

SPIRITS & ALCOHOL

A 6 monologue play, 6 chairs sit in a horse shoe on the stage, facing the audience, all seats are empty bar one. One man sits for a while in the middle, staring out passed the audience, he eventually stands up and addresses the crowd

SCENE ONE. IAN.

Welcome and thanks for attending our little meeting, my name's Ian, and I used to be an alcoholic, well I suppose I'm STILL an alcoholic, as they say, once an alcoholic always an alcoholic. I've been coming to this meeting for, shit, almost 4 years, there's people who have been coming a lot longer than me, a few come once and never come back, they're the ones I think about the most, we get a fragment of their story and then they're gone, in the wind, sometimes forever, Are they alive? Did they move on? Are they still haunted by their addiction or did they find solace, did they find their happy. I like it here, it's the old familiar, once a week without fail and I've come to realise that I need this place. You might hear the same stories over and over again but it's those stories that keep me grounded and keep me coming back.

For some of you here tonight, this might be your first meeting, hell you might not even have been affected by addiction or by alcoholism or you might simply turn a blind eye to it all. You may share the same view that junkies and alchies are all the same, begging on the streets looking for their next fix or next bottle, whatever, it does'nae really matter. I was'nae like that.

I had a wife, I had two kids, a good job, a nice wee house, and I had vodka, my liquid of choice. The perfect picture, all fitting together like a perfect jigsaw puzzle, well that's until the pieces didn't quite fit and the picture got too fuckin hazy, then I forgot all about the jigsaw. If you've ever lived with an alcoholic or an addict then YOU see the drink or the drug of choice as the problem, WRONG!! To me the vodka was the solution to all my problems!

Now how can I put this so you understand. I was never the strongest guy or the fatted guy. I was never the good looking one. I was the shy kid. No confidence really and if I'm being completely honest, I didn't like me, and if I didn't like me then what did the world think of me, then Vodka kindly introduced itself to me.

Suddenly I'm not the shy bashful kid no more, I become something better than myself, suddenly I've got confidence, and, and a swagger, It's like, CLARK KENT, yeah it's exactly like Clark Kent, you know Superman? You know SUPERMAN!!!...the comic bloke with the cape and all the superpowers, well imagine that I'm Clark Kent, weak and feeble and vodka transformed me into something else, something better. It turned me into my very own superman and on some nights it made me feel invincible, could I stop bullets, No! Could I fly, No! But did it make me feel better, fuckin right it did, I was fighting my own demons, putting the world to rights.

Now, Clark Kent was Superman's alter ego, he takes his glasses off, finds a phone box, good luck being Superman in Glasgow, every phone box in Glasgow has at least one junkie resident, using it as his own public toilet. Yeah, good luck changing yer clothes in one of those little junkie nests, superpowers or no superpowers you're not getting out of there with your pants over yer trousers without getting shit on your shoes. I digress.

You see Superman's nemesis is kryptonite, it removes his powers and leaves him as a mortal man. Now my vodka was the reverse of Kryptonite, it was my vodka that gave me my superpowers. I see you all sniggering, what superpowers does this alchie possess? I'll tell you, as I said I could mind read, yeah you heard me! I could see what every cunt was thinking, ok they were usually thinking SHIT about me, 'how does his poor wife cope with THAT?' I could see them thinking, BUT my vodka made me stronger, it made me unbreakable, ironically it made me feel mortal. The more I drank, the more I felt and the more I felt the stronger I became, nothing could touch me, you see my drinking wasn't a problem it was the fuckin solution to all my inferiorities, It helped me stand up and face my fears, it got me out of bed to face this fucking horrible world. Would Clark Kent go out fighting crime without Superman, would he fuck! because Clark Kent without superpowers is just a man living in the same shit hole as everyone else.

So just like Clark Kent removing his glasses to become superman, I picked up my glasses, usually filled with vodka and I morphed into my superman...COME ON WORLD!!!!!!
DO YOUR WORST, DO YOUR FUCKING WORST!

I am invincible and you want me to turn my back on the one thing that gives me my strength, just walk away? That's like asking Clark Kent to wear a pair of kryptonite earrings. 'Just be you Clark, just be normal, nobody likes that fanny Superman. Thinking he's better than everyone else, go on son, pour your superpowers doon that fucking drain and never think of him ever again'. In reality that's what you're saying to every alcoholic, every heroin injector, every fucker who needs an escape, be it drink or drugs, be normal, join the rat race, be one of us again.

