

Think of England

by

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Jon Prisoner

Screw 1 (Male Prison Officer)

Screw 2 (Male Prison Officer)

One Female Screw

Prison Governor

Prison Chaplain

Mr Brown Prison Visitor

Mrs Fisher Prison Visitor

Government Minister

Men in suits

Judge (on a wheeled bench)

Mrs Prisoner Mother of Jon's son

Prisoner with red arm band

Prison cell with large hook in ceiling, bed, toilet. Area outside cell door where other action

takes place, table for hearings, desk with crucifix for chaplains office, wheeled bench/witness box.

(Jon handcuffed to a Screw, standing in front of another Screw who carefully changes out of screw uniform and into white coat and bow tie and flings a stethoscope around neck)

Doctor/Screw1. Right, name

Jon. Jon Prisoner.

Doctor/Screw1. (Looking at other screw) Prisoner?

Screw2. Yep, just believe it.

Doctor/Screw1. Take off your clothes then let's have this look at you.

Jon. Look Doctor, I've only just left this fucking place, do you really need to look at me that closely. I mean do you really take an interest in me, like you really care then.

Doctor/Screw1. Rules, you should know the procedure then. Take off your clothes.

Jon. (reluctantly does so)

Doctor/Screw1. Right.

(uses stethoscope) Breathe.

In. Out. Again.

Right, OK.

Bend Over. (peers up Jon's bum)

Jon. If you look a bit closer there's a tunnelling tool up there, it's got a big sharp shiny end for cutting through the crap we get in here.

Doctor/Screw1. Yes of course now let me look at the bottom of your feet.

Hands.

Mouth.

Jon. Yep, I've one of those too.

Doctor/Screw1. Well done. Open it, I want to look inside.

Jon. Dentists do that.

Doctor/Screw1. Yes, I want to look at the inside of your mouth.

Jon. Tested in here, last time, clear. Had no choice about that, doesn't interest you does it.

Doctor/Screw1. Speak to someone else about that, I'm only part time here. You're healthy, off you go.

Doctor/Screw1. (changes back to a screw uniform leaves)

(Screws pile in, throw Jon into the cell and on to the floor, hold him down and silently pull his clothes off, he resists, they leave him naked, lying on the cell floor, he covers himself with a blanket)

Screw1. (enters cell) Hello Jon, I see you're back with us and we're going to be looking after you. Don't explode, we know you.

I'm here to help you move back in, help you feel a bit better about being here, help you do your time. You're a bit of an expert here but things are changing, we have this policy to help you cons make the most of it, get it over with the minimum of aggravation to yourselves and us of course. There's no bullying, we pride ourselves in treating everyone equally, it's zero tolerance, but discipline is important, we are firm. So this is what we are about, what I'm about. I will be your named prison officer, we meet regularly, talk about what ever is troubling you, on your mind, things about the nick, that sort of thing. We could meet in-between if you wanted but we try to keep it to arranged meetings so if you've got something you'll have to remember it, write it down or something. But if it's a real emergency and I'm on duty and not too busy then it's a possibility that we could meet to discuss whatever the emergency is.

Jon. You're the new boy then.

Screw1. One of the things I'd like to start on is how you're dealing with being back in here so soon after the last time, you are the expert so perhaps you'll need to guide me in some of this. But I wondered if you'd like to talk about how you're feeling, just having arrived from court, I guess you're angry, cross, bitter, all those things. So, do you want to talk about it, is it too early, what are your thoughts?

Jon. I couldn't make this up if I wanted to. Bullshit. Your induction then. Do you take me for a fool or what, no don't answer that. You are right of course about me being an expert, an expert in knowing all you big boots and there's me not struggling in the slightest to see if anything's changed; has it bollocks.

You are now entering the totally changed and completely refurbished nick for the twenty first century, where we care for the mental health of all cons so much so that we ask them how they're feeling. How was the grey zone.

Bollocks.

I know a con trick when I see one.

Screw1. Come on Jon give us a chance, just for once maybe. We mean what we say, you know, OK it's a bit new but we are trying to make things better, we're enthusiastic about this.

Jon. And I suppose you are.

Screw1. We do mean it so what more can I say to convince you. Perhaps you'd like to talk about the court, the sentence, get it off your chest sort of, let's deal with the right and wrong now shall we?

Jon. Bollocks.

Screw1. It's about coming to terms with what's happened, sooner rather than later, we know that a nick full of festering cons is a nick that's waiting to blow and none of us want that now do we.

Jon. Well I might just want that, you know.

Screw1. OK Jon, can you admit to me now that your being here is reasonable, that you did the crime.

Jon. I'm not going to discuss that with you Mr screw. It's my conscience I battle with. As if admission will make me feel better more like, I'm not falling for this of guilt thing, remorselessness is not legally binding – did you know that. Not legally fucking binding. You could tell your mates, have a good laugh, tell the tabloids, tell the fucking government too if you like. Yea, justice does the trick, guilty, admits it, so we got it right after all, well done us, prison works so we don't have to do much about it, don't have to bother too much with it then, don't have to think about it too much, leave it then it's good and sound. Good and sound. Let them rot in hell, throw the key and on and on and on and on. But no early release for me if you had your way, cause there's no confession.

