



# FIND YOUR OASIS

A collection of poetry and art from  
those affected by parental drinking



[www.oasisproject.org.uk](http://www.oasisproject.org.uk)



Specialist service for women, children and families in Brighton & Hove and East Sussex affected by drug & alcohol problems.



**Brighton & Hove  
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**ru-ok?**

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"As a child I had a secret, I kept it hidden for so long, and protected it all costs, I could never let anyone know my mum drank too much.

Over the years I've realised that I wasn't the only one and there is support out there, I realised so many others were struggling silently too. I created this book to give anyone affected by parental drinking a voice, a way to express how it feels, a creative outlet for their experience, and so that others would read it knowing they weren't alone in their struggles, and also in their healing.

I'd like to thank everyone who shared their work to make this collection of words and images. With each person who shares their experience we will hopefully support the next generation to seek support.

Your experiences are valid, in whichever form they come in. If you have a parent still drinking around you, if you are now having space from them, or have sadly lost them to addiction, whether you can find peace and understanding in their struggles, or moving on for you is accepting you don't need to forgive them, there is no judgement.

Please take a look at the words and images in this book, if you can relate take a look at the support available on the opposite page. There is confidential support, therapy, message boards, a community of people who are there for you, so please go at your own pace, do what feels ok for you, but do take a look. "

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Ceri Walker

Oasis Project Worker/Nacoa Ambassador with lived experience



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# I DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD A DAD



## Part 1



"I didn't know she had a dad"

What should I have said at family gatherings?

While you talked about how your Dad woke you up with breakfast every day.

Should I have told you how our Dad was passed out on the sofa every morning?

How we woke him wondering whether we'd be graced with Jekyll or Hyde that day?

You counted the slices of toast on your plate, I counted empty glass bottles on the floor.

In our house there were always three green bottles;

Jacobs Creek, Yellowtail and Barefoot.

"You never talked about him"

Lets share our childhood memories, reminisce on our pasts.

When you were searching for your homework, football kit or school supplies every morning,

we would search for twenty pence's hidden behind the sofa.

Praying there would be enough for twenty Superking and one box of red.

I don't drink red wine, I can still taste his hangover on my lips.

And I don't eat baked beans but for years I spent my pocket money on them,

so we could eat while he ate a liquid diet.

"You didn't see him that much"

Did you see the decade of calls that rung endlessly?

The messages not always returned.

All the "Sorry something came up" at the last minute?

Did you see how I threw away all my moral stances?

How we switched from fleeting meetings in coffee shops to hours in the pub?

Just so we could talk?

How he never understood that I could only drink one pint to his three?

How he would text every other Sunday and I would ring every other week in the middle of

the afternoon knowing there was a 50/50 chance he'd be sober?

"You weren't that close"

When I was three he taught me French

When I was five he taught me to ride a bike

When I was seven he taught me that books are medicine for the soul

When I was nine we danced to Leonard Cohen in the kitchen.



# I DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD A DAD

## Part 2

When I was eleven I asked "Daddy why do you drink?"  
And Daddy told me he was sorry but it would always be his first love.

At seventeen I walked away, at nineteen I went back.

At twenty-one I walked away, at twenty three I went back.

When I was twenty-one we held our own little graduation party,  
then it didn't matter if he got drunk.

"Did he mean that much to you?"

The best night of my life was the night he spent four hours in Wetherspoons  
with me, asked my hopes and dreams.

He studied photos of my hobbies, travels and life.

My favourite part of adopting our cat was how his face lit up when he met her.  
Every time we moved house I asked him round for dinner, but dinner never came.

When he died my phone flooded with messages of how  
his face beamed when he spoke of us

How he told everyone when we found a new job, new house, achievement and I  
hope every day I had made him proud.

I study the photos of the better years each day, pondering where it all went wrong.

I talk to him everyday because maybe now he's watching.

"Your world hasn't changed that much"

He died too young to ever hold a grandchild

Too young to drunkenly dance in the corner on my wedding day

His Sunday text no longer tells me he's okay

Every time I pass a Wetherspoons I think how I would buy him all the damn red wine  
if it gave us one more day.

And I have learnt of the trauma that made him pour wine to his lips each night

The demons that he never shared, hidden in his drunken mind.

My heart hurts for the pain he never shared.

"I didn't know you had a dad" Tell me what should I have said?



Jess White



# MOTHER LOVE

## Part 1



Friday 13th April, 2018

'Mrs Jones?'

'Yes?'

'Your Mother has been admitted to A&E.'

Friday 13th April, 2018

He pulls the curtains around the cubicle's bed and the rings catch like shower hooks in a cheap hotel.

'Your Mother is very ill.'

'No,' I explain to him. 'She just has a bad knee.'

'I'm afraid not. She has pneumonia.'

Pneumonia, I learn, and liver failure, go hand in hand.

Wednesday 4th June, 2014

My Mum hugs me close, squishing me against her warm body, and I cradle my new baby to my own chest.

'Congratulations, sweetheart. She is perfect.'

Saturday 14th April, 2018

'Got some nasty bruises there, my love.'

The sweet Bristolian nurse sponges my

Mum down. She writhes in pain at the slightest of touches.

She is naked in the bed.

She would hate me to see her like this.

'It's where my husband hits me,' my Mum lies.

Severe bruising, I learn, and liver failure go hand in hand.

Monday 10th February, 2012

'I'd rather you didn't drink at my wedding,' I manage to stutter.

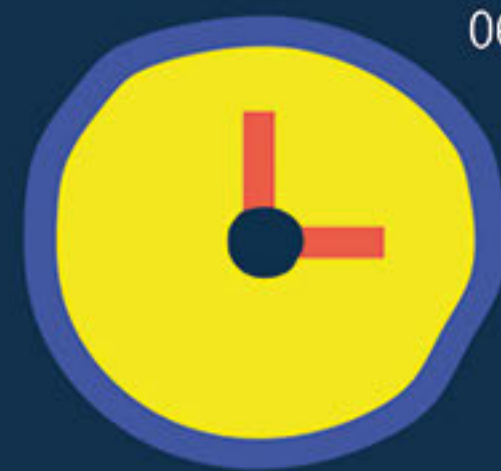
I have been practicing the sentence for weeks. Her mouth is a tight, grim line.

'I bet you would', she retorts. 'You always were a kill-joy.'



# MOTHER LOVE

## Part 2



Sunday 15th April, 2018

I push the lukewarm, congealing gravy around the plate and swish the meat (chicken, turkey, pork? All hospital protein looks the same) onto the fork.

‘Here you go.’ I gently push the food to the side of her mouth like the kind nurse showed me.

‘Disgusting,’ she spits, and allows it to dribble down her chin. Loss of appetite, I learn, and liver failure go hand in hand.

Friday 10th May, 1991

Vodka, brandy, wine, rum. The neighbours eye the makeshift bar in our living room and the strangers passed out on the sagging sofa.

‘What’s the celebration?’ they ask, as my Mum sways in front of them.

‘It’s the little one’s 5th birthday party.’

Monday 16th April, 2018

The medical students line up behind me in a semi-circle, pens clicked and clipboards at the ready. Today’s lesson: ‘How to explain to the daughter that: Your mother isn’t getting better... and she isn’t going to.’

Rapid decline, I learn, and liver failure go hand in hand.

Sunday 10th May, 1987

‘It’s only one drink. To calm my nerves.’

Tuesday 17th April, 2018

‘We’re all so sorry about your Mum,’ they say at the nurse’s station. Don’t be, I reassure them with my good girl smile. I’ve already lived this day in my head a thousand times. Ever since I was old enough to understand. It’s almost a relief to experience it for real.

Saturday May 10th, 1986

In a hospital bed, a beautiful blonde-haired woman cradles her new-born baby girl close. ‘Poppet,’ she says in a fierce whisper, ‘whatever happens, always know that I love you.’

Lucy Hampton





## COMING UNDONE

It's a piece I made during lockdown about how my Dad's addiction felt like it was taking over my life. It's a textiles piece, the background is hand dyed using layering of different techniques and I wanted it to show the 'emotional bruising' his addiction has caused and also the physical too for me and my family. I put myself in the centre (which has been screen printed) as I feel the loved ones of addicts can often be forgotten about but I wanted to show that I had started to feel like I was coming undone and couldn't cope anymore. I also wanted to show how his addiction felt like it was taking over and closing in on me, so I collaged this with fabric I hand dyed and printed. I decided to stretch it all around the circular frame to represent the vicious cycle of addiction and caring for an addict.

Natalie Needham



# DROP THE CURTAIN NOW

Drop by, my only light  
drop by, and sing me to my grave  
softly through the air

I brought someone into my life  
to sketch out circles round my eyes

leave me, I've lost the will  
leave me, the final thread must break  
that ties me to this plane

it's all for you now, use it well  
turn back to emails and coffee smells

stop here, we'll rest outside  
a house only millionaires could buy  
my legs are wearing out

next time we won't go quite so far  
we'll stick to kitchen landscapes  
like honey sticks to jars

son, you can drop the curtain now, it's over  
all my jokes were growing stale anyway  
you can drop the curtain now, it's over  
you'll be like me one day

drop by, my only light  
drop by and sing me to my grave





# WHAT WE ONCE WERE, WHAT WE BECAME

"What we once were"

What we once were shows the deep love and connection between my mum and I. There is pure joy in her eyes and I am that incredibly happy baby. It is indisputable that our potential for happiness was gigantic. I look at it and think "We had it all"... until alcohol torn us apart. The rose petals and butterfly symbolize the soft, lively, colourful side of our relationship. I cherish this picture more than anything.





The first frame “What we once were” shows the relationship I once had with my mum.

This relationship should have been the happiest one.

Nobody and nothing should have been able to come between us.

But alcohol did. It stole my mum away from me, destroyed her, destroyed me and finally destroyed our relationship; which leads to the second frame.



## "What we became"

What we became represents the painful distance between my mum and I. I have been estranged from her for years. The broken glass symbolizes our relationship shattered to pieces and the bottles of alcohol I so wanted to smash. The butterfly has been ripped apart and thorns have replaced the petals.

The blood represents violence, destruction, how dark and helpless I have felt, but it is also a symbol of life and the hope happiness will come back one day.





“What we became” shows how, many years later, nothing is comparable to the first frame. The hurt, the destruction, the violence caused by alcohol completely torn us apart.