Here's the real twist, the real mind melt. When I drank I thought I was turning into Superman! My wife however, well lets just say she didn't see Superman, she said she saw me turning from David Banner into the Hulk! You know the Hulk? I was only less incredible. She saw this quiet wee man..(me,pointing to himself) drink the magic potion (mimic with his hand downing a large glass of vodka) then turn into a raging monster, an uncontrollable beast, leaving carnage and destruction in it's wake. The HULK, fuck's sake, the Hulk? A brain dead green monster hitting things and smashing up the world, that wasn't who I was. I'M SUPERMAN putting the world to rights,how did she get that so wrong?....

...Looking back, she got it 100% right, but the Hulk??? Look, there was days where I did smash my fist through walls. True! I was an angry drunk. True! Green with envy, errrr True! There were days I'd wake up after a bender, topless with my troosers all ripped. True! Not knowing where I was or what I had done the night before, it wasn't solving crimes I'll tell you that for free. There would be cuts and grazes on my fists, a fall? or more likely some unlucky fuck who had tried to calm the monster down the night before, but Superman was who I was, who I thought I'd become, a HERO! not a monster.

There were times when I scared myself, not knowing. I remember after a two day bender waking up on a park bench and slowly coming too. There was a young kid about 10 standing about two foot away just staring down on me, he didn't look scared this kid, he looked terrified! I felt pain shooting up my right arm, not unusual, park benches are a bit like the Premier Inn but slightly more comfortable, I should know, I've slept the night on a few park benches. But my hand and

arm were throbbing and this kids eyes we're pure bulging out his terrified skull....
...what's this wee prick looking at? And my eyes slowly work their way down my arm to where
this kids gaze was focused, not really wanting them to reach the final destination, but my eyes
finally come to rest on my hand, a hand covered in blood, but what was that? sticking out, two
bloody stumps that look like bone, what the fuck, no, it wasn't bone, it was.....some.....
unlucky pricks two front teeth sticking in my hand and I didn't remember a thing.
That's when I knew things had to change.

Well I found the strength to put on my little kryptonite earrings and live amongst you all.
But superpowers are a hard thing to give up! Every once in a while I'd drift back.
Could Superman ever just put away the red cape. DON'T THINK SO! he'd get it out maybe just
put it on and think back, that's why I keep coming back here...I don't even know how I get here
sometimes. Think it in your head and the body will follow they say.
The drink maybe didn't kill me, but...my name was Ian and I was an alcoholic.....(fade)

**The lights go out, the stage is in darkness,
when the lights come back on Ian has disappeared and is replaced by Peter,
a distinguished, older man standing wearing a suit**

SCENE TWO. PETER.

Good evening and welcome, my name is Pete and I'm an alcoholic...I...I've been making an
appearance at this meeting for 10 years now and I was drunk longer than I was sober.

I was a lecturer at the old Edinburgh University, a wee nip of whisky before lectures to settle
my nerves led to two nips of whiskey to celebrate a successful lecture. I'm an intelligent man,
lecturer (rubs imaginary name badge..looking proud) I was the teacher of scholars but I found
I wasn't clever enough when it came to alcohol, it was and has always been my greatest foe.

Alcoholism and addiction can effect anyone from any walks of life. They can send men to the moon or to the deepest parts of the world's oceans but they'll never know what goes on up here (pointing to his own head). What goes on up here is the greatest mystery of all!

I knew I had a problem early on, as I said, nip first thing in the morning to get me moving, a quick swig to settle my nerves, a half bottle to get me to lunchtime, and well repeat the process. I hid it well though, no one knew (BIG SHRUG OF HIS SHOULDERS) Yeah well I THOUGHT I had it under control and I thought no one else new, you see the illusional alcoholic is normally the delusional alcoholic. I knew I was an alcoholic from an early age, my my father and his father before him were all afflicted, I used to think of it as the family heirloom, the only thing my father ever passed down to me, I suppose that's why I never had children of my own, the only control I ever had over my addiction was having the ability to cut this thing of at the source, I would be the man to end this family curse, and a curse is what it was. I studied addiction from books, I read everything I could and I came to a conclusion.... RIGHT.....this is going to sound a bit crazy, especially from a scholar, but bare with me.

They say a zombie apocalypse could never happen? It's comic book stuff, right?