Would I pretend guilt if I'd not done it, would I keep quiet if I'd done it, and if I told the truth would I be believed It's pride man and would you ever know. Actors all of us.

So now you can run off to record all this nonsense.

The prisoner admits to doing the crime. Or does he. Don't know. I've been stitched up too many times not to recognise it like some rampaging parent in a nightmare.

Please leave me alone and bugger off there's a good man.

Please.

No buts.

Screw1. But.

Jon. There you are I said no buts. Just leave me alone.

Screw1. All right but remember this is how we work now. I'm going to go, give you some time to think it over and settle in, you know how it is and what we expect of you. Settle in yea. (leaves)

Jon. (shouts after) Go tell your mates, have a good laugh, come and have a good fucking gawp.

You're one of them now.

Nothing else to do then.

(sleeps fitfully)

(door opens, Governor looks in, throws in a cardboard box, he then throws down/draws a white line, Jon crawls into the box)

Jon. (fiercely, with conviction) Don't do that, I said don't do that.

(Screws, one with fire extinguisher, and other Prisoner with flashing red arm-band enter)

Screw2. Lie down you bastard, get your arse open, you've had this coming to you for a long time, you know you have you bastard come on let me get it in.

Red Arm Band. You're behind me.

He's behind me, you're behind me.

Oh yes he is, and, oh no he isn't.

Screws (together) Oh no he isn't and oh yes he is and oh no he isn't and oh yes he is, isn't, is, isn't.

Screw2. Bend over you trusted Trustee (whilst attaching electrical cables to Jon, then gets fire extinguisher which he tries to insert into backside of red arm prisoner who screams then legs it)

Jon. (out of box, balances wobbly along the white line)

I think I've got to laugh about this, act my best, does anyone know how to laugh?

Screw1. Where's the bloody switch, give this bastard a roasting, ah I see.

(all lights out)

(Jon asleep in his cell, bright lights on)

Jon. What!

Bloody hell, it's still night time.

The bastards.

(light goes off)

(snoring)

light goes on)

Bloody hell, it's still night time, the bastards, the bastards, the bloody bastards; all of them, every one last sodding screw

Bastards turn it off.

(top of voice) Torturers. (covers self with blanket)

This is hopeless.

(jumps off bed, head-butts wall)

Damn and damn again.

This is hell.

(hits wall with fist)

Damn one more time.

(changes position, bed to chair, one end of bed to other)

Look if I wanted to kill myself I would have a long time ago

(changes position back).

What!

(change)

What is it you say.

(change)

No! That is not true.

(change)

I do not think like that.

And no, I never said that.

(change)

Of course not you bloody idiot.

Do you really think I would have done that, of course not.

(change)

OK.

Please listen.

OK.

It started early.

Did I want to be born.

Did I have a choice.

Na, who would have asked who?

Someday in sometime I was like that, always like that, I had no choice. It was like, sort of like waking up one day and realising what I'd got was me, it crept up on me like a honest person, yes an honest person, in the night. In the mirror was myself illuminated like a long shadow in the early morning.

It's in my head, I don't know what's in there until it sort of arrives, just pops in. Pop. Do I know where it comes from.

(change)

Pop!

(change)

O my god this is doing my head in, here then there.

This is so boring, what else am I to do. Go on, tell me.

What on earth am I to do

(change)

Get tired speaking to you.

(change)

And I never said it's all their fault, I never said I did it because of you, then, even though you think I think nothing and I think I think too much and, well hey presto, I think I do. Thoughts that I don't own, well perhaps I do else where else do they come from. I must own them, these thoughts, they are in my head. From me; where else I tell myself.

It's a dodgy belief, them bastards.

Even so I own what I own, own what I do, own being in here. I'm in here aren't I?

And I never said to mean to kill them, never would I do that, couldn't and shouldn't, shouldn't and couldn't. Some control and I know you think I haven't with good reason in here so it's what you expect.

(hand up, takes an in between position)

No. I don't need to know what you think about that, it will only confuse the here and now.

And finally, let me say again. I did not kill them. Look at the records but you won't 'cause you wish to believe what you believe what you believe to believe, records in the appropriate place.

He died, so, a street wise drug fuelled to think they'd never get caught gang of kids, kids who did not even think of the witnesses some of whom at least spoke up to their witness, identified the little,

yes no more than half way to adulthood, little bastards who are inside like me, so go look at the record if you dare.

She died in her sleep in the night on her own I grant you. But these places are locked, to keep them in. Why would I do that anyway, she was on her last bend, confused as a pile of pins, to die soon.

So. What do you say to all that.

Nothing.

Then go to sleep, sod you.

You know nothing about me, who I am, what I am, all that nonsense. What you see is not who I am or should or could lead you to one, make assumptions about or believe or could should ought to think. Do I know what I think, do I know what I think, before I speak, so do I have beliefs.

No. That's not correct.

For one, I know who I am. Know where I am.

For two, I have many experiences.

For three, God knows what three is.

Yes, those things I have done, my experience, Proud of them, show me what I believe, ah, this is bollocks, what is happening here.)

Screw! Where are you. (bangs on cell door)

Screw!

You bastard, when I want you you don't turn up for hours but when I don't want you you come and rile me, stamp on my face, screw

dignity, take some satisfaction in you own dysfunctional life from pushing me down further. Bastard. Show us you are sicker than we think, go on.