We tried so hard to save our relationship but alcohol won.

I do not want anyone else to let alcohol win. I do not want anyone to have that second frame in their life.

She was an alcoholic and she could not be saved but others could.

I was a kid and could not be rescued but others could.

Creating those frames was very therapeutic.

It allowed me to spend time with my mum, when we were in a happy place, and it also helped me to get rid of some of my anger and pain.

Audrey



# NOT AN ADDICT

EVERYTHING IS FINE, AFTER FOUR BOTTLES OF WINE

LAST  
ORDERS!  
(FOR TODAY)

DRINK, DRANK, PUNK



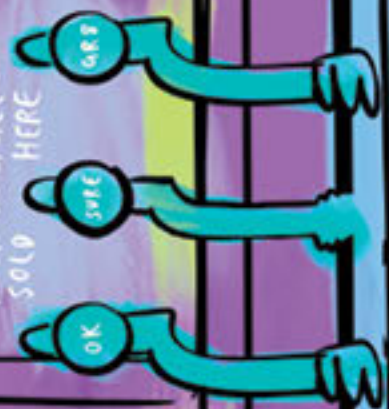
YOUR FAMILY  
MISSES YOU. ONLY  
YOU CAN CHANGE THIS.



KEYS? PHONE? WALLET? KIDS? BEER?

ALL FUN AND  
GAMES

BEER GOGGLES  
SOLD HERE



EMPTY  
INSIDE



SIT HERE, DRINK AND RUN  
AWAY FROM REALITY. IT'S  
FINE. IT'S ONLY  
ONE. RIGHT?





# NOT AN ADDICT

My piece is a mix of modern day drinking culture and memories of mid 90's pubs in Manchester growing up as a child. I wanted to incorporate all the excuses, laughter and how alcoholism can be seen by others on the outside looking in. How emotions can be suppressed beneath the bottom of a bottle, along with how drinking can be just an outlet to hide the pain underneath.

Beckie Burkill





# MY GRIEF

My Grief is just love but without the joy,  
My Grief is just fear but without the threat,  
My Grief is just goodbye without the embrace,  
My Grief is just anger but without the resolve.

Grief rarely needs an introduction,  
It begins on its journey without instruction.  
We evoke these emotions, all so familiar yet new,  
Grief often creeps up on me when a cry's overdue.

My Grief is forever, it's now part of me,  
I used to hate grief but now I love it you see.  
Sometimes I'm driving, or singing 'her song'  
Sometimes I'm angry, wondering 'what did I do wrong?'

Sometimes I'm laughing, though this grief is rare,  
this is the grief I'm most willing to share.  
The memories and thoughts of what could have been,  
grief is always with me, although hardly seen.

My Grief is just feelings, of every kind.  
My Grief is important therefore I keep it in mind.  
I want to thank my grief because it stopped me feeling numb.  
It is because of my grief, that I can remember my mum.

**Rebecca Knowles**



# FOR YOU: WISDOM I HAVE LEARNT FROM THE EARTH AND THE SEA

When I was a child  
I would look for your love  
under bracken and logs  
that splintered,  
leaving cheap shots in  
my fingertips.

Cheap shots like the ones  
you'd pour into your coffee  
each morning.

Cheap shots like the ones you'd throw  
after two bottles of wine.  
I have been told that  
I am difficult to get to know.  
See, trust to me is handing you  
my favourite lighter and braiding  
my hair with gasoline.

I am sorry that they hurt you.  
Some things cannot help hurting,  
some moments exist to teach you how to  
heal.

To grieve is to garden.  
Have you ever listened to soil drink?  
You must. It is quiet, safe.  
I have learnt that when there is a problem  
with plants  
you look to the roots.  
I think people are the same.

Just remember,  
there is never a quandary of roots  
that cannot be solved  
with some knowledge, care and a  
splash of seaweed.  
So go to the coast, stand in the swell.  
Scream until that wound is salted.

Even now?  
Even now.  
I am sorry that it still hurts.

I have learnt that apologies are  
paper cuts  
in muddied waters and you are  
upstream  
casting your fears to the tide and  
hoping that  
she is kind with them.

I have learnt that you can never tell  
the tide  
until she is teasing your ankles with  
her currents.

Do not let her scare you.  
This world is more bark than bite.  
More drift wood and silver fish.  
There is nothing that will not  
mellow under moonlight



Jamie



# WASTING AWAY

## Part 1

My Dad died 12 years ago aged 63 of alcohol related heart disease and cirrhosis of the liver. He had been a musician and entertainer all his life, since the age of 13, so alcohol came with the job.

When he was 54, he collapsed and was rushed into hospital with burst oesophageal varices – we were told he wouldn't survive. After two blood transfusions, he woke up and declared he wouldn't drink again. He didn't. His prognosis was 5 years, he managed almost 10.

During this time he started to live his life fully again. He travelled to America and performed and recorded in Nashville. I was 19 when I left home and although I was 21 when he was hospitalised, I got my Dad back. I can't explain the mixed feelings of joy, trepidation, fear, anxiety and loss I felt. I was scared he would relapse and also angry he hadn't done it for me when I lived with him at the same time I was proud and happy of the man he was and the strength and courage he showed every day. His death devastated me.

The lyrics are from a song he wrote after stopping drinking about friends he used to drink with. I have the recording too but will share this down the line. I have then adapted the lyrics of his song to how growing up with him drinking made me feel as a child. I am in the process of also recording this as a song.





# WASTING AWAY

## Part 2

My Dad – Tony Cooke –  
AKA Hickory Smith, Wasting Away

Under the bridge, on a bench in the park  
That's where my mind goes when my  
sunshine's gone dark  
Black dog of the bottle  
Returning its pay  
I see a good life there just wasting away  
Under the bridge, in a pub on the square  
I see my old friends, imagine I'm there  
All round at the bar  
Day after day  
I see a good life there just wasting away  
Under the bridge, at the church in the  
yard  
People's congregation, I look at them  
hard  
Praying to someone  
Who got nothing to say  
I see a good life there just wasting away  
Under the bridge, on a bench in the park  
That's where my mind goes when my  
sunshine's gone dark  
Black dog of the bottle  
Returning its pay  
I see a good life there just wasting away

Me – Wasting Away

Under the bridge, on a bench in the park  
That's where I ran to when my life was  
dark  
Black dog of the bottle  
It will make you pay  
I see a good life there just wasting away  
Under the bridge, in a pub on the square  
I see you drinking but you don't notice  
I'm there  
You're at the bar  
Day after day  
I see a good life there just wasting away  
Under the bridge, at the church in the  
yard  
I stand at your graveside and I look at it  
hard  
Praying to someone  
Who got nothing to say  
I saw a good life there just wasted away  
Under the bridge, on a bench in the park  
That's where I go now, it's no longer  
dark  
I think of you often  
So proud to say  
You eventually noticed you were  
wasting away

Alexandria Walker





# THE GAME

## Part 1

Lets' play pretend.

I like to pretend I am someone who is in control,  
even when surrounded by so much crazy.

I imagine that no one can see the anxiety and trauma,  
the deep scars I hide.

I know I am not happy or normal, this is just a mask I put on,  
a role I play to survive.

By the way dad, this game can be very lonely. How can you play when you  
don't know who to trust? When all I can hear is my friends'  
nervous whispers behind my back.

When you know they all know the secrets about your family but  
are too scared to ask how you actually are.

So I just keep pretending and say "I'm fine".

I've learnt to lie as well as you, or maybe it is as badly as you? They all  
know the truth but no one wants a difficult conversation.

Who wants to face reality really when pretend is so much more fun?

How do I explain to people that this disease is not a choice,  
no one chooses this life.

Would they understand that each day we hold our breath, wondering if  
today will be the day the never ending suffocating grip squeezes a little  
harder and the fight starts once more?

It is the most antisocial, soul destroying disease where people don't care  
if you live or die and sometimes dying would be easier.

How many times have I said I wish you had died?

I wish we had left you and not saved your life but saved ours instead.

How many times have I felt guilty for uttering those words,  
even thinking them!



# THE GAME

## Part 2

Each time we find you, your silence and remorse screams at me,  
telling me not one sip was enjoyed. The pools of sadness I see as I look  
into your eyes break me and show how lost you really are.

Despite this no one feels sad for you.

To others this disease is selfish and can be controlled. What they don't  
know is that you cannot control it, you and it just control us.

You have everything and it means nothing. It has ripped you apart from  
everything you love the most, even though we are right there in front  
of you begging you to stop.

Even when you promise there are no more chances.

It keeps coming back to destroy us time and time again. Wearing you down.

Wearing us down. Until there is nothing left.

No more fight, nothing left to give.

I hate it but I still protect you and I still love you.

The grief burns in my chest and the never ending sorrow floods from my  
eyes as I mourn the loss of a life I had dreamed of as a child.

Who knew you could be destroyed by an addiction that  
isn't even your own.

I cannot escape the truth, my mask has slipped and it's  
time to face reality.

STOP! There's a time and a place and now is not that time.  
It's time to play a game. So once again, stop thinking, hide it all deep  
down inside, take a deep breath, smile, put that mask on  
and lets play another game of pretend.



You can't relax when a tiger is chasing you.

My life is a tiger waiting to pounce,

You can't tell someone what you don't yet know.

The words can't form they are only sounds,

You can't talk about what you don't feel.

Even if you wanted to, it doesn't seem real.

You can't see what is out of sight; imprinted, unconsciously,

Just too far out of reach.

I do not need you to do anything.

To fix this mess (and it is),

Only help me to connect.

Not to my story that is not me.

That is just the stuff I must get through.

Every day, heavily weighing me down.

I don't need you to pull me further in to that.

I need you to help me find that space in the world.

Where I can breathe a sigh of relief and just be me.



# YOU CAN'T RELAX WHEN A TIGER IS CHASING YOU.

AMANDA  
MARY  
WALSH

BREATHLESS  
RAC  
TENSE  
FIDG  
NUMB HANDS  
DESPAIR  
FROZEN  
FOOT-TAPPING  
JUMPY  
QUIET  
TREMBLING  
SPEECHLESS  
COURAGEOUS



# ALONE

Written age 16

Buried  
Down deep in a hole  
Alone  
Crying  
Always wishing for more  
What you can't have  
Jealousy  
Anger  
Always tired  
Depressed  
Unstable  
Unsure where to go  
Who to go with  
Sorry  
Always sorry  
Maybe dependant  
Too dependant  
On everything  
that fills this hole

It's trapped  
Confined  
Always hurting  
Suffocated by its  
own words  
Weary  
Always dreaming  
Never heard  
Silenced  
Misunderstood  
Even by herself  
Tragic  
Always dying  
Inside  
Buried alone  
In the hole

**Gina Merchant**





# THIS IS WHAT AN ADULT CHILD OF AN ALCOHOLIC FEELS LIKE

23

The trauma is really hard to beat.