That shit only happens in movies? Well I'm here to pop that bubble, that shit is all real, because in search of a better word, when I was drinking... I WAS a zombie! In fact anyone in addiction is a zombie of some kind. Instead of craving blood and flesh it's alcohol or drugs that drives us addicted drooling zombies down to the shops or down to our dealers of choice. What I'm trying to say is I was never really in control, like someone else was pulling the strings and I was on the outside looking in.

You know what addiction is? How it works? It's pretty incredible, the whole process is pretty incredible. Now I know you're not all academics or specialists in this field, and I don't want to sound condescending but here it is in laymen's terms.

That bit of your brain, the primeval part, the early brain that still resides and hides in the deep recesses of your skull...the caveman brain that's still responsible for the fight or flight part. NOW when you drink or use, there's a chemical reaction that occurs, the more you drink or use the more dopamine floods your brain and your primeval part of the brain starts taking over. It likes, NO...IT LOVES this dopamine stuff, ironically it's the brains whisky.

The Basal Ganglia or primal section of your brain doesn't think, it can't think, it doesn't make rational decisions, it's function is to purely survival.

Like a zombies impulse is to eat human flesh, instead, my impulse was whisky and I'm not in control of anything, I'm being driven to do what my primeval brain wants, it starts locking out the other parts of my brain, the parts that make sensible decisions. It locks out the moral compass. It locks out the memories. It locks out my choices, you see, no other function is of relevance now..BECAUSE.... IHAVENOCONTROL...my inner brain says 'Piss yourself!' I piss myself, it says 'Hide in the bushes and drink a whole bottle of scotch!', I hide in the fucking bushes and drink a full bottle of Scotch. No rationality! No thought process! My inner brain fuelled by dopamine is the boss of me. You say 'If you loved me you'd stop drinking or using?' yeah, if I was in control, my thinking part of my brain would make that choice easy but this part of my brain is locked out, I am a zombie, a prisoner in my own body...locked out of my own fucking head, driven by addiction. I didn't think, I just did, a fucking zombie!...and the irony is I was a zombie that doesn't even eat meat, Vegetarian for 4 years! (said quite proudly). And the worst part about all of this, for any addict, once you open up that Pandora's box, the moment you give the Basal Ganglia part of your brain a taste of control, then it's always looking to take over and it's a constant battle, not a battle between me and drink, a battle between me an my primeval brain!

Look, I'm not a religious man, I sometimes joke 'Hey don't blame me for liking a drink, blame the big man upstairs (pointing skywards) he invented the fucking stuff, bloody hell. When his only son could change water into wine what fucking chance did we really have?... When the bloody saviour was conjuring his own home brew, what chance do any of us have? When the Catholic Church gives out free samples every Sunday, what chance do we have? Now I'm not saying Scotland is any better or any worse than anywhere else, but if Jesus were ever to rise again and found himself standing in some Scottish town centre performing miracles like turning water into wine, lets just say he wouldn't get a lot of other miracle stuff done because there'd be a line a thousand strong waiting with empty cups! More wine! More wine please Jesus, he's a good kid this Jesus, keep topping me up Jesus.

And the real paradox here that won't escape you, when you think about it, Jesus turning us all into Zombies with the free wine, he's the man who died, then rose again to walk amongst us, I'm just saying ...sounds like a zombie to me.

That old me...the old alcoholic that I killed a long time ago...maybe that's why I'm so anti-religion..maybe all I was looking for were the answers. I saw many a good man, and woman fall to addiction, I also saw many beat it and I saw many swap one addiction for another. I know the link between sobriety and the Church. Faith and hope. The greater power. Religion, they say is for people who are afraid of going to hell and Spirituality is for those who have already been there! Well let me tell you, I've been to hell and there's no escaping it, I should know I've been trying for the last 50 years to escape it.

LIGHTS GO OUT AND PETER DISAPPEARS

STAGE IN DARKNESS.

LIGHTS COME ON AND A SINGLE FIGURE STANDS IN A WHITE SHEET, TYPICAL GHOST ATTIRE BUT WITH A BIG GREY UNKEMPT BEARD ABOVE THE GHOST SHEET

SCENE THREE. SCOTT

Names Scott and I've been sober for exactly 32 years and 37 days. I've been dead for exactly 32 years and 37 days, I wasn't like them, the others here, the other ghosts, you see, you can come back and take your old persona or you can look like this (pointing to himself) WHHOOOOOOO (he makes a ghostly sound)..haha that still makes laugh, sorry us ghost still like to have a laugh now and again, we're not all dead inside.