Now there's something I think and believe and have experienced oh yes. I've thought it before so maybe just maybe it is a belief but who knows.

(to hand) If you were a real mirror I'd smash you to bits, that would bring the bastard screw wouldn't it.

Screw!

I think I'm about to cut myself, relieves the boredom.

Dying of thinking about thinking.

Screw!

Well I'm not going to smash my hand, believe me, it's precious, scratch my skin, pick my nose, hold a knife, throw a dart, fiddle with my balls, you know the score.

Screw, where are you. (bangs door)

(door opens)

Screw1. Jon, come on, what's all this then, doing some of that thinking again, I know it's your first week back but it's no new experience is it. Done it all before so why the fuss.

Set an example, help the others through or something do your time lad and give us an easy time. You know the score.

Jon. Look at me, I'm bored, what do you see, a bored man if screwy eyes see. Look I've been here all day, banged up, no exercise, no reading stuff, no TV, no-one to talk to except you, when's it going to be sorted screw?

Think of me, I bleed, bleeds as you, breathes, warmth and human kindness you know don't you.

Screw1. Warmth and human kindness my arse, you, what did you do you asshole. Warmth and kindness, how in the name of God can someone like you have that, I ask you.

Jon. Changed your tune now haven't we mister.

Screw1. No matter,

Jon. So I cut myself and the blood is warm, see my breath, I've children, they love me.

Screw1. If you loved them you wouldn't be in here would you, again and again.

Jon. I'm in here because of them, ah Jesus Christ you've heard all this before thousands of times, and you still don't believe it do you.

No. You don't I can see, hear, feel, ah!

And you'll vote Tory, think blacks are second class several times a day and you'd beat us all every day as custodian of public revenge.

So who knows, but I don't trust you so piss off and leave me alone.

Screw1. OK Jon, what is it you want then?

Jon. Association. Books. TV. Something to do. Is that too difficult to understand.

I'm going out of my head, and it's all because of you screw.

You know and I know it's my right, the governor needs to know about this doesn't he or is it she nowadays. So, and you know what's coming, I request he or she pays me a visit immediately. My basic human rights rat-brain have been summarily withdrawn by you and I want them back. And tell the governor I need writing paper as I wish to write to the inspector about this, you know the score screw.

Screw1. You are in solitary damn it man, the governor authorised it, you know that.

Jon. But not in an empty fucking cell.

Screw1. Wait there.

Jon. Where would I go, I suppose I could die, leave this place change the universe for ever.

Screw1. (leaves, loudly banging door)

Jon. This bloody life, why do I do it, why (bangs fists on wall) arrgh!! Bloody fucking cuntin'g idiot .

Judge (on court bench wheeled by marching screws)

Jon. (laughs)

Screws. (roughly stand Jon up)

Judge. Jon Prisoner. I have read all the reports, you have led a remarkably wicked life, you are a remarkably wicked man, you do not seem to take life seriously, in fact you seem to joke about everything. You have been in this court many times before and have learnt nothing. You have expressed no remorse. You have laughed at me, you have laughed in this court. That is your real crime.

Jon. (laughs)

Screw2. (digs Jon in ribs with elbow)

Judge. You appear to be oblivious to the considerable effect your crime has on its victims. It is therefore my duty to sentence you to...

(judge is wheeled off by marching screws)

Jon. Bloody hell, what an idiot, never learns.

Screw1. (opens door) Jon, here you are, (throws in a book) that'll do you good.(leaves, bangs cell door, looks through spy hole)

Jon. Screw, I know you're looking at me,
you think it's funny throwing me a fucking bible.

I know you can see me.

Piss off! Screw. Screw. Screw.

(to hand) Mirror mirror on my hand, am I conscious or am I not.

Well! Am I.

Not able to keep this up for much longer, not something I do well
this spoken stuff, not a natural. Give me the fists, give me the
flesh, the aim of the eye a punch to the head with the fist on my
arm. Learnt before I ever came in here, before I could talk before I
went to school. Survival, ends meet, let them know I'm equal, look
these fucking custodians of revenge straight in the face,
equal in the eye,
even if I die
in the process.

Then I've won

Will they know

Will I

So what's the point

What is the point

Feel better I suppose.

(Judge is wheeled in pushed by screws)

Judge. We've had enough of you, so, to make an example you
will remain in prison. You are no stranger to prison and, you are a
burden to society, you must think carefully about fighting in that
place, make the most of it by not fighting the other prisoners, the
system, those who are charged with looking after you. there are
advantages to be taken in that place, There should be no room for
this brutalisation your records suggest you are capable of. It is up

to you, it is your responsibility, keep a low profile or whatever it is that is necessary and you just might get out early with good behaviour. If I see you back here...

(Judge is wheeled off by the screws)

Jon. Don't I get my say, (mocking) ought not to say it. Burden on society, only a few hundred pounds a week and the rest.

Now, hand, mirror, can we do it differently, doyah think?

(screws outside cell)

Screw 1. That fucking Jon Prisoner is mad, he can't listen, talks to himself all the time and swears and tells me it's all rubbish.

