to people
conversation face to face
Can we get off this insane path
or will Bush have the last laugh?
With his finger on the button
as god whispers in his ear
a delusional fool
creating hate and fear

I've got the 21st century blues
Will I live to see a change
I've got the 21st century blues
In this world it's me who's strange
Cos I don't need a belief
For existential relief
You call me infidel
and want to send me down to hell
but there is no such place
so blow the smile off your face
When I die I'm going nowhere
and you will rot like me
In the end we're all just microbes
the truth you refuse to see
Your world view so distorted
that your mind is never free

I've got the 21st century blues
but at least I am still me
I've got the 21st century blues
but at least my mind is free

ODE TO A BAG OF LEAVES

I really, really, really
love a cup of tea

it's tasty
it fuels me
it makes me happy

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

At what point
should a towel
be washed?

WAITER

I went up to a 34 waist
and in haste
I threw out loads of my trousers.
Then I lost a bit of weight
and wished I'd wait
ed
before discarding several pairs of 32 waist trousers.

WASTED CYCLE

I hate it when I put
some trousers in the wash
and forget a bit of tissue
it's a frustrating issue.

CHINESE SNOOKER

In snooker
when a player is hampered
by having to cue over another ball
which is directly behind the cue ball
it is known as a 'Chinese snooker'.
Now that there are increasing number of top Chinese players
will they have to call it something else?
May I suggest a 'reverse snooker'
since that's what it actually is?
It was called a 'Chinese snooker'
because it's a 'back to front' snooker
and Chinese writing is back to front
when compared to written English.
But surely that means the Chinese players
should call it an 'English snooker',
which would become rather confusing?
The same event is viewed differently
depending on the observer
rather like the wave/particle duality
at the heart of quantum physics.
I had no idea that would be the last line
when I started writing this poem.
But it isn't now because that was.
No that was.
No that was.

No *this* is.
Definitely.

DIE FOR YOUR BELIEFS

Die for your beliefs if you want to
but don't expect me to join you
Killing yourself for god
supreme act of stupidity
even if there was a heaven
they wouldn't let you in
Destroy yourself if you want to
but don't expect me to join you
Holy War – oxymoron
War for Peace – oxymoron
Peacekeeping Force – oxymoron
form a queue – you're a moron
Pray for guns
pray for bombs
pray for death
your wish is granted
Israel
kill with impunity
we'll all let you do it
nobody dares say anything
cos you're not allowed
to criticise the jews
so we let them invade a country
what kind of sense does that make?
We're all so guilty about world war two
that we'll let them start a third one
America sends them blessings and weapons
cos they can't upset the business men
The age old foreign policy
prop up one tyranny
to counterbalance another
That's been a resounding success over the years,
hasn't it?
Oh I forgot
Americans don't understand irony

CHOICE

Choice is the new buzzword
We've choice in everything
A multitude of options
None of which in any way fit our requirements.

DISEMBODIED BODY

Sometimes when I'm sitting down
it can seem to be the case
that my legs don't belong to me
a strange prospect to face

They look so unfamiliar
and disassociated
I know it's a false thought
but my mind won't be placated
I feel disembodied
like a mind without a head
like my body has been stolen
and I've another one instead
I just cannot relate
to this gristle and this bone
and can't shake the feeling
that this bodies not my own
It won't do what I tell it
it always misbehaves
sometimes it will do something
that doesn't even rhyme
from time to time
it's not a crime
but it's not sublime
and it's quite inconvenient
when I walk into a lamp post

FREE TRADE

Sanctions only hurt the poor
the disaffected
the powerless
while the leaders remain
in their ivory tower
counting their money
and their power
Sanctions don't work
they're political sophistry
smoke and mirrors
a pretence at action and conscience
from people who know the meaning of neither
Free trade means freedom for everyone
including the tyrants
a genuine world wide free market
free from protectionism and subsidy

We also need a world wide free market
for ideas
Ideas can't hurt anyone
Only actions and people hurt people
We need to be free to express ideas
without worrying about offending people
or falling foul of draconian laws
designed to restrict free thought
We should give *all* ideas free reign
no matter how absurd or offensive
they may be to some
and allow natural selection to take it's course
When everything is out in the open

the unworkable and the hateful
can be dealt with in an adult manner
instead of becoming merely 'taboo'
which means nothing is ever dealt with
and nothing ever resolved
so the unworkable and the hateful
continue and perpetuate
Middle class liberals congratulate themselves
on not using 'the n-word' or 'the p-word'
and think that they have solved racism
Just because you don't talk about something
doesn't mean it ceases to exist
Prejudice and hate are not leprechauns
they are viruses
They don't fade away if ignored
they have to be dealt with
Deal with them openly
in a free market

Meanwhile, I reserve the right to disagree with your ideas
and I reserve the right to express ideas you may disagree with
that's called democracy
If I express something genuinely hateful
I will be admonished for it
and most people will turn against me
but I should not and will not be admonished
because someone disagrees with my ideas and values
There is and never will be
a universally agreed
set of moral principles
so we have to
accommodate each other
So long as I'm not harming you
and you're not harming me
then why can't we just
let each other be
and live in a world
of peace and harmony?