Shit, growing up I never even believed in ghosts, or psychics, it was all bullshit, well I thought it WAS all bullshit, any psychic in the room? Raise my hand..

So if you haven't clicked, every one of us at this meeting is a ghost, but I wasn't like them, I wasn't like them at all! I died holding a drink, never stopped, never had the balls to stop, never had the balls to stop and look at myself in that mirror, no mirrors in the park you see!

I'd just taken a gulp and **BANG**... an explosion, fucking **BOOM** (a massive bang goes off) I fucking jumped out of ma skin, what a fright, the explosion vibrated all the way through my body, I remember looking around me thinking some wee arse hole had stolen the one o'clock

gun from the castle and brought it down to the park for a lark, or worst, a terrorist attack. Man, we all live in fear, Terrorism and Crime! In fact the only thing us homeless folks don't worry about is burglary. But that explosion, it was so loud in my ears that I shit myself, NO I literally shit myself and then, then the realisation kicks in, It's not terrorists, it's worse.....It's my own heart, the thing exploded in my chest and my only thought that consumed me wasn't about the people I was leaving behind or about the life I had lead, or not lead. No, my only concern was.. 'I've just spent 3 quid on that bottle of cider' you know the shit stuff, we're not calling it vintage cider, it was 3 quid for about 2 litres and I had just opened the bloody bottle, taken one swig, what a fucking waste. I couldn't even taste that last mouthful because of the metallic taste of blood that filled my mouth. But I can honestly say, hand on heart, well, hand on where my heart used to be, I haven't touched a drink since that day. I suppose death cured me of my alcoholism, silver linings and all that!

Truth be told I never thought about stopping, not once. Living on the street, my drink kept me warm on a cold night, it told me everything would be ok. We were buddies, best fucking buddies, me and the drink, it didn't criticise or question me! It never once held me accountable, that's why all us alchies stick together, hang out together in the park, you never get another alcoholic questioning how much yer drinking. They don't ask... "if you love me you'll stop!" they're drinking just as much as you. Don't get me wrong, I would'nae trust any of them, aye we're not the most trusting of the human species...but on the street, I had one mate, my best mate...MY DRINK.

It was with me to the very end, it didn't leave my side, in fact when things got really shit we bonded even closer, I didn't need anyone else, I didn't trust anyone else. My drink hud my back, my drink didn't question me or look down on me, my drink kept me blinkered and blissfully unaware. I come here to reminisce, about the good old days.

My drink was like a faithful dog, always by my side, obedient to the last, but lately I've been thinking, you get time to think here, the one upside to being dead, 'your a long time died son, a long time died' my mother used to say. So I've been thinking, maybe I hud it wrong, maybe I was the dog and drink was my master, maybe I was the obedient one, never question the master, I was the dog simply obeying, man's best friend, his dog.

My drink wasn't killing me, it was the reverse! it was keeping me alive, it's the only thing that got me up in the morning and it's the only thing that mattered. My master would say 'Fetch boy, go fetch me a bottle' and I dutifully obliged.

I never felt human, I wouldn't say I was a non caring son of a bitch, but in reality I was a non caring son of a bitch. It wasn't that I didn't care, I just didn't feel and I certainly didn't feel like you (pointing out to the audience) maybe that's why I'd prefer to be seen like this, haha or not seen like this...Whhhooooo (moves his arms beneath the white sheet in ghostly manner)... sorry. I was empty inside, never really fitting in, so I drank, and the more I drank the more invisible I became and the more invisible I became the less people paid me any attention, they looked through me. I saw my invisibility as a gift, it gave me freedom, how many people can say they are unequivocally free? Free from mortgage arrears? Free from the financial worries? Free from working commitments? Free from family stresses? I was FREE from all that and my invisibility allowed me to drift, somewhere outside reality, so you could say that I spent my whole life preparing for death, you could say my life was an apprenticeship to my death, I walked this earth as a ghost because I had been living as a ghost.

Sitting on a manky pavement with my little empty cup, eyes would always be up looking down the street, maybe that's why this country has a terrible attitude to drink, the culture is just to pretend it's just not fucking happening, if I can't see it, it's not there and if it's not there it doesn't effect me.

