

FORBIDDEN WORDS.

BY TOM FRY



LAYING IT ALL BARE IN A
CONFRONTATIONAL PROCESS
OF SELF-REHABILITATION

EMBRACE YOUR MADNESS TO
MAKE LIFE MORE BEARABLE.

SUPPORTING DATA:

**IN 2021 THERE WERE 6,319 DEATHS REGISTERED IN GREAT BRITAIN WHERE THE CAUSE WAS RECORDED AS SUICIDE.*

WHICH MEANS THAT EVERY DAY ON AVERAGE, 17 PEOPLE TAKE THEIR OWN LIVES.

WE MUST ALSO BARE IN MIND THAT MANY VICTIMS OF SUICIDE ALSO GO COMPLETELY UNRECORDED, SOMEWHAT MASKING THE TRUE SCALE OF THE ISSUE IN QUESTION.

**RELATIVE TO THE SIZE OF THE POPULATION, THE SUICIDE RATE IN ENGLAND AND WALES HAS DECLINED BY 28% SINCE 1981. MOST OF THIS FALL OCCURRED BEFORE 2000. IN 2021 THE RATE WAS HIGHER THAN IT HAD BEEN IN 2005-2012 AND 2016-2017.*

IT IS UPSETTING TO SEE, BUT TRENDS TELL US THAT DESPITE THE WORK THAT HAS SO FAR BEEN DONE TO RAISE AWARENESS AND EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH, SUICIDE RATES HAVE ONCE AGAIN BEEN ON THE RISE SINCE 2005.

**SUICIDE IN ENGLAND AND WALES IS THREE TIMES MORE COMMON AMONG MEN THAN AMONG WOMEN, WITH THE GAP BETWEEN SEXES INCREASING OVER TIME.*

SUICIDE AFFECTS EVERYONE, BUT THE MAJORITY OF THE VICTIMS ARE YOUNG MEN IN THEIR EARLY TWENTIES.

IT IS A TABOO TO ASK WHY, BUT IT IS NO SECRET THAT SOCIETAL NORMS STIGMATISE THE VULNERABILITY OF MEN, WHO ARE FORCED TO MEET UNNATURAL EXPECTATIONS ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO SHARE THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCE OF PAIN AND TRAUMA.

**DATA SOURCE: COMMONSLIBRARY.PARLIAMENT.UK*

FOREWORD:

PAINTING IS A FREEDOM WHICH DANCES WITH THE TRUTH, BUT WORDS REQUIRE BRUTAL HONESTY.

TOGETHER, ART AND POETRY HAVE BECOME MY TEXTBOOK TO UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH: MY WEAPONS OF CHOICE IN DEFYING THE EXPECTATIONS OF WHAT "A MAN" TRULY IS.

DESPITE THE PROGRESS WE HAVE MADE, WE STILL LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE MENTAL HEALTH IS DEEPLY STIGMATISED.

FOR SO LONG, MY EXPERIENCE AS A MAN HAD ALWAYS BEEN TO SUPPRESS FEELINGS AND CARRY ON, NO MATTER WHAT LIFE THREW AT ME. IN DOING SO, I LOST A SENSE OF WHO I WAS.

A CULTURE OF TOXIC MASCULINITY EMBEDDED IN SOCIETY CAST A SHADOW ON MY SENSE OF SELF.