I really wish I wasn't dealt a shit card.

Lots of things trigger me daily.

I wish I was stronger and I didn't care as much as I did.

I miss my mum and I've never needed her more.

I wish more people were more understanding and kinder.

This lockdown is a load of bullshit.

I want to help more people who are like me.

I worry for all other children being stuck in lockdown with alcoholic parents.

I wish my mum was happier.

My mental health is way more important.

I don't trust a lot of people intentions.

I need a new head.

I just wish I was better. Why did my mum do this to me?

I find it really hard to find any happiness.

Why was she so unhappy?

I have really low self esteem and have a bad body image complex.

I always worry I'm not doing enough for my daughter and I worry my depression impacts her.

I worry I have the exact same head as my mum.

How do you ever complete your trauma?

I'm not sure what I did wrong to deserve any of this? I was just born, I didn't ask for the trauma.

They say 'if we recognise a parent needs a lifetime of healing from drinking, we must also recognise that the child affected by this does too'

I never feel good enough.

I don't want to live a life feeling triggered or sad.

I hate having no control over lots of elements in my life.

I will never allow darling to be bought up like I did.

I so desperately want to be free of it all. I think that's why I've always tried to run away. I keep trying to find happiness but I struggle with this.

I love my baby and will always do anything for her. I'll never turn my back on her or prioritise anything else over her.

I don't like speaking to people as I don't want to burden others with my problems. I try so hard for happiness and if it fails it breaks me and I feel like I've failed.

I feel I'll never fully feel happy

I wish I could snap my fingers and feel better

Lizzy



# BROKEN PROMISES

Broken promises I so want to  
believe you,  
I really do  
You always sound so sincere,  
You have that special knack of  
knowing  
exactly what I want to hear

I really want to believe  
I'm so desperate for you to  
succeed  
I want you to see the light  
So, you finally give up the fight

I can see that battle that goes on  
in your head  
Trying to remember what  
you've already said  
Tripping up on your lies,  
But I can see Dad, it's in your eyes

I pray for a reprieve,  
for the penny to drop  
Hoping that one day  
you might finally stop  
Why can't you see that  
your enemy is the drink?  
You can't walk, let alone think!

You're not just lying to me  
Look in the mirror "can't  
you see"  
The constant denying the lying,  
It's getting tiring

Turn those words into action  
And stop using them as a  
distraction

I know my words are harsh  
They are not intended to make  
you cry  
But I can no longer lie

This battle will never end  
Until you realise the drink isn't  
your friend

Tracey Ford





# HIDING

## Part 1

I learned how to search her for clues. Imperceptible to others,  
I knew all of her tells. She would call me ‘honey.’  
She would also say – at first soothingly and later  
then hiss – “I’m fine.”

I never want my son or daughter to search for me.  
I don’t want them to have to unlearn a fear response established in  
their neural networks because they came to learn, time and again,  
that the mother they see before them is not actually inside her body.  
That she does not exist inside herself because alcohol has taken her  
hostage. That only the outward semblance of her remains.  
I don’t want them to always be watching. Always gripping the edge of  
their existence, trying to control the uncontrollable.

Those memories of feeling her slipping away, slowly at first, and then  
sharply, suddenly, and without regard, haunt me.  
The memories cause me pain that splits my heart open,  
pours gasoline on it, lights a match and then runs away laughing  
while I try to put out the flames.





# HIDING

## Part 2

### HERE I AM

\*To my daughter, Alina (age two) “Ahhh-lean-aaa...”

My beautiful girl, Alina,  
I see you!

It is getting dark but my eyes adjust.  
There you are, looking for me in our garden. Laughing.  
We find each other. I cloak you in my unadulterated love.  
Here I am. I am here, just as you see me before you.

\*To the little girls and boys growing up in addicted homes, I see you. I sit with you.  
You are not alone. It will get better. It may take a long, long time. You are not alone.

### MY MUM USED TO HIDE

I was always searching for her.

I remember thinking that I could telepathically talk to her.  
Believing that if she could just see me then she would say, ah, right, sorry about that.  
Here I am, my child.

I remember the desperation in my hope that she would return herself to me.

I remember being afraid.

I remember the way her body would shift away from me,  
her eyes look into mine less deeply and for less time.

I remember I was not seen. I remember sadness.

I remember wishing for the night to be over so we could have a talk tomorrow.

Where she would cry, apologize, and hold me tight.

I remember when there were no more tomorrow talks.

When she was gone for stretches at a time. When she was hiding in body and in mind.

When she returned home with bruises.

I remember when my sadness turned to anger, and my fear to resentment.

I remember thinking that if she died...

I remember when the plot thickened and my Dad began to search for her.

I remember his bruises too. I remember the semblance of my Mom.

**Gina Merchant**







# THE YOU I KNOW

I miss the you I didn't know.

The teenager, happy to stay in her room

And devour words, phrases, pages.

Happily reaching the end of another book, not

Sadly reaching the end of another bottle.

I miss the you who spoke three languages,

Had two degrees and one job she loved.

The teacher, the writer, the speaker.

If only they all thought of you the same, not

Simply as "the problem drinker".

I miss the mother you could have been.

Bursting with pride as you watched me

Walk down school corridors, graduation halls, the aisle.

I wish you could have turned my pain to comfort, not

Made your comfort the ultimate pain.

Instead, the you I know

Has smiled the same smile for 20 years, frozen in time,

living in photographs.

The you I know

Burns bright in the flame of a solitary candle,

before leaving me once again.

The you I know

Is a cold, black gravestone, that hears my

highs and lows but never answers.

But, Mum, even this you

I forgive.

Imogen Dalziel




# BALL AND CHAIN

## Part 1

It all started when I was about nine.  
So glad I could not see forward at the time.  
You had a disappointment that you could not get over.  
Your way to deal with it was to never be sober.  
To start, Old English Cider was your choice.  
I heard the name often, knew it was wrong, I lost my voice.

A relationship with an alcoholic is near impossible.  
The bitterness, paranoia, dependency is totally unstoppable.  
Arguments, divorce, my Dad and brother left.  
Walking on eggshells I was totally bereft.  
We moved to a council house, you, me and the  
elephant in the room.  
I kept the secret, told no one, just felt the shame and gloom.

Clinking in the handbag, bottles behind the bleach.  
Drinking before your coat is off, sly comments, slurred speech.  
New school, new start, I kept them separate.  
Did not want anyone to know, I was desperate.  
I try to remember that underneath you are good.  
Creative and kind but covered by a dark hood.





# BALL AND CHAIN

## Part 2

Your best friend comes to play every day.  
There is no room for anyone else, go away, go away.  
The decades pass one after another.  
Constantly on repeat, I am sad that you are my Mother.  
The love-hate scales heavily tip one way.  
I give up hope, that I will ever see the day.

So here we are at 52 & 81, alcohol is winning that is for sure.  
He is still banging and knocking at your door.  
You cannot stop, you hate yourself.  
There is nothing left, you're an empty shelf.  
From the top of your head to the tip of your toe.  
Inside and out its spoilt you so.

It has marked me for life and made me so sad.  
I constantly wished for something I never had.  
My life is happy, I always believed it would be.  
Never let go of positivity.  
You want to die; you keep telling us.  
Requested yellow roses, there will not be a fuss.

How will I feel when this day arrives?  
I've no idea, bit of a cliché, but love survives.

Lynne Unsworth





# WHO ARE YOU?

Standing proud, head held high  
you are a magnificent horse  
At sunrise on a summer's day waiting  
to gallop along the beach  
Freedom!

You are rain  
All who feel you cannot ignore you.

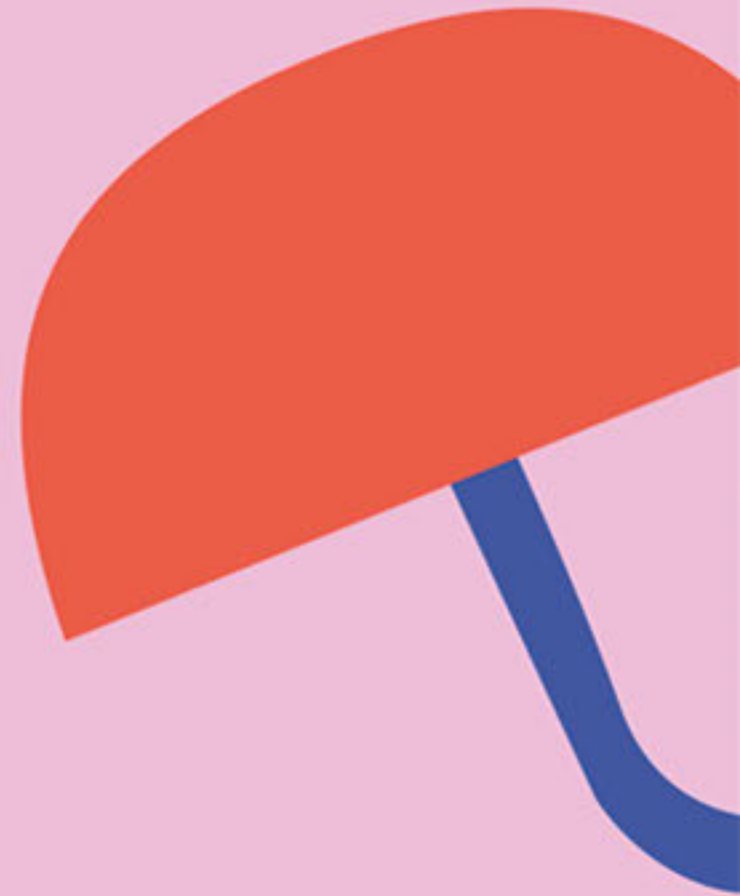
You weep like a willow  
Cap pulled down low to hide your tears.