Screw 2. I've heard some rubbish in my time. Do his stretch with the minimum of fuss and trouble, bollocks. Mad's not the word, why doesn't he top himself, can't do ourselves not in the job description.

(shakes head and whistles)

Screw1. Seriously, you don't think he's a risk, I mean of actually doing it.

Screw2. No, he's just angry, too up his own arse to do himself in, I know these cons, it's the wimps and quiet ones. No, he'd rather do one of us than himself.

(both leave to wheel in the Judge, followed by Governor who remains in the background))

Judge. The second crime.

(Several screws pile in, including a female screw, taunting, berating, goading Jon)

Jon. You bastards, if you want a fight here I am and I give you what you deserve, come on you bastards.

(they beat him up, he is left lying still. The female screw kneels next to Jon feeling for a pulse)

Female Screw. There's no pulse here, you idiots, stand back it's resuscitation time, call the medics.

Screw2. I wouldn't do that. You don't know where he's been, I mean, who knows what people like him get up to in a place like this then.

(she starts resuscitation, blowing in his mouth etc, whilst she is doing that Jon's arm slowly raises over her shoulder, female screw suddenly pulls herself away)

Female screw. You bastard. You bloody bastard. He tried to snog me, the bastard, ugh!

He put his tongue in my mouth! Ugh!! The disgusting bastard.

Screw2. (directly to female screw) Did I say anything. (shakes head)

(the other screws lay into Jon again)

Judge. Assaulting prison officers, 'causing grievous bodily harm to two of them, a sexual assault on a female prison officer, who has

not returned to work since the attack, understandably suffering from a stress disorder.

Jon. Bloody trauma for me you old git. Do you know what happened to me.? Ruptured my left testicle, bruises everywhere, eighty percent of my body, jumped on my ankle and broke it, five teeth broken, broken finger, and who started it, did you ask that, did anyone ask that, no you did not, no they did not. No one is interested in important little details like that are they.

Judge. Enough of that. It is in your control whether I see you again, I hope not. Four more years, Take him down .

Jon. Na, different judge I hope.

Judge. (wheeled off)

(Jon left alone in cell, door banged shut)

Screw1. (opens cell door)

Here's books, writing paper, pen, no TV. You're in solitary for another two weeks so make the most of it. And don't keep fucking shouting or ringing the bell as no one will return for at least two hours. And we don't think you're a suicide risk so you'll get no sympathy from us, no surprise there I expect after what you did to us you bastard, you deserve all you get. Rat in the piano, you're mad.

Look at you.

A failure, hopeless, what a future, in here for years to come.

Jon. Empathy one of your skills then, years of training. I do not have a mirror in here otherwise I'd take a look to see this failure, this hopelessness, and what, another four years, now fuck off. And take these fucking things with you and put them where the fucking sun don't shine. (shoves the books at the screw)

Screw1. Fucking idiot.

(leaves)

Chaplain. (knock on cell door)

Please may I come in.

Jon. Who the fuck here asks to come in, noncer, pathetic squalk.

Chaplain. Hello, my name is Michael, I'm the visiting Prison Chaplain, I've been asked to see you.

Jon. Who.

Chaplain. Michael I'm the

Jon. No! Who asked you to see me.

Chaplain. Yes, of course, yes the prison governor

Jon. No he didn't.

Chaplain. Well not personally but, all right I'm sorry, I'll go if it's not convenient.

Jon. Hang on, stay a while. It's a set up really, the system not you, I suppose you're real. I'm in solitary, shouting my mouth off, they'd say I was making threats and demanding my rights. You're

here 'cause they gave me a bible, thought it was funny, then you turn up. What's that about then.

Chaplain. I suppose so. So, I know you are Jon and had four years added to your sentence for attacking some screws.

Jon. Prison officers to you.

Chaplain. Why?

Jon. Well you're one of them sort of

Chaplain. I don't think so, we both know what screw means so shall we leave it at that and I guess the screws had a good go at you and that the other party probably started it is my guess.

Jon. Party's the right word, there were four of them bloody determined to put their large purpose built boots into me

Chaplain. So why the er

Jon. Snogging the woman screw?

Chaplain. Yes.

Jon. What d'ya think.

Chaplain. I've no idea, I mean it wasn't sex I suppose, or a secret crush, no surely

Jon. Please come on give me some credibility, no just an opportunity, put my point of view in you could say, a sort of last laugh with lots of tongue.

No, this is not why you've come to see me, you're not the usual god squad and not even old, why's that?

Chaplain. All sorts of reasons, to help, contribute to the restoration of justice perhaps, someone to listen, spiritual things maybe, God if you like.

Jon. No gods and I'm not the apologising sort.

Chaplain. Don't worry it's an occupational hazard, I try not to apologise too much, I guess there's a sort of balance there.

Anyway, is there anything I can do to help, let's start there shall we?

Jon. What can you do, there's no changing this, you're the same size as the rest of us, even if the governor was on my side nothing much would change, it's the screws. I mean you can't slip me out of here can you, slip me a master key, organise a helicopter, get me some blow, a phone in my cell, no of course not. Make the most of it while it lasts they seem to think, or so they tell me, come on lad, do your time like every one else. I want to be out of this hell hole. You would if you were me.

Chaplain. I've thought about what it must be like but of course never will experience it I guess.

Jon. Careful. I don't suppose you touch wood do you.