Now I'm not saying for a second that in those days if someone had paid me a blind bit of notice or shown me any kind of attention that I'd want to change, NO, I'd want THEIR change, 3 quid for a bottle! it's not too much to ask. But we're not all alike, us street bums, us alcoholics, just do one thing, one tiny thing, just look at the person, the drunk, the junkie, don't ignore them, don't step over them, just look at them, a quick glance. You don't even have to speak, look and acknowledge them as people, somebodies daughter, somebodies son, somebodies mother or father, people!, fuckwits most of them but people never the less and I say that as a classified fuckwit myself.

So I've been dead / sober for 32 years and 37 days and I can honestly say I've missed drink for exactly 32 years and 37 days. I was never one to give up, that would mean me being officially single and alone for the first time in my life, walk away from my one and only friend? no way was that ever, ever, EVER going to happen!

I've been back to my grave side, just stood there looking down, fuck, sorry, that sounds as cliched as ghost stories get, apologies. No one ever left flowers but on the mound of earth, next to my little headstone, sits my little friend, waiting for me to return like some really sad Grayfriar's Bobby, You know the little Dug that sat by his masters grave every day?

Waiting for his turn to die so he could be reunited with his master, well instead of a wee dug, some unfunny cunt has left a full glass bottle of Magners cider on my grave, its just sits there waiting for my return, still full with the cap in place and it breaks my heart....cause..... I don't have a bottle opener.

**Lights go out, stage in darkness, when the lights come back on
A thin woman stands wearing all white, holding a little red purse
we can see her face.**

SCENE FOUR. BARBARA

Good evening, my name's Barbara and I'm an alcoholic. Alcohol didn't kill me..no!

..THE TRAIN DID. When I stumbled over the platform one Friday night.

You know when they talk about two solids colliding well when one of the solids is the London Express and the other solid is, well me, **BOOM!** Good night Vienna. Prestonpans Station, Friday night, I didn't jump! I didn't! I promise I didn't. Don't get me wrong I'd thought about it but I didn't have the guts and I wouldn't have picked the bloody London Express, I'd have picked something much slower, appreciated it a bit more. When they say you see your whole life pass before your eyes, well it flashes by a hell of a lot quicker when it's the London BLOODY Express.

Too much Red wine, three bottles too much red wine. I dropped my purse, that bloody stupid red purse, funny thing was it was empty, it was my mum's and about one of the only things I had left of her, that bloody stupid red purse! I went into my handbag for a half opened bottle of red wine, screw top, I'm not a bloody idiot and when I pulled it out, out fell the purse. Two bounces over the edge of the platform, shit! I wasn't going to just leave it there, I'll remind you where I was PRESTONPANS train Station...BLOODY PRESTONPANS! I'm amazed it even bounced once, never mind twice, normally some wee prick would have been half way to Port Seton with it. Hell if I was just going to leave it, my mum cherished that old red purse.

On hind site, I should have left it, come back when I was a bit more sober, a bit more stable of my feet, but ironically the red wine loosened something in my brain and gave me the balls to clamber over the edge of the platform. The rest of the station was empty, just me, between the tracks. I'm sure if someone else had been there they would have made me aware that the 6.50 Express from London was about to race past the station in 3 minutes and typically for the first time in about 2 weeks it was on time!!!...but,it was my mums old red purse.

I find it, bend down ...and...and...I feel the ground beneath my feet rumble, gentle like, I hear the tinkle off the rails playing a melody and it still didn't click what was happening, how pissed was I? I look up and along the line I see the light in the distance. Now this train is going faster than green grass through a goose and I'm on 2 inch heels....and I can hear the train, that melody on the rails becomes deafening, it sings to me and I can hear itYOUR GONNA DIE YOUR GONNA DIE... YOUR GONNA DIE...YOUR GONNA DIE...(sounding like the clickity click of a train on the track, repeating it faster) YOURGONNADIE..YOURGONNADIE..YOURGONNADIE...I feel the train.... I feel the wind it's generating, even though it's still 50 metres away and I'm still, I can't move, my legs just don't move, I see the driver and time.....stands.....still.....for a second I'm in control of time or something, it's all in slow motion and....time...stops.....but my last thoughts aren't the meaning of life or does heaven exist, NO my last thought on this earth was 'Hey that driver looks like my ex husband Keith'

I don't think the driver even sees me, I don't know if the red wine had numbed my senses, but I can honestly say I didn't feel a thing. In that exact moment when two solids collide and one solid continues It's way down to London leaving a less than solid me on the tracks, lying right next to that bloody red purse.