You are country music; an acquired taste!  
You are Diet Coke straight out of the can  
topped up with vodka to hide the truth;  
it is 9am.

You are a fish finger butty  
quick and easy, no effort made at all.

You are a thistle, prickly and oh so sore.  
You are bold, you are bright, you are my Mum.

Philippa Robinson







## DON'T LET THE DARK CLOUDS WEIGH YOU DOWN

I have personally been a survivor of domestic abuse and I was affected by my father's alcoholism. I use art as a coping mechanism, the piece depicts my struggles with depression and coming to terms with the impact his drinking had on me as a child and how i try to stay positive despite the hardships i have faced.

Brooke Altringham



# YET ANOTHER LETTER TO YOU

## Part 1

You penned a four page letter, right before my very first breath.

It's buried deep in a box of my most prized possessions.

Do you remember how close we once were?

Do you remember how radiant you once were?

How you could light up every room?

How full of life you used to be?

The grown ups, they say you've always been this way.

That my eyes are finally open, the rose tinted glasses have shattered.

I still don't, still can't believe it.

I still believe you once had a beautiful nature.

I idolised you, you were my very own hero. When I was small,  
it felt like you gave me the world. We'd laugh and dance in the kitchen,  
now there's a fire of rage inside me that only you can spark. You were  
supposed to be my role model. When I picture you now,  
all I feel is sorrow and pity. Some days, I wish I'd never grown up so I can  
pretend that you're still perfect. So that I could pretend the  
wine and the whisky were second place instead of me.

How did you slip so far? How did you use to bring me so much joy? Now  
you fill my life with nothing but sorrow and drunken apologies.

I love you, I hate who you've become.

You disappear, leave my life for months on end then come crashing in  
like a hurricane. You'll act like nothing's happened,  
like you didn't forget about me. I've learnt that these are called sober  
spells. I spend the drunken spells hoping that you are still alive.

Hoping that you still remember me,  
that maybe next time you'll stay sober.



# YET ANOTHER LETTER TO YOU

## Part 2

Your skin is yellow now, your memory is fading. You always look on the edge of death. And I know your body can't fight forever, it fills me with fear. I have spent more waking moments trying to save you than anywhere else. AA links in the middle of the night, fleeting meetings in coffee shops, hiding the money. I have spent forever trying to save you, I still blame myself.

Do you remember what sober feels like? To me, you were perfect. Then I heard the broken glasses at night, heard you secrets, saw your lies unravel. You were supposed to sweep up the broken pieces from my bad decisions, Instead I hide all the broken pieces of my life away from you, picking up all the little pieces of yours. I've tried to save you from the poison so many times. I still believe you have a beautiful heart underneath all the trauma.

Your body can't fight forever I keep waiting for that phone call, saying it gave up today. Praying you'll put the bottle down. That call finally came, ten years later. I still miss you. I still sometimes blame myself.

Jess White





# THE WORM

There is a worm that preys on the sad and lonely.

The worm can sniff out a victim easily, a feeling of insecurity,  
a sense of isolation and slowly creep inside,  
so slowly that nobody notices at first...

'Just a couple of drinks after work, just something to help me relax,  
I'll feel so much better after just one.'

The worm found Dad and weavilled it's way deep into his brain,  
so deep it could hardly be detected from the outside,  
slyly whispering poisonous thoughts...

'You're so much better when you've had a drink,  
much more fun, more interesting.'

The worm knew Dad's weak spots and fed greedily on detritus,  
destroying all remnants of the once kind man.  
Now the worm is the only voice...

'You deserve a drink, it's been such a long day,  
you've earned it, don't listen to them,  
they've never loved you as much as I have.'

The worm even got inside Mum's brain,  
fooling and twisting her until she was paralyzed in its gloopy web...

'His problem isn't so bad, there are so many worse drinkers  
let him go to the pub, it's so much easier that way.'

We daughters could always see the worm;  
we suffer in the wake of its destruction.  
But the worm doesn't care; it smiles at us and cackles through a toothless grin...

'You'll never be free, I'll always be here, lurking, waiting to swallow you up.'

**Katie Longridge**





## DELIVERANCE

The meaning behind it is a collaboration of things that have rescued and set me free from the chains of being a COA, and feeling like something was missing, finally finding peace and being able to rest and let someone else do the carrying.

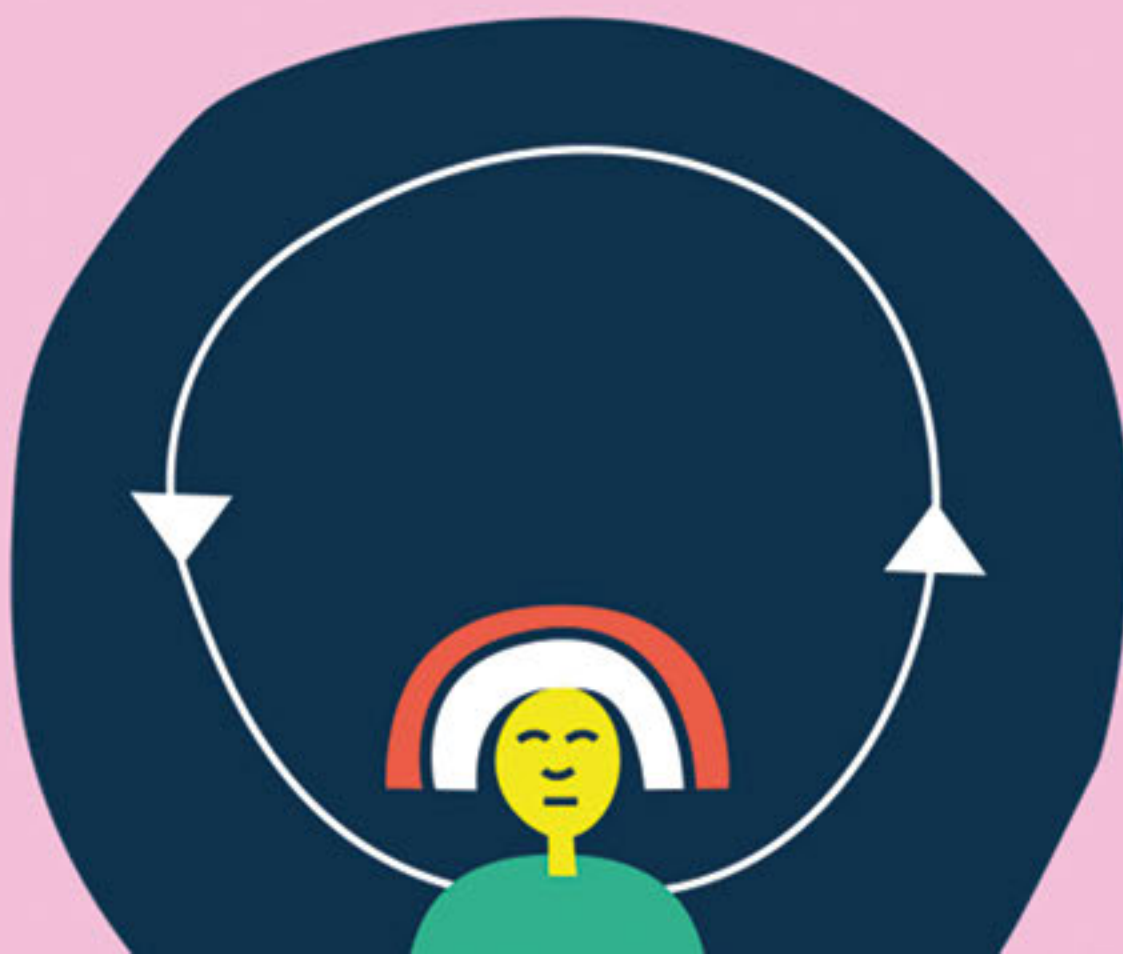
Rebecca Ellis Hamilton



# INHERENTLY MINE

Because you did not feel safe  
You could not provide  
Because you did not feel comfort  
You could not provide  
Because you did not feel peace  
You could not provide  
Because you could not heal  
Your pain is mine  
Because you could not break the cycle  
This burden is mine  
And as I shelter and console and mend  
I know the honor is mine  
And as I love and heal and enlighten  
I know the privilege is mine

Jessica Bisko





# PARASITE

His skin burns for it; allergic reaction to the black funk of memory; a twitch of that insidious parasite, a leaden lump that slumbers just south of the aortic.

If this worm wakes, it will squeeze itself through every vein and artery and gorge itself on every other thought till it is sated.

My father's solution was simple; burnt-umber plastic full of bargain-basement cider. The roll of his seasick eye.

I would hear the door to the fridge, the scraping of the plastic-screw top, the cascade glug hitting glass.

Come morning, I'd find the slick ring-moat on the kitchen counter, the dried stickiness poxed with air in the cold clay light.

After breakfast, I would make a start on the washing up.

Nick Compton





# Goodbye Dad

## Part 1

Dad turned to wave goodbye, cheerful on the sunny afternoon with a deckchair in hand. He was heading to the park for his usual afternoon wine, a bottle cuddled snugly to his chest. I fake smiled goodbye and walked away, pushing my baby in her pram. My heart broke, shattering down all of the old vault lines, while my mind whirled in anger.

While he's soaking up the sun, I'm left to deal with a lifetime of coming second best to drink.

Once home, exhausted, I look down into the sleepy eyes of my baby, suckling on her evening feed and wonder how I can provide all the love she deserves whilst feeling so unloved myself. I wonder how my parents could have treated me with so little care.

Remembering my childhood brings back mixed memories. I cherish the happy moments with sober Dad, warming my hands in his pockets and making fish finger sandwiches afterschool. That Dad was lost a long time ago. Replaced by the Dad who's been down the pub all day, the Dad who's unpredictable and quick to anger.

I shudder as I go through all the years spent worrying about Dad. Worrying about whether he'd fall over and hit his head again or not find his way home. I remember the anger and shame at the ruined graduation ceremonies and wedding speeches.

Dad wasted at the local pantomime with neighbours laughing as he stumbled on stage, expertly playing the part of a drunken cowboy.



# Goodbye Dad

## Part 2

Right now, as a new Mum, I need sober Dad more than ever.  
I want him to worry about me, to drop in with a homemade lasagne and  
take the baby for a walk. But even now, with grandchildren so bright  
eyed and full of smiles, drink comes first.