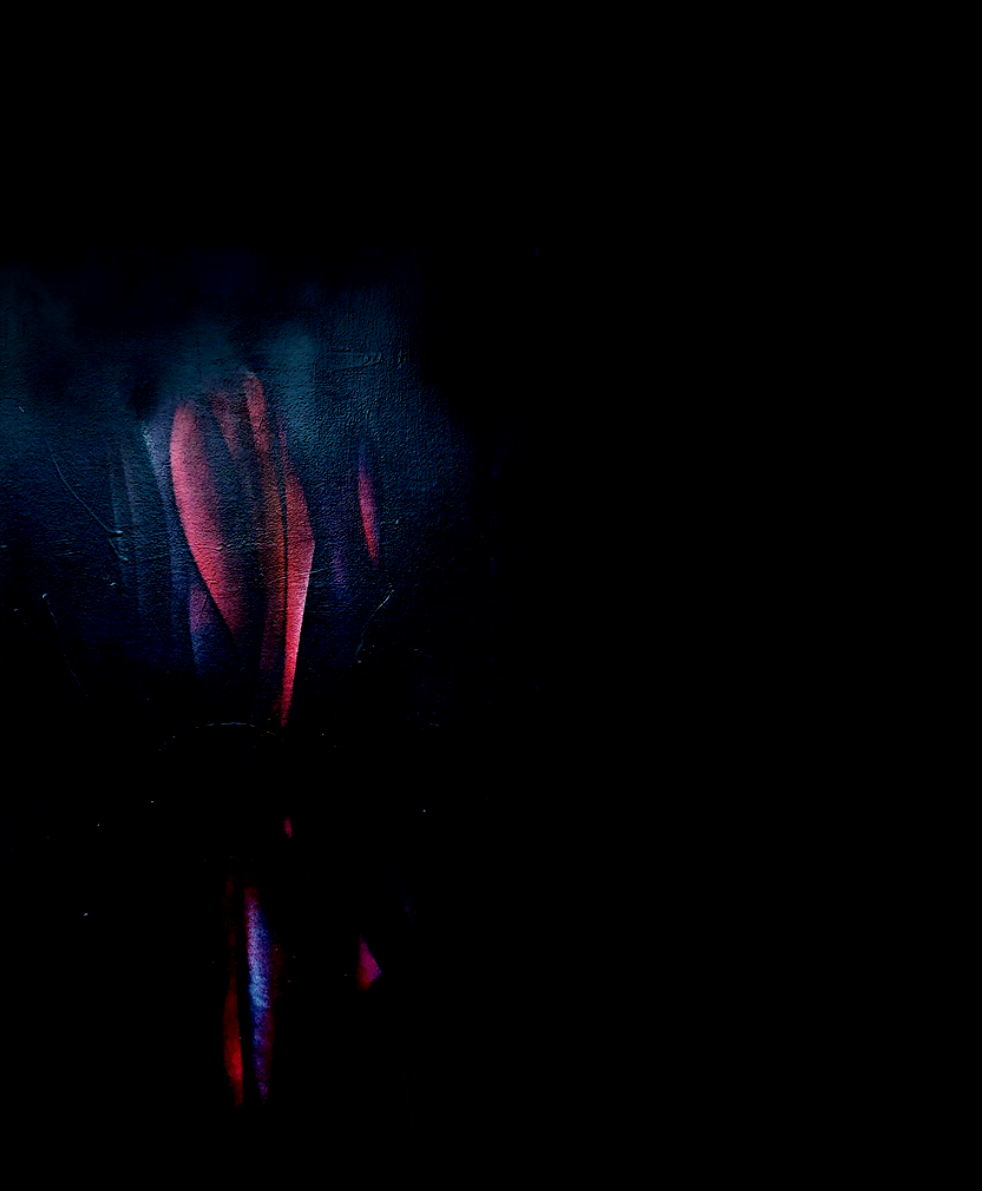
I WAS STUCK IN WHAT FELT LIKE AN ETERNAL VOID OF MISUNDERSTOOD AND UNPROCESSED EMOTIONS.

AFTER BEING PLAGUED WITH CONSTANT SUICIDAL THOUGHTS AND LIVING THROUGH A SEVERE MENTAL BREAKDOWN IN 2017, EVENTUALLY LEADING ME TO THERAPY, I BEGAN A PROCESS OF REHABILITATION AND FOUND CREATIVE OUTLETS THAT BECAME A NEW FORM OF MEDICINE.

IT WAS FREEING TO PAINT. YET WRITING SEEMED PAINFUL, DESPITE HOW NECESSARY IT BECAME TO CONFRONT MYSELF WITH WORDS.

IT IS NOT EASY TO REOPEN OLD WOUNDS, BUT THIS IS WHERE THE HEALING STARTS.

WE MUST LAY OUR SOUL BARE IN THE FACE OF TRAUMA AND LEARN TO QUANTIFY OUR EMOTIONAL TURBULENCES. I THEREFORE SHARE MY FORBIDDEN WORDS - POEMS FORGED FROM A HEAVY HEART - IN THE HOPE OF RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ACCEPTING MALE VULNERABILITY.



**MOVING
THINGS.**

I looked around the room at memories,
Pallet-wrapped in film so tight, with
Accessories that couldn't fit, in spite of
Cardboard boxes that felt like remedies.
I packed my life into the night.