Chaplain. I forget sometimes.

Jon. Well don't imagine too much and don't tempt fate, I've met all sorts in here including a few of your sort, children mostly.

Chaplain. Out of this hell hole?

Jon. You've got to have some determination to survive in here, bravado and testosterone, ok, but nevertheless it's a struggle to not drown in your own sometimes – if you know what I mean. Shall we talk about death?

Chaplain. Why not if you wish, yes we can.

Jon. Right, we'll do that then.

Chaplain. OK, now or later.

Jon. Now is best, I've some things to say.

I'd like to talk about god, what that might mean, you know listen to what you've got to say, my prediction is you will conclude it is an intensely personal issue.

And I'd like to talk about equality, justice, fairness, evil institutions, subjugation, masturbation, consubstantiation and transubstantiation if we must. Fighting the system, not giving a monkeys about right or wrong, you know the usual sorts of things we cons want to talk about.

Chaplain. Well, I don't know what the usual sorts of things are but some of those might be interesting if in context I suppose and anyway I think you are taking the piss a bit.

Jon. I'm sorry, this is just anger and pleasure, don't get me wrong I'd like to talk about all those things and more. Even if you're a vicar, basic social stuff, a few words here, a few words there, express yourself, doesn't really matter what.

This must happen to you a lot.

Chaplain. Yea.

Jon. Especially those in solitary.

Chaplain. Especially those in solitary.

Jon. You know then it's hell generally but more hellish here.

Chaplain. One of my specialist subjects then.

Jon. Why did you come and see me.

Chaplain. I was asked by your screw, they were worried they'd pushed you too far.

Jon. They don't care, they'd push me to my death if they thought they'd get away with it. I reckon they reckon they could get away with it, but realise one of their mates would squeal. No conspiracies then.

Or maybe they are worried, trying to cover themselves, involve the vicar and he can be implicated too in whatever happens, eschatological, scatological, yes?

Chaplain. Maybe but that won't happen. surely.

Jon. Na no sweat. Off you go then.

Chaplain. See you again?

Jon. Perhaps.

Chaplain. Well I'd like to see you again so shall we make an arrangement. Tomorrow?

Jon. Right.

Chaplain. Bye then. (leaves uncertainly but doesn't close the cell door)

Jon. Na, no sweat.

(pushes cell door closed with his foot)

But not yet.

Chaplain. (returns to listen outside cell door)

Jon. Alone again, obviously.

Progress. Do my time. Behave myself. Find people to talk to.

Make the most of it. Progress.

Not really.

Progress of what, from what, what!

Experience is a certain and specific history, my history, turn me off
– the universe changes, my history is rather heavy, too bloody
heavy.

So what do I do, yearn for it hopelessly, regret its passing.

Think about therapy for the loss.

Na.

Do I really believe in a god, something to watch over me, protect
me, false nostalgia, mummy, daddy, bastards who beat the shit out
and smiled all the time, did the rat exist?

Na.

Was I frightened?

Yes.

Did I know what a rat was.

Na.

Too young.

Did they tell me.

No.

Did it frighten me.

Bloody did.

(chaplain creeps away)

Haunted.

Anyway. So what do they think, make it boring enough, boring equals bonkers, equals barking, woof woof. Mad, they think, throw him in solitary, make it hurt, primitive and bloody minded, animals, free range in the bloody arse of their skulls. Do they think about the effect, is it based on evidence I wonder, but hold on do people think like this.

Na.

But then,

I suppose,

Na, I've nothing to suppose.

Sleep time.

(goes to sleep)

Screws. (file in with whips attached as tails)

(Jon suddenly sits up, eyes wide and fixed)

(together as chorus) do that again we whip you again, do that again we whip you again, do that again so help us god we will kill you again and again and again, bloody see if we don't you ungrateful undeserving twat.

And we can see everything, we're not blind, we can see so don't you ever ever do that again.

Jon. Please, no, not that. Please no.

(struggles on his bed, wakes, sits bolt upright, shaking)

Shit.

Screw1. (bangs on cell door)

Come on Jon, time for exercise.

(they both walk up and down)

Jon. This is not doing me any good, no association, social intercourse, joining in, sucking the nipple of human kindness.

Screw1. You get that in here?

Jon. Do you understand anything?

Screw1. What!

Are you crazy and mad, you are in solitary man, you beat up all my mates and you tell me it's no good for you. You have no choice take your punishment like the man monster you are. You know what time means so fucking do it like everyone else.

Jon. I'm talking to myself here, this is not a conversation, you'd be well behaved and practised to ignore me, block up your ears along

with all the other impossible things you and your mates do in this god forsaken hell hole.

I shall name them, no, even better I shall name them and then describe them.

The first is ignorance, you ignore our needs, you are experts at ignoring us as people, experts at repressing our emotions by controlling your own except of course when you beat us up.

Screw1. I did not.

Jon. No, of course not. You is the collective pronoun, dumbo, all of you then. As I was saying controlling our emotions, it used to be our motions too. As I was saying, controlling our emotions by controlling your own, don't quite take the accolade for that. And giving some thought to what you think about us, you, the singular you, the real you, Mister Screw, what do you think, eh? No, I reckon you think nothing much, it's your screw mates here tell you what to think.