The family counsellor had tried to explain to Dad that his drinking causes  
me pain, but it had fallen on deaf ears. “It’s just a couple of glasses of wine  
in the afternoon love, just to give me some time to relax”.  
We all know it’s so much more than that.

But with the birth of my child, I have a new beginning, a chance to start  
afresh with a family of my own. I hold my daughter close, stroking the  
contours of her cheeks and caressing the soft soles of her feet.  
I put her down to sleep, as rays of sun soak the room in warmth.  
I breathe in deeply and remember that this time I have choices.  
I deserve to feel love just as much as my daughter does.

I smile as hope fills me up and I imagine sharing simple moments with her,  
exploring woodlands and parks, taking her first steps knowing that I’m  
right behind her. I realise it’s finally time to say goodbye Dad,  
time for me to bathe in the sun for a while.

Katie Longridge







**When you drink, mom,  
you disappear...**

**and at the same time,  
you're everywhere.**

**I grieve the loss of the mother,  
you could have been, and the woman  
you could be today.**

**You aren't dead, but you evaporated  
in alcohol years ago.**



## **RED WINE SPILLS**

The physical and mental absence of an alcoholic parent.

**Katrine Quorning**



# WHO WOULD HAVE KNOWN

We used to be so close you and I,  
Who would have known you'd be the man to make me cry

We used to tell each other everything and talk for hours on end  
Who would have known we would have drove each other round the bend

We used to laugh till our bellies hurt  
Who would have known you'd treat me like dirt

We used to have so much love and happiness for years  
Who would have known that this trauma caused so many tears.

We used to run around the garden having so much fun with our water fights  
Who would have known you would only show me darkness and no sign of light.

We used to stay up late and talk all night  
Who would have known how much we were going to fight

We used to think nothing would come between the bond we had  
Who would have known this darkness all started with the passing of my grandad

We used to think that we would always be in each others lives  
Who would have known I would have to put in so much distance just to survive

We used to say I love you with our own special code  
Who would have known when I hear a can open I'd want to implode

We used to think that we were both so strong  
Who would have known this darkness can go on for so long

Holly Pratt





# “CAN I CALL YOU MUM?”

As a child I loved you with all my heart  
I'd give anything to be with you again  
The constant waiting gave me great pain  
The constant longing was breaking my heart  
Again and again...

As a child I wanted to have you all to myself  
I was tired of waiting for you every day  
Nothing was certain then  
My constant questions push me away  
I asked, Where are you mum, where??  
It's me, your child why don't you care?  
Answer me!  
Come and hold me  
Please, give me a chance.  
What did I do wrong in my life?  
Why are you keeping us apart?  
Feeling helpless and lacking strength  
I thought this was our end.  
I started searching for love,  
looking for us,  
but in someone else's eyes.

Marta Hermanczuk





# I SIT STARING AT A FLAME

Pour vodka on a flame and watch it burst to life  
This does not work with every flame  
As my flame has a name and that name is Mum

It hard to sit around this flame with vodka as its fuel  
I recognise the flame but the more I stare into the eye  
the more I am not sure

The flame I knew when I grew warmed me from head to feet  
This new flame dances different, to a blue kind of beat

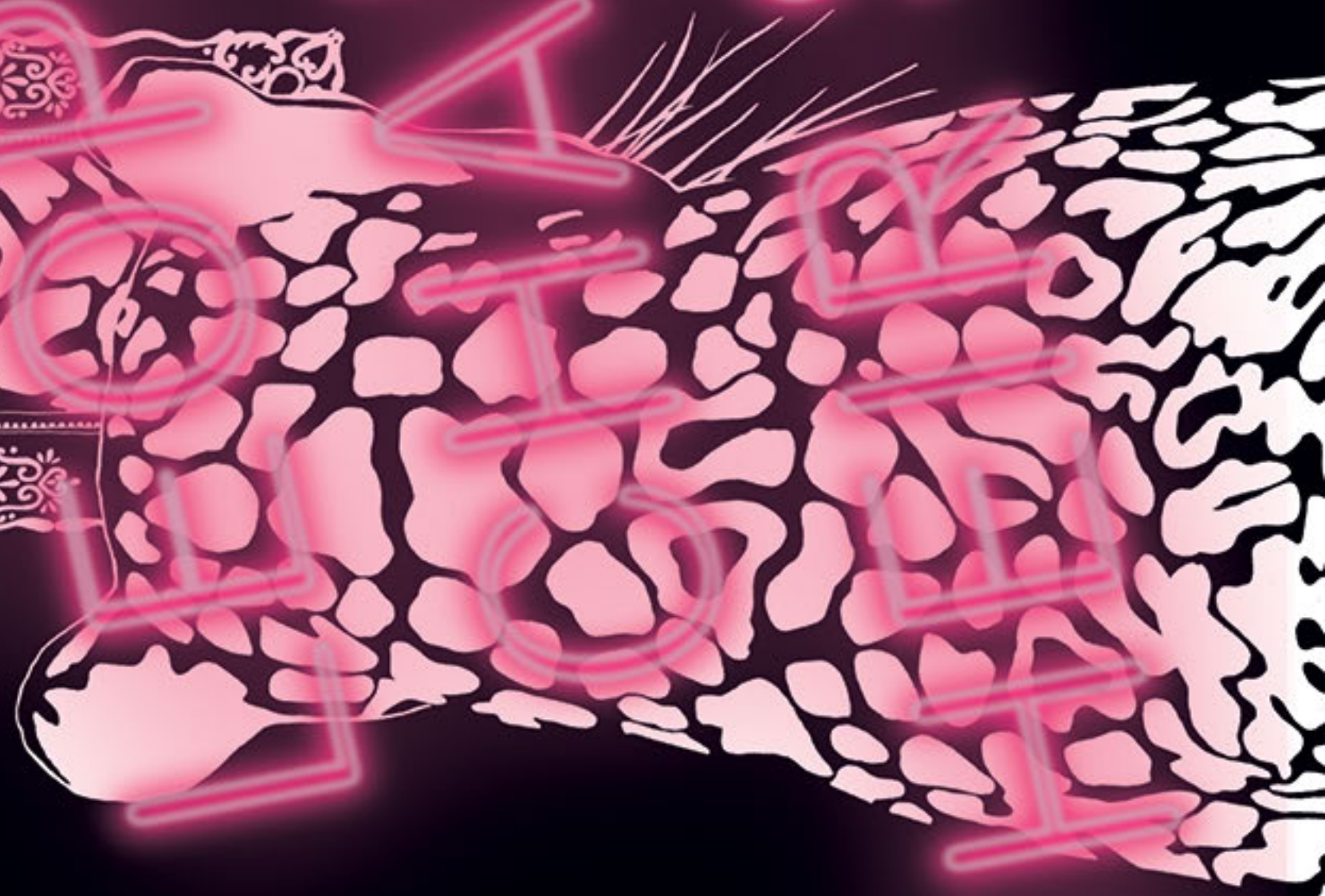
This flame is used for cooking, bringing the stew to the boil  
But the food is not just heavy on my stomach but my chest and mind.  
I'm really not hungry. Can I just go to my room?  
I think it might be burnt because air is thick and filled with gloom

This flame casts thick shadows across the room for secrets to go and hide  
It illuminates my face just enough to see I've cried  
But I turn my face because you are not to know  
My heart is already broke so why break yours

I promise I have tried everything to breath life back into my flame  
But why am I left with the scent of guilt and a horrible tang of shame  
I'm starting to believe there is nothing I can do to restore your glow  
Bring back the time you lit up every room you go

I wish I had the answer and I know you wish that too  
I have shielded you from the wild but I am scared, it getting through  
What do I do if the light goes out because I really do not know  
Because although I hate it here I'd hate it more for you to go





Is just removing the alcohol ever enough?

Amanda Murphy



# JUST ONE MORE

What I would give for just one more,  
One more walk on a beach,  
One more trip to the park,  
One more weekend spent together,  
One more adventure in any weather.

One more photograph,  
One more kick of a ball,  
One more story to be shared,  
One more tale so tall.

One more walk to the offie,  
Oh how I wished you'd just drink coffee,  
One more afternoon in the pub,  
I just wanted a bit of love.

Just one more you used to say,  
I hoped your demons would go away,  
Just one more then we will be on our way,  
I'm ok, you used to say.

Your demons came and took you away,  
Every night I would lie and pray,  
Please help my Dad, please give him peace, if not on this earth,  
just take him please.

Now you are gone, and I hope you are at ease, we are left with  
feelings we can't appease...  
But we carry on, as we have before, forgiving you again, just  
once more....

Natasha Clarke



# SAME JOURNEYS, DIFFERENT PATHS

## Part 1

There was you having teddy bears picnics and playing with  
lots of Lego bricks

And here was me having water fights and eating  
lots of pick and mix

The memories we had growing up were so memorable  
which will stay with us forever

We never thought they would be tainted and the people  
we were would change forever.

So innocent growing up and not understanding the world  
and the hardship it can face

Let alone the torment, the anxiety and the undeniable  
change of a safe place.

Home is where the heart is people would tell you.

However, our home was where the heartbreak was too.

So much confusion on why the people we idolized were  
slipping further and further away,

No more picnics, no more pick and mix, instead we were  
walking by you on the floor in the hallway.

Was we naughty? Was we not what you wanted?

Was we not good enough that you couldn't cope?

Could we have done more?

Could we have been a better child?

Did we not give you any hope?





# SAME JOURNEYS, DIFFERENT PATHS

## Part 2

As time went on our paths crossed time and time again but  
one night it was meant to be.

We built a strong bond, however with both our guards up  
we would say we'll just wait and see.

As the guards came down the darkness crept through and  
we realised we were going through the same ordeal.

Instead of letting the darkness win again we pushed against it and  
helped each other heal.

There's been many tears, worries and dark times we've  
shared on this road.

However there has also been protection,  
support and much love has been shown.

We have been each others light in the darkness,  
We have been each others joy in the harshness

Alcoholism within our families could have pushed us apart

Instead we chose to give each other our full heart

Our journey is apart of us however it does not define who we are

We will keep on growing, learning and continue to go far.

We will always stand by each others side in whatever comes our way

No matter what, no matter when, each and every day.