Taking steps to fix myself after
Years of growth with no release,
A wealth of troubled inner peace, just
More rubble piled on dwindling health.
Into boxes I stuffed each fleece.

Brooding notions of what could be
Can't take away the pain of late, time lost
Crudely, my oily blackened pupils dilate.
Dying oceans and void eternal seas
On which I sailed for land with freight.

Between my largest works I stood and shivered,
Ogling past, present and broken springs,
Whithered in the nostalgia of slowly moving things.
The hurt be gone, when it finally gets delivered.
Upon the land I marched an endless blizzard.
Till I reached my home at last and figured,

Life is new, here I am, let me go.

The image features a dark, almost black background. On the right side, there are several vertical, blurry streaks of light in shades of red, blue, and white, suggesting a light source or a reflection on a textured surface. The overall mood is mysterious and atmospheric.

**LOST
OASIS.**

Ever felt you're missing pieces,
Senses dampened, will defeated?
No matter the lengthy thirst for life,
Shallow rivers run depleted.

Ever tried to switch your step,
Seek outside the box for meaning?
Picked up your bones and headed west,
In search of arid land worth greening?

Ever known to want the end,
Lay your soul to ground and free it?
Return to earth the dues you spent,
From which we grew but not once seeded.

Odd how simply things can change,
How often tides will rearrange.
As the moon, it seems, is shining brightest,
Orbit sways us into darkness.

Ever seen a loved one wrecked,
Living traumas you've known in wealth?
And despite your counsel being correct,
You can't apply it to yourself?

Ever heard a grown man cry?
A world so fragile in that instance,
Built from rules we chose to pry
From notions false of our existence.

Ever wet the sand with tears,
Not expecting evolution?
But as the fog and hurting clears,
You see you've moulded a solution.

Odd how simply things can change,
How often tides will rearrange.
Let me orbit back to face this
And build a blossoming oasis.

**SILENCE
MEANS
YOU
DIE.**



I've been thinking about it a lot,
Whether or not I want to be noticed.
I think what I want is respect,
Too many times I've been down at my lowest,
Standing in protest.

Sure, I want to make bread man,
But I'm still learning to bake.
Give me time while I map out the floorplan,
Enchant the doorman.

Money is just a question of sustainability,
Being rich doesn't necessarily interest me.
Fame is only important if others resonate
With the visions that I try to demonstrate.

The proof is in the pudding,
But if I'm silent I'm alone.
I have plenty to go round showing,
To share the way I've grown,
Spread the seeds I've sewn.

I get that sometimes it's hard to read,
Poetry is past pain, blood and tears;
A masked emotional flood I've carried quietly for years.
But it's my way of dealing with my fears,
Paying my dues and settling life's arrears.

I've been thinking about it a lot,
Whether or not I want to be known
As the artist who champions these issues.
It's not even something I chose alone
It was actually my other personalities that brought it home.

I get that it's all sudden for some,
Being this open is new to me too,
But being this broken is what I'm used to
So please bare with me while I make my debut.

I realised I was right to share my insights of depression
When someone else came to me for decompression
And I was able to help them with my own life lessons
With the utmost care, love and discretion.

I've had grown men cry in my lap,
Asking me why is it they feel this way?
Inevitably trapped,
Because as men we don't know how to react.

Feelings are there for us all to experience,
So when we train young men to remove these ingredients,
It all builds up in our head as confusion
Until suicide becomes the only solution.

So I've been thinking about it a lot,
And I've never felt so strongly
About the way mental health has been represented so
wrongly.
I've been thinking about it a lot,
And I'll keep writing words
Despite my haters telling me it hurts
To be exposed as those who inflicted the burns.
Well, Fuck You!

I've been thinking about it a lot,
I'll be loud so I can never be alone,
Make sure the world sees me turning every stone.
I've been thinking about it a lot
And you should think about it too,
Understand yourself so you can follow through.

**TIME
TO
THINK.**



When the fog lifted I sensed the elation
Of a whole new era coming to.
Sifting through me,
Overcoming the stagnation of late
That consumed my dues.

For a moment, time stood still.

The colours of my world
Adapted hues that spilt expectations -
Fodder I'd unfurled - in amassed refuse.

The skies turned blue in automation
To the reality
My fears were uncontrolled.

I took flight in cue with affirmations
The solidarity
My own years behold.

Solitude can be peace.
But this kind... Was an enemy.