Do you.

No this is not a conversation so I'm not expecting a reply, perhaps a little reflection. Do you think, now reflect, do you think it is understandable, put yourself in my shoes, that I, we, us, get angry in here, have no choice but to join in with the brutality, we don't manufacture it it is between us. Are any of us in control of it, the answer is no and no and no again but you should be.

We each play a part, handed out in part not least by history. How could we start again, good question this, start again by your lot freeing us and starting again. Simple I reckon but then I would say that as I have the most to gain, what would you gain, not a lot I reckon.

The civilised state looks after those who are weak and vulnerable, and that includes me, and you for that matter, us here, and kills people just because they've killed someone else, I mean murder just happens. So they kill, well I mean the state used to. The point is, should this be a conversation and, should I be asking your opinion, which I'm not.

The point is...

I don't know what the bloody fucking point is. This is madness.

However we are reasonable people, we have no choice.

Why do you think you and your mates beat me up, no, it doesn't matter who it was. It's the collective pronoun again.

They thought I needed a lesson, no they didn't think, it was animal revenge. The only lesson you guys have ever given, the only lesson you know, so you put your boots in me, the hardest part of your being. And more. Probably incensed that I had the resolve to fight back and your words, not take my punishment like a man.

Screw1. But.

Jon. No. Hang on. This is not a conversation, remember, spare me a little dignity or have you forgotten what we were talking about just now but I suppose you disagreed or perhaps don't know what you think until you open that mouth and no it is not an invitation to for you to join in.

It was an emotional response, bloody angry,
and the kiss, no more than a statement.

Please...

I tell you just an opportunity and a primitive response, just like yours.

Take me back now I've finished.

Screw1. You really are a mad bastard aren't you.

Mad.

Yep, fucking mad. You complain about not having association and then want to go back to your cell before your time. All right back you go, make the most of it then.

(back to cell, Jon slumps on bed, Governor with screw2 comes to take a look)

Screw2. Come on Jon, look sharp, Governor's come to see you, come on stand up, let's have some discipline here.

Governor. It's all right, stay where you are, we can talk just as well with you on your bed. Now, you asked to see me, what do you want.

Jon. Well thank you for taking the trouble to see me at last, are you going to be safe with only one screw? Not a peace offering then. So you know what it's all about I reckon.

Governor. I know what my officers tell me but I want to hear it from you. We've met before many times, similar situations, you've got a few more years here. Yes.

Jon. A few more years, the high and fucking mighty governor taking the piss, what is the world coming to. You know as well as all these slobs that I'm here for life and more besides if there's more of the same from your screws.

What is the world coming to.

Governor. We don't know that, parole perhaps, remission, you know the score. Anyway, how may I help you.

Jon. You know the rules about solitary, so where's my books, TV even, understanding from your officers, go on tell me that.

Governor. I understand you refused to have anything of the sort, and if its been reported correctly told the officer to put the books offered up his bottom. Is that correct.

Jon. And you believe them.

Governor. You refused to accept the books, pens paper after you had asked for them.

Jon. Did they tell you the first book thrown into my cell was a bible with the words 'that will do you good.'

No I don't expect so, it would have been a matter of pride to refuse the books. There. Think about it.

I changed my mind, but at least I'm slightly less stubborn, it used to be worse. I'm allowed to change my mind. Did they tell you that.

Governor. (shakes head)

Jon. No, I thought not.

And.

I don't have to apologise or brown tongue anyone and damn it I'm not going to relinquish everything and do it entirely your way am I.

Governor. So you want some books of your choice and your TV?

Jon. Rules is rules.

Governor. It will be done. We will leave now. (they do)

Jon. I'll give them a week.

(Jon slumps, head in hands)

Screw1. (from outside) Lights two minutes.

Jon. (climbs onto bed, sleeps, tosses and turns)

(Governor returns tip toeing, holds sheet of paper)

(Jon sits up suddenly, wide staring eyes watching Governor)

Governor. Jon, look at this paper closely, it is you. See the finely drawn pictures of your life, the beatings, the piano, that rat, the cellar - cold, and the rest microscopically written in a fine hand, your loves, your losses, all there, it is you, no-one else had a life like that. Concentrate hard. Look at it, become it, hold on, hard.

Now feel good, the bad bits are not so bad, the awful bits not so awful, you really feel good about it all...

(after long pause Governor screws paper into ball which is thrown into the corner)

Screwed up well and truly.

Jon. (shouts at top of voice) You should have buried that.

(head in hands, sounds of despair, etc returns to sleep)

(morning)

(Jon gets up, washes etc, gets large knife from some hiding place)

This is the day

Well another day.

(knock on cell door)

Come in Vicar.

Chaplain. (cheerfully) All right if I come in?

Jon. What do you want. No it's not what you want it's what I want.

Vicar, it's a rotten world and your world has gone rotten all of a sudden, no torture I'm afraid so no martyrdom for you, it's not because I don't like you or anything like that. I thought about having some of the others but they would have been rather boring, no conversation, so I suppose it's a sort of compliment but little comfort to you I guess, however, my apologies to start with. And you know it's not personal but I've got to get some recognition for

my position here. I was put in solitary days ago, I asked reasonably politely for books and a TV, have I got them yet, of course not.