Martin & Holly Pratt





# TOGETHER: WE TRIED

There was nothing I could do  
There was nothing I could say  
But still I tried to help you  
And remove your pain each day

There was nothing I could tell you  
There was nothing I could stop  
But I held you up so high  
So high you wouldn't drop

I tried to be your daughter  
I tried to let you be  
I tried so hard to ignore it  
But that was never me

For it was you who gave me empathy  
It was you who made me strong  
You allowed me to take care of you  
And I don't think that was wrong

For you only get one Father  
To hold and keep you safe  
I tried my best to keep you  
Alive and in your place

You tried so hard to beat it  
You succeeded for a while  
But life had been unkind  
And beat you and made you frail

You will always be my father  
You will always be my friend  
You will always keep me fighting  
Until the very end

Lizzie Fletcher







I gave this to you  
when I was about nine.  
A souvenir of time  
away, bought from Woolworths.  
I wanted to say  
that I'd missed you.

You loved it.  
You used it every day.  
Red label – strong,  
with UHT milk.  
It was yours  
  
and now it's mine again.  
Sometimes I see it  
and I picture you, back then,  
when you drank tea.

Somehow this never broke  
when it all fell apart.

You drew a heart  
on the last note  
you ever wrote to me.  
And it's still true.

I ❤️ you, Dad.



Rachel Pattinson



# EMPTY WITHOUT YOU

Trying to put things down on paper, even after all this time,  
Is still such an impossible task, when your heart stopped beating  
you took part of mine.

I'm left here picking up the pieces, of all the hurt you felt inside,  
But knowing we just weren't enough is too hard to  
comprehend in my mind.

I try so hard to shift the darkness that clouds my soul each day,  
Still longing of the 'could I have done more' would it have made you stay?  
You clearly drank to save yourself and hide away from pain,  
But now your children are left behind, the new ancestors of that ball and  
chain.

Remember the times I'd beg of you to stop and look around,  
Of all the things in front of you and a family to make proud.  
I guess I never truly understood the absence that I'd feel,  
The day your pain on earth came to an end was my day one to mend and heal.

This wasn't how it was supposed to be, this wasn't what we'd planned,  
Living this life without you now feels like I'm drowning in quick sand.  
There is so much you are missing here and each new milestone that we reach,  
Always carries a pang of sadness because there's always one empty seat.

Melissa Kane



# LIQUID SUICIDE

I love my dad and he loves me  
But his disease is bad, he'll never be free  
I know he understands what he must do  
Throw away the bottle and start over new  
The devil is lurking inside that bottle  
When it's to his face, he's no role model  
It's sad to say but it's very true  
We're a lot alike but we're different too  
It scares me to death knowing I'm just like him  
Will I ever lead a life that is so drunk and so dim?  
Will I ever lead a life I need to start over new?  
I pray to God that I never do

**Renee Drabek**





# MUM'S NEW FRIENDS

## Part 1

When I was 13, mum started to hang out with new friends, we had seen them before but far less often, in her time of need, they were always around. These friends changed, and my mum with them. When it was a can or two, life was fun. Hey I was 13, I got given extra money to keep out the way, my mum belly laughed again, and she hadn't done that in a while. She was a fun mum.

As I got older, I noticed mum spending more time with these friends than me. There were new ones, taller, stronger, they made her smell funny. I started to realise maybe mum was preferring these to me. She wasn't laughing as much, they made her cry. I used to hide them, but mum found them. We stopped playing and I didn't get any extra pocket money anymore, her friends needed it. I started to feel sad and alone. I didn't understand what was so good about these friends anyway.

As the years passed old friends came back, and sometimes there were none. We were together then, mum slept well as they weren't keeping her up, she went to work and she was excited for the future. She said she knew they were not good friends to keep, and they made her sad. So we worked hard to keep them away, and sometimes she kept the door shut on them for months. Except they always managed to sneak in somehow, I couldn't stop this, I felt like I let mum down.



# MUM'S NEW FRIENDS

## Part 2

The fancy friends were the worst, they seemed like a cover, wrapped up in a fancy glass, with a chunk of ice, and a slice of lime. These were the days mum pretended the friends were different, things had changed and it was just fun. Next came the rows, I was embarrassing her by saying they shouldn't be there.

Towards the end mum needed her 'friends' all the time. Now we all knew they were not really friends, but none the less mum needed them. I had spent a long time thinking mum chose to be with them instead of with me, chose to spend her money on them instead of me, and now it looked like she was giving them the last bits of her too. Why would she choose to do that?

Mum's gone now, and I now know she didn't want these in her life. She was secretly trying to get rid of them, with tablets, meetings, she was desperate. I was her friend and she was trying to do all this for us. Mum lost her fight, they were just that bit stronger, she had relied on them for so long, they knew her weak spots. I am so proud of her, in the end she left us in order to protect us.

I was always her best friend, she felt that inside, her 'new friends' just stopped her saying it out loud.

Rebecca Knowles







## MY SPACE

When I was small, the problems of those around me took up all the space.

As I got older, I decided to stay small – it seemed safer that way, not to get in anyone else's way.

The trouble with staying small is that problems can overwhelm you.

So now I occupy my own space – I think the world deserves to see me.



# WHAT I AM

I'm not the books I read  
Or the songs I write  
I'm not the clutter that surrounds my space at night.  
I'm not the child who went through hell  
Or the broken history some may tell.  
I'm not the heart break that went unseen  
Or the crisis and house fires that made a scene.  
I'm not the 64 hospital admissions she survived  
Or her prison sentence for reported crimes.  
I'm not the authorities that failed to help  
Or the nosey neighbours that talked so well.  
Her beauty and wonder lives on in me  
Her triumphs and resilience that I could see  
Her smiling eyes her laughter rare  
Her humble persona and bright blonde hair  
Her love so real and heart so strong  
Her presence and unbreakable bond.

We are something no one can ever define  
No photo or lyrics not even this rhyme  
Mother and daughter  
In my child you live on  
Your spirit, your story has made me strong.

I am here as I am and now I'm me.  
I fight the good fight and you are now free.





# FADE AWAY

Since having my own  
 It breaks my heart  
 To think he'd ever forget my face  
 My smile, my smell, my voice  
 I try so hard but it's fading away.  
 I know you had a huge smile  
 and an even bigger heart  
 but now the details are gone.  
 No words can explain the pain this  
 causes me.  
 You gave me life and I long to  
 remember your sweet voice.  
 It's like a pixelated photo in my  
 mind  
 One that I fear before long will  
 disappear forever.  
 How can someone so important  
 become a blurry image  
 How can a mother feel like a  
 stranger  
 You never got to know me  
 Not the real me.

Cari Jones



Alcohol took everything that little  
 girl ever knew.  
 Her world was you and solely you  
 But her is now me and I have my  
 own family.  
 But I'll never stop wishing that you  
 were here with me.  
 The hole is still as apparent now as  
 the day you left, but for many  
 different reasons.  
 I needed you then too look after me  
 I need you now too tell me I'm  
 doing a good job myself.  
 I wanted to be enough for you to  
 quit  
 My whole life has now been a fight  
 for me not to quit.  
 And it was so worth it too see my  
 own child's gorgeous face.  
 Why wasn't that enough for you.  
 Life could of been so different for us  
 You were worth so much more than  
 the horrific end that the drink gave  
 you.  
 I will keep you forever in my heart  
 but I fear everything else will Fade  
 Away.



# MUM

You're unable to see the pain,  
You're unwilling to hear the tears,  
Communication ceases now,  
As your barriers remain.  
You can't admit your mistakes,  
You're unwilling to hear the truth,  
Our lives are constantly shattered,  
You hide when shown the truth.  
You treat me as a child,  
But a childhood I never had.  
Growing up within a family,  
I was always in the driver's seat.  
I always have been...  
Yet... What of my life?  
My life has been put on hold.  
I have paid with my childhood.  
But now... Things are changing,  
I will soon have my own family.  
I will have MY responsibilities.  
I WILL be in charge of my life.  
No longer at the wheel of my 1st family.  
I will survive. I have to.  
I need to look to my future,  
I need to deal with my life,  
Don't you understand?  
You have to accept responsibility.  
Im now an adult...Like you,  
I have my own life,  
Please...  
Let me live it.



Dee



# NEEDS



Katrine Quorning



# THIS DAY

This Day.

On this day we still had hope. Another promise that things would change.  
We all gathered together as though unified.  
Brushed your hair, trimmed your nails and stroked your face.  
In that moment I was back as the mum playing my role.  
Holding your hand in the hope you would stay.

That Day.

That was the day. The very next day. No more what ifs.  
Parts of you lost years before... now are all one.  
No more excuses, no late-night calls or 'what's for dinner?'  
Trying to untangle this web of emotions.  
Made more difficult when never shown how.

Back In the Day.

As a child I knew no different. This was my hand that I was dealt.  
As a teen the pain stung. I knew but didn't understand.  
When I became a mum, the hatred stuck in my throat.  
I would give my life for this life.  
Confusion, frustration, why couldn't you?

Today

Even now, my emotions crash around me like a ship at sea.  
Yet somehow, my understanding has grown.  
Forgiveness is a hurdle too far right now.  
Maybe one day I can remember the good times,  
See past the shadows that cloud my mind...

Just not today.

Dee





# LETTER TO MY FATHER

How could you do it?

How could you step over my despair?

With every sip you-walked away

With every glug you-walked away

Away... Away....

I . With your skin, your blood, your bones

You. With your beautiful eyes and your stubborn soul.

You were my Corrupt Superhero.

I didn't deserve to cower from you, to shield from you.

I didn't deserve to see you urinate yourself time and time again.

to see you vomit and collapse time and time again.

I didn't deserve to wish the man I loved dead.

What I did deserve was to be showered in love.

For my mind was made to be bathed in honey milk. Not sour milk.

To be seen by you, applauded by you. No criticism. No judgement.

For you to have just been there, present, would have been enough.

And now, the Angels may have their Wings wrapped around you,  
and your Tears may weep from heaven-

-I know they land upon my crown.

And all they do is make My tears heavier.

You left this world with no offering to your daughter.

Only repetitive feelings of inadequacy and invincibility.

It does not stop. It does not end

....nor will my love for you.

Bindy Rowcroft





## ALCOHOL ADDICTION IS A FAMILY DISEASE. ONE PERSON MAY DRINK BUT THE WHOLE FAMILY CAN SUFFER.

The night times I found most difficult when mum was drinking a lot. Its upsetting now as an adult to realise how much I worried about my mums drinking as a kid. I remember waking up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom and praying that all the lights would be off downstairs as then I would know my mum had made it to bed okay. But most of the time, the lights were nearly always.....on.