Now given my time again would I do things differently, damn right I would! I wouldn't have married that bastard Keith for starters, who incidently isn't a train driver.

I looked on my drink as like having a wee affair, my escape. Keith was a bit of a prick, you know the type, his way or no way and no way was anybody else having it their own way, and my drink, well, my drink was my little secret, my secret love.

I'd sneak out of the house for a wee drink, Jesus, even when Keith went out with the boys and I was alone in the house, I'd still sneak out! it was my little secret drinking affair.

I went from being with it once a week and before not too long it was all I could think about, twice a week, three times a week until I couldn't go without my secret love, when I got up in the morning, at work, on the bus home, it was all i could think about, it consumed my thoughts. It was all nice and romantic at first, a box of red wine by candle light when I was alone in the house, but my drink, this secret love wanted more of me all to himself, look It sounds better if I refer to my drink as a he, he would keep me warm and made me feel save. I would fall asleep with him in my arms and a smile on my face, he made me happy, he made me feel wanted and it blocked out the shit. But as all affairs go he became more controlling, I couldn't go out without him, one bottle, two bottles, three bottles, he wanted me to spend more time with him. I would hear him whisper in my ear 'your husbands nothing, leave him, stay with me!' Hey I didn't say the red wine wasn't wrong all of the time, in my head the drink made sense... sometimes. Yeah I will leave that prick Keith, and my drink would say 'don't go to work today, stay home with me, just the two of us, wouldn't that be nice, we can have fun just you and me? You don't need anyone else' and like the good girl I was I'd do exactly what the drink requested.

Then things would get a bit muddled, the drink, sorry, he began ..I... began to feel abused, we would have fun and the next I'd wake up in hospital, he'd been responsible for cracking my skull on a pavement or breaking my nose where I'd fallen, but like any shitty relationship, I'd go back to him. 'It would be better this time' I'd convince myself, I would start to control drink, him, me! and then I'd end up back in hospital with a black eye, in need of stitches, and the drink would laugh in my face as if it knew, 'Doesn't matter how badly I treat you, you will come back, you need me' and I'd wake up in the street, missing clothes, missing a shoe or worse, back in a hospital bed with no recollection of how I even got there, and Keith would be there picking up the pieces, well trying to pick up the pieces....fuck.....fuck....I felt like a piece of shit, but no matter

how shit I felt I always went back to drink, it had me and it had me good and Keith would be there waiting by my hospital bed, I'd open my eyes and he's there...looking down like some helpless puppy dog and all I could think about was.....

.....how the HELL do I get out of this hospital, I need a drink.

Lights go out and the stage is in darkness again.

The lights come back on. A woman stands with the ghostly white sheet and dark eye holes

SCENE FIVE. SHEENA

I'm sorry, I'm so so sorry..I....I....I didn't, I didn't mean for anything like this to happen.

I liked to drink, I drank, it wasn't a problem (composing herself takes 3 deep breaths)

My name's Sheena and I'm a police, I was a police officer, I'm sorry...ummm....I had a job!

it was stressful! I liked to drink, I liked it, there I said it, I liked to drink but it should never have happened and I'll never forgive myself, ever!

You can judge me but you'll never make me feel any worse than I already do, and if I could go back and change things I'd do it in a heart beat but I can't. We all have to live with our worst consequences, you're the lucky ones, there's no escape for me, it's like that really shit

Bill Murray movie Ground Hog Day where I relive my worst ever day after day after day.

It's constant, no escaping it's clutches, no escaping the pain...I....I'm....I'm sorry I really am, but

it's not enough just to be sorry, I think that's why I'm in this state (pointing to her ghostly sheet)

god's too ashamed to take me in, so I'm made to suffer, walk the earth for evermore with the guilt,

with this hole in my stomach, maybe I don't deserve anything else other than suffering

and damnation.