Now.

I know this is going to make it worse, another stretch in this place will be a test between them or me going mad but if rules were really rules and they treated us all the same this wouldn't have happened - wonky I know. So I hope this won't hurt you too much. Personally that is.

Chaplain. You're not serious, where will it get you, more time in solitary, more time on top of your sentence, hostage taking is treated very seriously here.

Jon. Shut up, I'm going through with this and don't you try to negotiate with me. I suggest you pray or something you consider helpful like co-operate.

Chaplain. You would say that, but as it's really the other way round, as I see it...

Jon. Stop! Stop! I said you do not try to negotiate and that sounds like the beginning of one, so fucking shut up or I might have to hit you a bit or worse, I've got a knife.

Chaplain. That would only make it worse.

Jon. For you.

Chaplain. Maybe, but for you, a big hike up to murder or GBH, don't forget who I am and the power of death and all that, give it some thought, consider what I might do.

(gets up, leaves) Too late.

Jon. Bollocks. What a prat..

(sits, head in hands)

(screws pile in and beat him up)

(clinic or hospital room, Jon bandaged etc, screw standing by)

Governor. (enters) This is very serious, the stuff of stupidity and infinite regress, if you continue to be violent to us we will follow the rules, we will not be violent to you. You know what that means, it means your time in here will go on and on, maybe you will die in here.

Jon. Can I speak? Of course I can.

Governor. No.

Jon. No? You don't know what infinite regress means, opposing forces?

Governor. Silence, this will stop, I'll simply walk out.

Jon. The second one today then.

Governor. What.

Jon. Doesn't matter.

Governor. No more. I'll speak to you in a different place when you're prepared to listen.

(starts to leave)

Jon. Opposing forces both think they are right

(governor leaves)

But not with this bullying brown paper bag of screws, and when did you show concern or even notice this causality, these injuries, as yourself or anyone else. I suppose, how did they happen, oh yes, he did it himself, bloody stupid man. I did it myself defending myself so that's all right, my fault, just trying to limit what could have been a dangerous situation, preventing more hurt.

Screw1. Come on Jon, no trouble now, back to your cell and please be quick we haven't got all day, you know the score.

Jon. Bloody right we haven't but that's all right then 'cause you were decent enough to stick a please in there, forgotten your lines then.

Left right left right left right. (limps out of clinic)

(back in cell, with governor and screws)

Governor. Right. Jon Prisoner, let's try and do this right this time. I have to consider what action to take following a series of assaults you have made on prison officers in the last week. You were put into solitary as a result of hitting an officer in the face.

Jon. Bloody ugly he was and still is, you've got to admit it, take a look, (points to a screw) that one.

Governor. I was about to say that you have to hear what I've got to say before having your say, but clearly you are not able to achieve that simple request so I will have to end this, again, will you ever learn.

Jon. Hang about.

Governor. Not until you face up to your responsibilities and listen to what we've got to say to you, you will listen, you can do that you know.

Jon. Infinite regress.

Governor. OK. The ball is in your court, surely you see that?

Jon. OK. How about just you and me, we have a gentle chat with out your bully boys watching.

Governor. Rules and policies.

Jon. Bigger them then, you can change them, go on.

Governor. I'm going. (leaves)

Jon. Well we'll have to do this sometime. Off you go then, go on.

Right you two, here I am in solitary. Right left right left, (Jon feigns marching but with a limp)

(screws leave)

(knock on cell door)

Jon. Mr Chaplain it must be you, come on in please,

(chaplain enters) you're the only one to knock but then I've told you that already I expect.

Screw2. (in doorway) I'll be just outside, shout if you need us.

Chaplain. Thank you, I'll be all right, please close the door this is private. Thank you.

(screw closes door)

Jon. Thank you. No, I mean it, and I won't try to repeat what happened last time this time, sorry for that I was desperate. You did the right thing, and it wouldn't work would it you'd never be a real hostage and I let you go so I'd probably let you go a second time

Chaplain. And a third time. I expect I'd just walk and I somehow think you'd do nothing, I don't even think you are capable of all this violence they say you are, I think you are soft and vulnerable, proud retaliation is all you are capable of. Tell me.

Jon. OK vicar on my side then.

Chaplain. Well not necessarily but give me time and a little effort, I maybe

Jon. Effort.

Chaplain. We need to talk properly, that's the effort.

Jon. Go on.

Chaplain. No, not me, I'm going to listen, you talk, you make the effort, and no god.

Jon. OK.

Chaplain. I'm listening.

Jon. Perhaps I'll pay it back one day.

Chaplain. No need but come on start man.

Jon. (to audience)

I told him about the rat, if I lifted the lid the rat would gobble me up, attack me, lick me, bite me, get inside for the juicy bits, And I told him about the cellar, the beatings, the friends, their games, the secrets.

He listened.

Chaplain. That's good, I'm going now, come to my place tomorrow for the next instalment, I'll arrange it.

(Jon and Chaplain exit)

(chaplain's office)

Chaplain. (reading from book)

Visit the speechless sick

And still converse

with groaning wretches.

(puts book down)

Ah Jon, come in sit down there, let me do this a moment. (practices laying on of hands)

(screw1 with Jon knock on door)

Come in.

Screw1. (enters with Jon) Vicar here he is, in you go.