GET A LIFE

Do I have to live
life as it's been planned
childhood draws the map
freewill has been banned
I am not like you
I just can't accept
this is all there is
people so inept
we're all free to change
ourselves any time
sentence living death
but what was the crime?

Get a life
future in your hands
past all in you minds
so get a life

Define yourself as is
not as you once were
it's you who calls the shots
of that you can be sure
no one else knows what
is inside your head
follow your own mind
cos too soon we're all dead

No one else's opinions
matter when they say
things you know are false
so don't be lead astray
decide on you own path
and follow to the end
cos no one's walking with you
it's all just cruel pretend
No one knows each other
we can't communicate
except in black and white
and good and bad and love and hate
so banish useless stereotypes
put precedent in the bin
cos the past is killing us
the deadliest of all sin

Written by the winning side
all history is lies
so let's live in the present
lift the wool from our eyes
deal with individuals
not what you expect
think about all situations
and we can all get a life

ITEMS YOU SHOULD AVOID BUYING AT A CAR BOOT SALE

2nd hand underwear
a human spleen
foreign children
sight unseen
wigs that move
food priced in shillings
any sandwiches
with unidentifiable fillings
soiled bandages
clothes from an orange bag
cars with bullet holes
a swastika flag

packets of medication
adorned with foreign writing
mobile phones with
video footage of fighting
shoes that smell
of camonbere or bree
laptops stamped
'property of the M.O.D.'

KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge
is not
intelligence

intelligence
is thinking
for yourself

knowledge
is resurecting
the thoughts of others

history
is a corpse
leave it alone

it teaches us nothing
except how to repeat past mistakes
again and again and again

WAR

War
what is it good for?
Reinvigorating depressed economies
and winning elections

MIDDLE CLASS LAND

Some live in middle class land
with pensions a prime concern
conversations about investments
with high yield return
they'll move to another county
so Tarquin can have a good school
and grow up and work in the city
and join an investment pool
they drive their 2.4 volvos
around the corner to the shops
I'd like to give them a really
good smack around the chops

NO FUN IN MISERY

When I was thirteen
I thought my life was over
I locked myself in the bathroom
And cut myself with a razor blade

A sharp dose of reality
101 in negativity
But that path was not for me
There's no fun in misery

I really thought I would die in there
So I put on side two of a favourite album
The first song talked of heaven
And I cried 'cos I knew there was no such place

A sharp dose of reality
I thought in oblivion I'd be free
But that way lies insanity
There's no fun in misery

Depression was never a lifestyle choice
I never wore black or painted my face
It never made me more interesting
Just more annoying to be around

A sharp dose of reality
I wanted to see my blood run free
But I'm very squeamish, luckily
So I stepped back from stupidity
No prescribed identity
I have centre of gravity
Freewill and integrity
Know your own mind and you'll be free

OPTIONS

For sarcasm press 1
For irony press 2
For intransigence press 3
For insults press 4
For incomprehensible technical support press 5
To speak to somebody helpful
Press the hash key
Whereupon you will be given a list of alternative service providers
with a less ridiculous automated phone system

PERSPECTIVE

There are seven billion people on this planet
There are more stars in our galaxy
There are billions of galaxies

There are a hundred undiscovered species
for every square meter of ocean
The planet is four and a half billion years old
Humans have been here for a couple of million years
What makes you think we're special?
Yes, I know, we're the only species
that study the Universe
we've created societies and systems
we're the only ones with self-awareness and higher consciousness
but what have we done with it?
What have *you* done today with your higher consciousness?
Watched the telly?
Had an argument?
Made a sandwich?
Started a war?
If we're a species apart
then why do we behave like animals?
Because we *are* animals
we're monkeys with delusions
In anthropocentric ignorance
we treat the world as if it's been put here for our benefit
It was here long before us
and it'll be here long after we've been snuffed out
or snuffed ourselves out

We cannot get perspective on our consciousness
because we view everything *through* our consciousness
and you cannot view a microscope through itself
Even if most people no longer think we're the centre of the Universe
many still think we're the most important species on the planet
We are not. We are just another species of microbe
bundles of protein in fancy dress

PASSING TIME

Passing water
is a polite euphemism
and so is passing time.
Pissing your life away
what a wasteful crime.