One Saturday night in, if I'm being honest, most Saturday nights were Saturday nights in. I remember the previous week had been...horrific!, there was a case we were working on, I won't go into any details but it involved a priest and an alter boy. What is it with the church? it reminds me of that joke 'A priest, a paedophile and a homosexual walk into a bar and he buys himself a drink' anyhow it had been a difficult week, so I drink to clear my head of all the shit, but this prick, sorry this priest is sitting in the police station giving an interview, under oath! and he's asked 'DID YOU ABUSE THIS CHILD?' and he replied, and this sticks in my craw, he replies 'No comment, NO FUCKING COMMENT!!!!!!' how can a man of God, this self proclaimed preacher man of god, how can a man, speaking on the behalf of Jesus Christ seriously sit and say 'NO COMMENT' when it suits him, look, as you can probably gather I'm not religious, maybe that's why heaven's doors are locked and as I said it was Saturday night.

My head was full, every time I shut my eyes I saw that fucking priest's face and his holier than though stance, and the irony of what I do is I protect people, I help to protect people, I stand up for the weak and the innocent, I try to protect people who most need protecting and ...I failed... BIG TIME...

Vodka was my medicine of choice, and it was medicine, it was my form of self medication. I couldn't risk going to my local GP and admitting I was suffering from anxiety or depression, shit, if that got back to the force it wouldn't look good on my record and I had worked bloody hard to get to where I was. A woman in the police force, let me tell you, mixing with the Alpha male everyday, well give me alcoholism over anti depressants any day...fuck.....HALF the boys on the force have a drink problem, you can't do a job like that and not be effected. If they'd found out about my drink problem, I'd have got a pat on the back, 'Welcome to the club' they'd say 'You're one of the boys'shit, that's all I ever wanted to be, one of the boys, I just didn't know I'd have to sink so low to become one of them. By the way Did you know 100% of priests who abuse boys are men! Just saying.

But what I did was worse, much worse, worse than any priest. What I did doesn't even compare, the most ironic thing of all is that priest who abused that child still feels he'll get into heaven! He'll be forgiven and receive complete absolution from the big man. I don't think I can even forgive myself for what I did. Living with what I'd done would have been tough, not living with it is so much harder..eternal suffering.

They say you can't hurt a ghost's feelings, yeah right. This shit isn't GHOST the fucking movie, where Patrick Swazey and Demi Moor go off and do some pottery!

This ghost shit is real, well as real as me standing here talking to you about ghosts, don't get me wrong I would love to have come back and pottered some bowls but that isn't my movie, that's not my Story. My story plays out more like the traditional horror flick.

A good Saturday night would consist of a bottle of wine and a bottle of vodka, a bad Saturday night would consist of a bottle of wine and a bottle of vodka poured together into a rather large glass and this was a bad Saturday night. On the couch, scented candles to try and lighten the ambiance of my life, unfortunately Yankee candles don't come in "WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU PLAYING AT" essence. I was going to drown the demons in my head from screaming into the night, Wine, Check! Vodka Check! and scented candles usually did the trick, usually!

I passed out, oblivious, I woke with my morning alarm puncturing my conscience dragging me out of a deep sleep, stinging eyes, I'm still groggy, way too groggy, what time is it?

The light streaming through my window, blinding me through half shut eyes, what the fuck?

I can't move! I'm trying to switch off the bedside alarm...but...I'm still on the couch, what's going on, it's, it's not the alarm clock...it's the fucking smoke detector, fuck! I sober up, coughing, spluttering, the light flooding into the flat isn't the morning, the curtains are ablaze and the fire seems instantly to suck the air from my lungs and then clarity...for a second...Like time just freezes for a microsecond and I remember...I'm on the floor and it's like those dreams when you try to scream and nothing comes out, you try to run but your legs are like cement and you suddenly wake up as if you've been thrown from a roof top but I know I'm not sleeping, this is real, this shit is real and I just can't yell out, heavy smoke engulfs the whole house and my eyes water, not from the smoke but with guilt, what have I done! what the hell have I done.