Unrecovered fragments of past
Deceased in my mind endlessly.

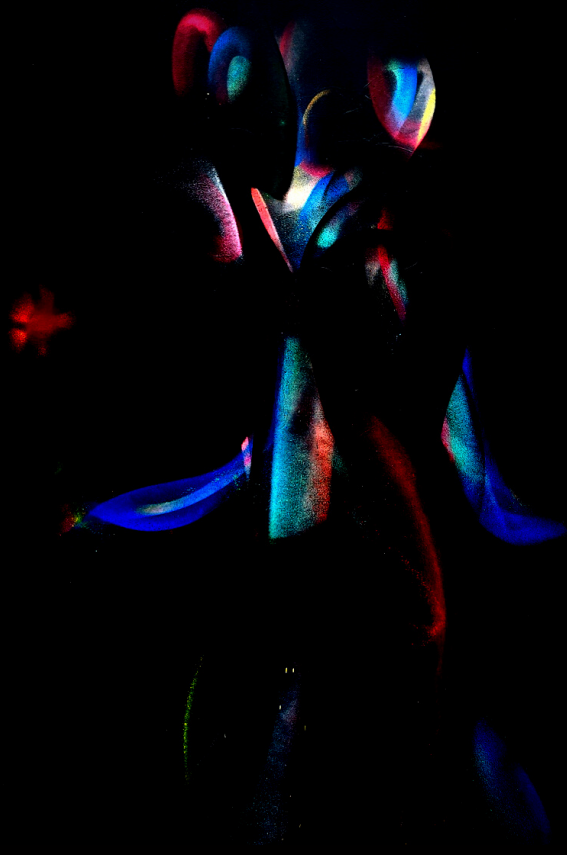
Discoloured memories that last.

Yet,
Finally the sight was clear
And nuances did appear
Among the lines that structure life.

Pigments returned
And my stomach burned
With a long-lost hunger I forgot existed.

Finally my ruptured patterns shifted.
For now I fixed it.

**THOSE
VOICES
HAVE
NO
POWER.**



All of a sudden there were so many expectations.
Revelations of the onus I'd placed on myself came to.
For the first time there were haters and accusations.
The elevation of status I'd worked so hard to produce came
through
But some couldn't believe it, despite the years of pain to
which I'd conceded:
I was trying to find a community where I'm heard,
Instead of wasting the beauty my own mind secreted,
That for so long I didn't even believe existed.
My low self-esteem eclipsed it.
But finally I insisted,
Gathered my limbs, stood up and explained where I was at.
Trying to stop young men from doing this and that,
Like jumping on the tracks,
It's those expectations that make us lose them through the
cracks.
My mental health collapsed and I've seen it all before.
I thought about it too,
Choked myself with rope until my face was blackened blue.

I came back to tell you life is mighty precious,
I've seen limbo and it's just breathless black skies and sharp
pointy edges.
I almost stayed there forever,
Comatose'd and wandering,
Weathered between bad choices I endeavored and the pain
I'm conquering.

Now all those expectations are gone,
I've learnt to turn off the voices, appreciate the breeze and
listen to the birds
Instead of spending my attention reading hurtful words.
A friend once told me: turn your traumas into beauty,
So I took my own hate and fears and made it my line of duty
To express myself duly,
Share the mistakes I've made so others won't repeat them,
Wear the heartaches I've carried so others can also beat
them.
So I'll be lazy to let these words defeat me.
They must be crazy if they think I'll let them cheat me.
The perfect storm in case I ever felt ignored.
I hated me more than anyone that came before.
So good luck with the tragedy of an encore,
And thank you.
Keep fuelling my flames,
For, one day,
I'll make sure these words get framed.

MISTRESS.



It is a sin for many,
I for one am plenty.
The IPA, the slur of red,
A drink to some means twenty.

It's simple,

Confusing in a beautiful way,

I may be lost,
Drinking Cabernet.
Losing conscience
And all my contents
I won't become obnoxious.

Maintaining barely, I follow correspondence.

My friends, mistress,
I hear you speak me into truth.

The dram I love,
Gin and sweet vermouth.
Lemon twists,
Magic Vodka grist,
Shaken from my wrists.



THANK YOU FOR READING

SELECTED ORIGINAL POEMS WRITTEN
BY TOM FRY BETWEEN 2017-2023

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