PROGRESS?

We managed perfectly well
without mobile phones and websites
How much more stuff
will the future bring us
that we don't really need?
All they do is feed
our misguided idea
that all progress is positive
no matter how dear
the cost turns out to be
for society

for you and me
eventually

INSIDE

Rain at the window
I'm here in my room
It's like a cocoon
A comforting womb
But I'm going out soon
so I'll need my umbrella

RANDOM THOUGHTS IN THE MIND OF A BORED TEENAGER IN 1989

Milk cartons
Terry and June
Happy Birthday
see you soon
weathermen
salt n shake crisps
Giles Brandreth
things that don't rhyme
Keith Chegwin
Anneka Rice
BBC Micros
Fire and ice
alcohol free lager
French cheeses
Citreon 2CVs
antisocial sneezes
graphic equalisers
black bow ties
Arthur Neagus
Ceri's thighs
nurses uniforms
soup in a cup
trying to finish this poem
without giving...

SEMANTICS

Once on the way home from school
I made the mistake of referring to my walkman
and a friend pointed out
that I should not call it that
because only those made by Sony are 'walkmen'
and mine was a different brand
“What is this then?” I asked
waving it at him
“A personal stereo,” he said
“Is there any need to be that pedantic?” I inquired
“It's not a Walkman, it's a personal stereo” he repeated

It occurs to me that we cannot have been

the only ones to have ever had this pointless conversation
I expect that more recently
some younger people have had a similar conversation
regarding the i-pod/mp3 player situation

THE ALL TOO COMMON ROOM

Where do you go when you're bored out of your mind
There's nothing to do, as you will soon find
If you're looking for an atmosphere of gloom
Look no further than St. Cyres common room

It's always full of people killing time
It really is a dump, it really is a crime
Do they just let us in this awful place?
No, they make us prefects to save their face

THE FUTILITY OF FIRE DRILLS

There's going to be a fire drill in a minute.
I've put all my stuff away
and now I'm waiting...
waiting...
What is the point?
We all know there's going to be a fire drill
so there's no surprise
no point
It's supposed to be a practice
to see how we would cope in a real fire situation
But nobody moves fast enough because they know it's only a drill
and they don't give a toss.
I bet they're only having a fire drill because they know
I have no lessons and they want me to stay in the library all day
writing poems about staying in the library all day
The school register may be a legal document
but it's still the most exaggerated piece of fiction
since the unemployment figures
There aren't any real people here at all
I don't know, Thatcher's bloody Britain

THE KNAP

When I was five
my father took me to a lake
to feed the swans
One of them rose gracefully out of the water
and almost bit my face off

BLAIR

There was a young man called Blair
who once had plenty of hair
After ten years in power
he saw with a glower

that most of it just wasn't there

But confidence he did not lack
in deciding to invade Iraq
but when he was hated
not congratulated
he left and hasn't come back

THIS IS CALLED 'SIMPLY'

Today I was chased by a quantity of rabbits.
Somewhere between 31 and 107
I'd just emerged from the greengrocers and I suspect they were enticed by the carrots that
lingered within my carrier bag
I tried to explain to them that I needed them for a stew
the carrots that is, not the rabbits themselves
I did once see diced rabbit for sale in Iceland, the shop not the country
but I didn't buy any because I once had rabbits as pets
and I could no more eat a rabbit than I could eat a cat or a dog
Or a tortoise
I've never had a pet tortoise but I still couldn't eat one
I did eat horse meat in France which was delicious, the meat not the country
I've never had a horse as a pet, but one of them did try to eat my dinky toy bat mobile outside a newsagents in
1977, so I was quite happy to eat a horse burger for breakfast
Besides, any animal that can be cruel enough to kill Superman
and Roy Kinnear deserves everything they get
Anyway, I explained to the rabbits that I needed the carrots for a stew
and that I only had 3 carrots anyway
which wouldn't go far among between 31 and 107 rabbits
and would in all probability lead to
some rabbit on rabbit internecine violence
Nevertheless, despite the logic of my argument
the rabbits continued to follow me.
I was getting close to my house by now
and began to worry because I didn't want
these between 31 and 107 rabbits to know my address
I dodged down some back streets and managed to outrun them
I enjoyed my stew that evening
which contained exactly the right amount of carrots
thus vindicating my earlier argument
but later I was troubled by strange dreams
where I had very small feet and white fur
very small feet and white fur.