I would creep downstairs to the landing and look into the living room to see her passed out on the chair in her clothes with a drink by her side.  
She would never look like she was peacefully asleep.

I would worry if she would get up for work, I would worry about not being able to get enough sleep for school the next day, I would worry she wouldn't wake up at all. And the cycle would continue most nights.

I was around 9 years old when she started drinking and I never questioned why I had all this worry all the time, and so young. Its only growing up that I realise how damaging all that worry was and how it's never left me even though she's gone. It's followed me into adulthood. I worry about EVERYTHING.  
I massively overthink and think the worst will happen in any given situation.  
It's exhausting really.

This has all stemmed from my mum being an alcoholic and never being able to switch that worry off. Being so young and being so naive with addiction, I used to think hiding the alcohol or tipping it down the sink would fix the problem and make my mum better. I desperately wanted that. For her. For me. For us.

Jennifer Brough



## YOU DON'T ALWAYS GET A CHILDHOOD WHEN YOU GROW UP WITH AN ALCOHOLIC PARENT

When I was younger, I used to think not having a curfew was cool. Coming and going any time I wanted. Mum never pestering me with questions like where I was going, when I would be back and who I was with. Free to do whatever.

Many alcoholic families tend to have two extremes. Overly harsh/arbitrary rules or no rules whatsoever. My experience was the latter. I can't remember having any consistency in my childhood and early teen years because living with an alcoholic parent doesn't invite consistent behaviours, it invites the opposite.

Most of my friends had parents that provided structure and routine. They were their children's biggest teachers. They were their children's biggest believers.  
And that's how it should be.

So the question that always tapped in my little child brain was 'Why is my mum not like this?'

Her addiction made her not available for me physically or emotionally,  
and that's had everlasting damage.

Children of alcoholics carry so much into their adult lives. So many feelings of low self worth and uncertainty. Not feeling confident in their actions and their feelings because we didn't always have that encouragement from our parent.

It's hard to even write examples down, to think back to those times because you don't want to portray that parent to being an awful human and facing the judgement but also feel like it's healthy to be real and honest about how s\*\*t things were.  
Swings and roundabouts I guess.

Nothing in this world hurts more than feeling you were unloved or unwanted  
in your childhood/adulthood.

Always remember that your parents drinking doesn't define who you are or shape who you will grow up to be. It's not your responsibility to fix it and most importantly, you did not cause any of it. Love to everyone.

Jennifer Brough





## SMOKING

My art talks about how I cope with my parent's drinking which is actually smoking, I do smoke because of the stress I do go through and the pain I go through when they are usually fighting and sometimes threatening each other or filing a divorce due to their indiscriminate drinking. Sometimes I feel insecure and sometimes smoke to get my head straight and also forget those horrible memories of them.

Ojo Moses



# YOURS. MINE. OURS.

## Part 1

Addiction is a disease.

As if the word disease explains the parasite that slowly, but surely invaded our family.

Reaching its tendrils into every memory, every moment and leaving a path of destruction in its wake.

The ripples of that addiction didn't just remain with you.

It was yours. Mine. Ours.

Denial surrounded our family like a fog.

Consuming. Isolating.

It belonged to each of your family members who indulged your charisma and humour that was fuelled by alcohol.

And then turned their backs when your charm turned to anger, violence and harm.

A little girl who could no longer equate the word 'Daddy' with the monster she saw emerging.

That denial was yours. Mine. Ours.

The shame was suffocating.

Drowning us from the inside out.

Blame that came from places of presumed safety.

Shame that bubbled to the surface when a grandmother points her finger at a child for breaking the silence and secrets of the violence and destruction that festered in our home.

For the female police officer who shamed us for not speaking out sooner about the violence we couldn't wrap our minds around.

We shared in that blame and shame.

It was yours. Mine. Ours.

Loneliness. A cold, indestructible glass wall that seemed to cut us off from those we loved.

The masks we wore to hide the trembling, sobbing, confused souls that we had become.

The simple sight of that amber coloured liquid could slice through and scoop out any ounce of warmth we felt.

For as much as you used that liquid to cradle you in your pain, it drove a wedge into our family.

Sip by sip.

Bottle by bottle.

Can by can.

That loneliness was yours. Mine. Ours.





# YOURS. MINE. OURS.

## Part 2

The separation I felt, begging you to stop.  
Praying our love would be enough and the hope I had that one day we would be  
more important than that poison that was slowly, surely killing you.  
The pain of threat after threat.  
The violence you perpetrated against us, against yourself.  
The nights you declared would be your last.  
And the hours we waited for you to return.  
Alive? Emotionless?  
You awoke with an amnesia that only alcohol could provide.  
While we painstakingly picked up the shattered pieces of our lives. Again.  
Yours. Mine. Ours.

I guess it was inevitable. The Ending.  
Though the denial from your relatives lasted way beyond your final breath.  
Your frail frame, tucked into a sterile hospital bed couldn't coexist with the monster  
that existed in my memories.  
Yet that monster would appear still.  
Sneaking into the room through controlling behaviours and manipulation.  
You said you no longer drank.  
But it didn't matter.  
Forty years of behaviour had become the norm.  
Death came slowly.  
Purging everything from your body, mind and soul until there was nothing left of you.  
Nothing left of the father I loved.  
That death was yours. Mine. Ours.

As I write this, my heart aches for the man who gave his body, mind and soul to a  
bottle of liquid that was as temporary as a wave on the shore.  
A man who lost a battle and became another invisible person; a statistic.  
A wife who never stopped trying to save a man who drove her to hell and back.  
Even when their marriage was over.  
A wife who was blamed for acts she didn't commit, and shamed for a person she never was.  
A little girl who lost her daddy long before he died.  
Whose memories are tainted with the darkness that consumed our lives.  
Your addiction was an earthquake whose aftershocks can still be felt today.  
Trembling softly, and sometimes unexpectedly, into moments of calm.  
You lost your battle that September day but gained a freedom from your hell.  
Yours. Mine. Ours.

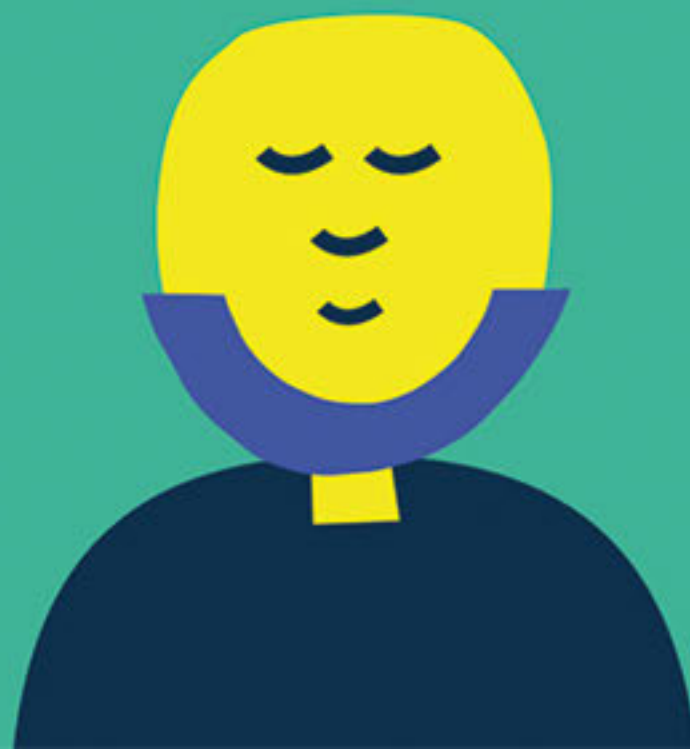
Amanda



# HOPE AND REALITY

## Part 1

I hoped you would help me through school work  
You didn't know how to help so didn't try  
I hoped we'd be able to just sit and talk  
You couldn't hold a conversation and I never knew why  
I hoped we would sit up and watch films late into the night  
I sat up and dreaded hearing your heavy footsteps as you came for a drink  
I hoped you would be a normal dad in front of my friends  
I stopped bringing them home just in case you were too drunk  
I hoped you would look after mum when she became ill  
You left me to do everything  
I hoped you would stop me quitting university to care for mum  
You later told me you didn't out of jealousy and spite  
I hoped you would talk to me after I drove the man I once loved away  
You said nothing  
I hoped we would have a family Christmas with food and precious time  
You were drunk by midday and shouting at us as the food burnt  
I hoped we'd have a nice meal out for mum's 60th  
You were drunk and rude to the staff  
I hoped this time would be the one where you finally gave up the bottle  
It was only the 100th time