(FROM BEHIND SHEENA, A SMALL CHILD GHOST PREVIOUSLY HIDDEN FROM VIEW STEPS OUT INTO VIEW HOLDING SHEENA'S HAND, IN THE OTHER HAND SHE HOLDS A BURNT TEDDY BEAR)

**THE STAGE PLUNGES INTO DARKNESS AND THEN A SINGLE SPOT LIGHT SHINES ON A SOLITARY FIGURE DRESSED IN WHITE ON THE STAGE.
A YOUNG MAN SITS ALONE, HE DOESN'T STAND.**

FINAL SCENE SIX. BRIAN

Brian! (THE YOUNG MAN POINTS TO HIMSELF)

Look, we all die, one day, every single one of us. Some get there quicker, some take their time but none of us can escape the inevitable, but for some, death isn't the end. But this meeting here isn't about death, it's not really even about drink or drug addiction, it's about life, it's about choice, it's about the decisions we make, it's about waking up in the morning and looking ourselves in the mirror and carrying on. It's about living with our faults, it's about living with everyone else's faults and accepting who we are. Life isn't about regrets, looking back and wishing things should have been different, it's about accepting who you are and accepting what you've done, accepting what others have done and moving on. FUCK! life isn't meant to be easy, it's meant to test us.

I like to tell people who are willing to listen, that Life is like a computer game, for example take the simple platform game Donkey Kong, you've heard of Donkey Kong?

For those who don't know I'll give you a quick synopsis. You start off as a little dude, sorry ladies it was the early 80s, all the heroes back then were small dudes, it wasn't called sexism back in the 90s, it was just called..... the 1990's!

Anyhow this game is a platform game. Like any great journey or life itself we start off at the bottom, and even biologically that's almost true, close enough?, (points to his nether regions) you know what I mean.....the idea of the game is you have to rise the various levels to get to the end. You have to keep moving, there's a set path for you to follow, but you can't stand still and you can't deviate from the path. Gotta keep moving people! You'll come across obstacles that need crossing or in Donkey Kong's case those obstacles came in the shape of barrels and you needed to jump over said barrels. I loved that game but what consumed me was not how the game would end or even wondering what would be waiting for me when I finished, NO, what consumed me was what was in those barrels that keep dropping down? You see I always envisaged, even as a kid, those barrels were full of beer and some prick up above kept dropping them down, trying to tempt me, trying to trip me up, trying to end me!

And the point of this game, like life, was simple....1) avoid the obstacles 2) Climb the ladders and climb them as quickly as possible, just like social ladders where we're all trying to elevate ourselves from the shit show below. Look at me, I'm higher than you, I'm better than you! Still got to keep avoiding those barrels though! because one slip would either end your life or worst still send you hurtling back to the shit show below, the level it had taken an age to crawl out from and you'd have to start climbing those ladders all over again.

And the point of the game isn't really about getting to the highest level, it's about surviving as long as you can and if you make it to that top level you discover whose been throwing those bloody barrels of beer at you, trying to trip you up and finish you off. The maker himself! The main event! Donkey Kong. He'd be sitting at the very top looking down on everyone else, simply trying to make it as hard as possible for you to rise. Ok not exactly like life itself but, look, we're all on this journey, some won't make it! some will fall! and some will climb and some will say 'What's the point in this fucking game...I don't want to play anymore, hit me with the beer barrel monkey god!!!!!! I don't want to play this game no more.'

What I'm trying to say is that we're all different and we're all the same, the only difference between life and Donkey Kong is there's no reset switch when things go south (POINTING DOWN). One life that's it, done! Don't think any less of a person who falls and doesn't get back up, that's life!...But in Donkey Kong, the irony is if you ever get to the very top level you win a free life (said sarcastically).

Apologies if you're all waiting for that meaning of life moment...I'm truly sorry. If I'm really being honest I'm just as clueless to the meaning of life as everyone else in this room.

All I truly know is that addiction and alcoholism isn't really a choice thing, no one really chooses to be an alcoholic and no one in their right mind would choose to be a drug addict.

They say people are born addicted? I don't know? Was I born an alcoholic or did life turn me that way, was I always going to become an alcoholic no matter what I did in life? Was that part of the game I had to play, where I couldn't escape it, where alcoholism was already pre-written in my code and if you look at it that way, the only real choice that's left open to me is I can stop drinking or I can stop playing the game.

Is there a God? (shrug of the shoulders) Is there a point to any of this? (shrug of the shoulders) all I know is that life is over in a blink of an eye, appreciate what it is you have, try and understand people, try not to judge people, because what you may have grasped from all our stories is that any one of us can become addicted. If it's already written into our DNA we may all be addicted to something, we just don't know it yet because we haven't encountered what our triggers are. Now I don't need a special power to know what you're all thinking? Brian? What is the main trigger for addiction? Now you'll laugh at this, the main trigger for addiction is simply.....life itself!

Thank you for visiting our little meeting, keep living, keep playing the game.

THE END