TRAGEDY PLUS TIME

Tragedy plus time equals comedy
that's what I have heard said
but how long do you have to wait
after the subject is dead
before you can make jokes
about them

Some people still get shirty

if you mention Jesus
no sense of perspective
those insane believers

but if you believe all that nonsense
then you don't think he's actually dead
he's still passing around the fish
he's still passing around the bread
and making sure everyone's fed
but nobody ever saw Jesus
passing around the cheeses

THE ZEBRA BREAKFAST INCIDENT

The table has been laid
There's milk in the jug
The zebras are seated
One of them has some fruit and fibre
One of them opts for strawberry crisp
Another reaches for the cornflakes
But oh dear – what's happened here?
Only a few crumbs remain
Somebody has replaced an essentially empty packet in the cupboard
and failed to inform everyone that they're out of cornflakes
In the meantime, the other 2 have begun their respective cereals
and emptied both the strawberry crisp and fruit and fibre
This means one of them has to go without breakfast
Oh dear – it's going to kick off now
“Why is it always me who has to go to the shops?” cries Barry
in as petulant a way as a zebra
with it's limited facial expression and limb control
can muster
Domestic harmony is now precarious
Until one of the others points out the chocolate gateaux
which is hidden at the back of the freezer
and can be defrosted in the microwave in a relatively short space of time
And so the incident ends with Barry eating a large plate of chocolate gateaux
but pretending outwardly that he's not enjoying it
so as to make the others feel guilty
He also resolves to hide his own secret stash of cornflakes
under his bed from now on
in order to avoid this or a similar situation
occurring in the near or not quite so near future

THE BALLAD OF TONY BLAIR

Who are you?
To take the moral high ground
Who are you?
To spin us all around
Who are you?
To tell me what to think
Who are you?
To tell me what to drink

Who are you?
To tell me what to eat
Who are you?
So bitter in defeat
Who are you?
At night you talk to god
Who are you?
On us all you trod
Who are you?
A top the greasy pole
Who are you?
Good job there is no soul

You've never lived
in the real world
and so my voice
remains unheard
you've never struggled
to pay the bills
you've never lived
with real life's ills

Insulting my
intelligence each day
blame us when things
don't go your way
we're characters in
your farcical play
I wish you'd choke
on the shit you say

Who are you?
A genocidal liar
if there was a hell
you'd burn in it's fire

WHOSE MORALITY IS IT ANYWAY?

Why are people who are killed
always innocent?
Why is a man's life worth more
if he was father of three?

Today there was a murder
a man was arrested
I know that you probably
won't be interested
but the man who committed
this terrible crime
never had a mental illness
at any time
He wasn't unemployed
he wasn't on drugs
he wasn't one of those

ubiquitous hooded thugs
He was a regular person
just like you and me
an unpalatable truth
I think you'll agree
So he won't make the news
you'll keep him out of the way
and wait for a schizophrenic
so you can all say
another nutter killed today
let's lock the fucking scum away

ZEITGEIST

Always an end
to every trend
predictable
and risible
don't follow it
ignore that shit
forge your own path
have the last laugh
wear your own clothes
don't flock in droves
to copy your friends
in the latest trends
disposable
regrettable
fashionable
despicable
maleable
forgettable
plastic people

ELUSIVE MUSE

The Universe is my muse
It's the only one I use
My creative spark needs a fuse
So what have I to lose?

The stars reflect their light
And I try with all my might
To set imagination in flight
In a sense, this is my plight

Because there's nobody at home
To read my latest tome
So I always write alone
This solitude to which I'm prone

So I search the universe
Break my solitary curse
I guess it could be worse

It has given me this verse

The ideas always come
Like the answer to a sum
My imagination never fails
It always tells me tales

I'm never stuck for words
The ideas always flow
Like the worms that feed the birds
It is always, ever so

My mind feeds itself
Like a greedy child with sweets
No ideas left on the shelf
I finish all creative treats
So my inspiration is life
Through the happiness and strife
I will always, always write
Even when I'm feeling shite

Mostly I'm talking to myself
But I'm always fine with that
Cos I've lived alone for years
Though I used to have a cat

It's the process that I love
I don't need validation
I know when I've written well
And that's plenty consolation

So I'm writing to myself I guess
I'm writing just for me
I don't want to be famous
But I would quite like some money

So my tribute's to the Universe
Not one person or thing
The infinity of space-time
That's made of tiny string
It's the only muse I need
For my imagination to feed
And evolve each tiny seed
Into a nice story, novel, poem or some other form of writing

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