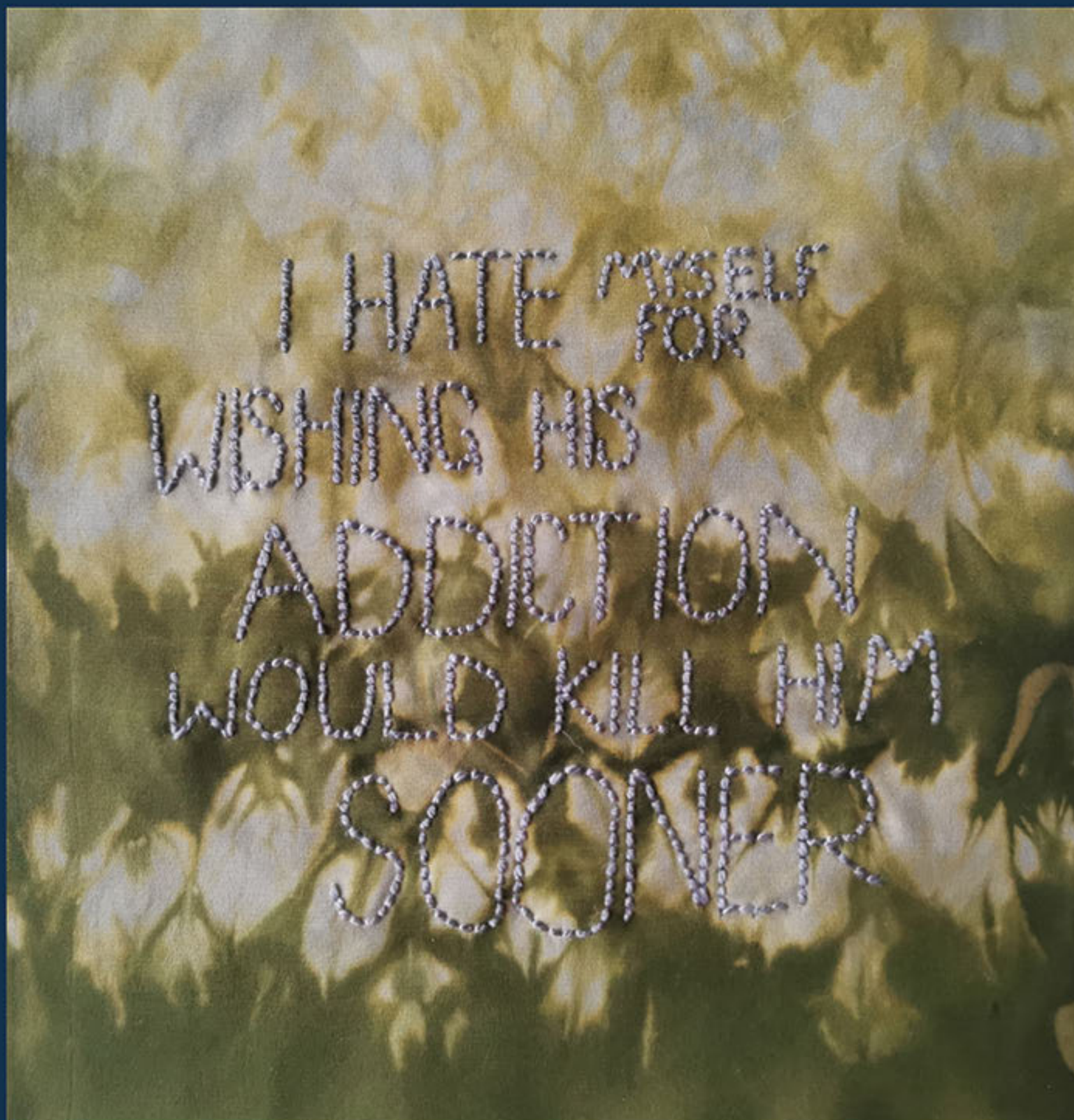
# HOPE AND REALITY

## Part 2

I hoped you would celebrate me getting a new job  
You barely remembered  
I hoped you'd understand why I was inconsolable when  
my maternal Nanna died  
You were angry because I saw her as a parent  
I hoped you'd one day ring me just to chat  
You rang me to tell me you hated life and everyone thought it was my fault  
I hoped someone would see how bad things were and save us  
No one came  
I hoped through the darkness your kindness would stay  
That part of you was lost and we never saw it again  
I hoped you would help me find our new home  
You were too drunk to know we bought our first house  
I hoped you'd celebrate my 30th birthday by my side  
I sat with you in hospital and watched you die  
I hoped you would be the kind father I remembered to my sister  
She only remembers the bottle and neglect  
I hoped you would walk me down the aisle and hold my hand  
My maid of honour will one day take that role  
I hoped you'd love being a grandpa to my children  
Any children I have will never meet you  
I hoped I'd see you into your golden years enjoying life  
You were gone by 64 and your life was anything but happy  
I hoped I could save you from the death I knew would come  
I could never be enough  
I just wanted a dad  
You never thought you were enough  
I hope you now know that you would have been enough.

**Vicki Faulkner**





## STITCH AWAY THE STIGMA

I began stitching my thoughts and feelings towards my Dad and his addiction as a way of processing them. I found the stitching meditative and calming and it made me focus. By almost taking the thought out of my head and placing it somewhere else it stopped them from whirling around my head as much. From there I created 'Stitch Away the Stigma' sending packs out to those in the same position as me all across the country for them to stitch their own pieces. I have created a wall hanging with those squares which will be an ever-growing piece to show we are not alone and just how many of us are affected.

Natalie Needham



# LIFE AFTER CARING -THE VOID

There's a void  
I'm not sure how to fill it  
Especially now that you are no  
longer in it

I have dreamt of this moment and  
now that it's here  
I've changed my mind  
Come back Dad  
"There's nothing to fear"

I have finally been released  
From fight or flight mode  
You'd think I'd be relieved  
But I find I'm at a new crossroad

I feel numb inside  
There is nothing left  
I need to refuel  
I need to move on from your  
death

Your life has ended  
But mine still goes on  
I can continue to mourn  
Or I can learn to move on

I have chosen the latter  
I know that's what you would  
have wanted  
I wish it was that easy  
Still at times I feel haunted

I tried to reach you  
But you couldn't see  
Locked in your addiction  
You couldn't find the key

I still bear the scars  
They will never go away  
But I have learned how to cope  
I have learned to keep my emotions  
at bay

I have made a pledge to myself  
Your death won't be in vain  
It can't...  
After all, there are millions of others  
Who are going through the same?

I will continue to fight  
I will continue to write  
I will speak up for others  
Including all the mums, dads,  
sisters and brothers

The void is still there  
I don't think it will ever go away  
But I now have the strength and  
the courage  
To make it through another day

Tracey Ford





# UNAVAILABLE

Mummy, I cried out for you, but you weren't there  
My dad rocking baby clothes on the stair

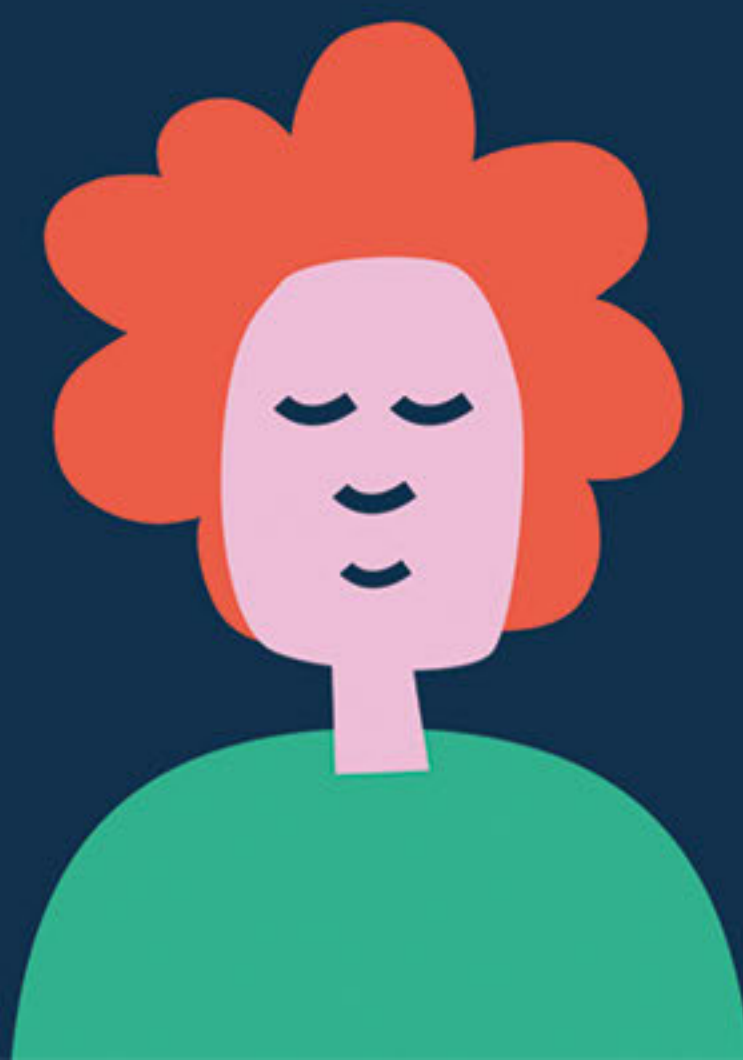
I was a child, I needed you, you were physically there  
But a distance in your eyes a preoccupied stare

I tried to fix you, to comfort you, with so much care  
You just cried and said how it was all so unfair

I searched your glazed eyes in a hospital bed  
I love you, I'm sorry, I love you I said  
I put on your lipstick and combed your hair

I could tell all the pain and regret was gone, finality,  
was more than I could bear  
You weren't there.

Louise Grasso  
@daughterofthebottle









# THE GLIMPSE I HAD OF YOU

## Part 1

It's all too easy to look back on the chaos of my childhood with anger and sadness but  
now I understand addiction better, so now.....

I just want to say thank you Mum

Thank you for the four years you gave me before alcohol crept in, thank you for carrying  
me, for keeping me safe inside you, for feeding me milk for my first year, sounds to me  
like we once had a wonderful bond,

Thank you for waiting for me at the school gates on the days you could get there, you  
never knew the excitement I felt when I saw you as I peeped round the door, it wasn't  
very often, sometimes weeks or months went by, but I want you know I just loved it, I  
still remember your blue hoody,  
it was so cosy to snuggle into,

Thank you for being so brave when you knew it had all got too much, it must have been  
hard to let me go, but in your own way you made sure I was safe. Sometimes it just  
wasn't right for me to be with you, and Grandad did a great job, he wasn't you though,  
and I secretly cried too most days,

Thank you for trying again and again, repeatedly to stay sober, you were so strong to  
do it, and the side effects of that were the most painful to watch! You were a warrior in  
those times, and I was with you, holding your hand through the chaos that ensued...  
you even once said out loud that you knew there was a problem, I can't imagine how  
hard that must have been!



# THE GLIMPSE I HAD OF YOU

## Part 2

Thank you for the ridiculous chats, we talked about anything, there was no slurring, you didn't judge, you cared, I know you did deep down, and that's taken me 15 years to say, but I get it now and do you know why?

Because I'm recreating those magical glimpses of you with my babies, those tiny special moments are running through me, and as much as you have broken me, and made me worry of the Mum I am, I also love the Mum I am becoming because of you!

I laugh until I cry with them, I'm ridiculously silly with them, I get on their level sometimes so there is no parent and child, just a stream of magic that we're all part of, and that's from you, and I know once you felt it too.

I know we started with a bond, a strong attachment, because if not why can't I think of the grandparent you'd be without my chest aching, literally a breath taking physical pain?

I will always try to separate my memories of you from the drink, and remember the sober times, however small they were, and I'll tell them about the real you, just my Mum,

Tomorrow I may feel different, no two days are the same, but today I just want to thank you.....

Ceri Walker