I think I'd better stay.

Chaplain. There's no need thank you, please return in an hour
thank you.

Screw1. I have to wait out side, Governors orders, so that's what I
have to do, thank you sir.

Chaplain. All right, I'll call you when we've finished.

Screw1. Yes sir. (closes door)

Chaplain. Thank you for coming Jon, sit down there and let me
read something to you. It's not the bible.

(chaplain sits, Jon remains standing, chaplain reads from book)

Visit the speechless sick

And still converse

With groaning wretches

And your task shall be

With all the fierce endeavour

Of your wit

To enforce the pained impotent to smile.

There you are what do you think of that.

Jon. You think I'm a groaning wretch.

Chaplain. No. Not me personally but I expect there are many here
who would say so. I believe you are groaning in anger, spite,
vindictiveness and so on. I think you're a sort of wretch as being in
here must be wretched, impossible at times and must tax the soul,
ah spirit, you know, to death, whatever you call it, of any one.

Jon. Yep.

Chaplain. Anyway, so I thought I'd read it to set the scene so to speak. Please sit down

Jon. (sits) And who wrote it?

Chaplain. No idea, probably out of context, I read it in a book of quotations and was so struck so forgot to look at the author, or perhaps did and forgot the name.

Jon. Can I have a look?

Chaplain. Of course.

Jon. (takes book, reads, whilst Jon reads chaplain goes around the back and start his blessing, picks up stole, kisses it etc)

Visit the speechless sick

And still converse

With growing wretches

And your task shall be

With all the fierce endeavour

Of your wit

To enforce the pained impotent to smile.

Is that what you think, me as impotent and smiling will do the trick.

Hey what are you doing.

Chaplain. Just a little blessing.

Jon. It's informed consent with me, how would I know to be different if I didn't know you did it.

Chaplain. Yes of course, my apologies, just a little something I thought I could do. And yes will smiling do the trick, how would I know but I imagine it might, I know when it has.

And no, of course not how would I know anyway. You are impotent in here, I mean you're imprisoned, the walls, the locks, the rules, the brutality, the attitude, all to make you a better human being.

Jon. That's subversive.

Chaplain. Yes and no.

Yes, the answer is as I described it.

And no, if you're asking me if it works then I've got to say define what works means.

Some individuals here just keep their heads down, do their time, leave, often come back in some shape or form but don't try to do anything about the system as you could call it, then there are others

Jon. Like me.

Chaplain. Like you, who give themselves a hard time, chronically fester with boiling anger and rage, fighting, hostage taking, spending time in solitary.

Jon. That's me.

Chaplain. That's you but there's more so tell me more about the more, please.

Jon. Your task to make me smile?

Chaplain. Perhaps, inside would be good to start with. Yes I'd like to think of you ending up smiling.

Jo. OK.

Chaplain. Now, about the more, the spirit inside struggling to be heard, let's hear it.

Jon. Not easy, I mean we've met a couple of times before, didn't do too well you might say. I'm on the spot and it's not comfortable.

Chaplain. More difficult than using your fists.

Jon. I've spent many hours in solitary with an imaginary mirror. Controlling, threatening, thinking, exasperating, planning, it has done me no good. I always end up in a treacle of powerlessness, like the real punishment is just that. I know I've got to do my time but they bloody well don't make it any fucking easier. I demanded to see the governor but he just walked out.

Chaplain. Why'd he do that?

Jon. I kept shouting cause he wouldn't listen just went on about the bloody rules, on and on, what were you saying about the rules being constrained, well it's more, it's bullying and it sucks.

Chaplain. Well we ain't going to change them, this place, society, government, call it what you like. Believes in the rules and there are some of course who want to throw away the key and leave you to rot. In a way you have to accept that whether you, or I, even the screw out there, think it wrong, we won't change it over night.

Jon. But it's giving in.

Chaplain. What is?

Jon. If I do the rules.

Chaplain. No more beatings.

No more solitary.

No more chats with me, maybe.

Jon. Bollocks.

Chaplain. Time is nearly up, we need to meet again to talk about what next.

Jon. What next?

Chaplain. What you do next of course.

Jon. To do what?

Chaplain. Do your time. Have your dignity. What else do you want, tell me.

Jon. To think about it all again, to think by myself calmly, not to have people telling me what to do, what not to do, to do what I want to do.

Chaplain. Jon, I do the listening.

Jon. Yes.

Chaplain. So you can join in.

Jon. Join in.

Chaplain. Of course with the other speechless sick.

Jon. Right, off you go.

Chaplain. Tomorrow the

Jon. Go. Go.

Chaplain. OK.. (leaves)

Jon. I'm the judge, jury and high executioner. No tabloids in here
thank you very much.

Well what do you make of that, what do you see.

(different voice) A poor fucking beleaguered man, who is stupid,
vulnerable, proud, frightened to face the future, frightened,
frightened to talk, to listen, take any advice from where ever it
comes, any friendship, any comfort, bloody idiot.

(bangs head against wall)

Arrgh. That was hard.

(door crashes open, in pile screws, followed by Governor who
stands watching, they beat him then leave, followed by Governor)

(groaning) What was that for you bastards.

I thought, ugh, ugh... arghh...

I thought.

Think, come on think!

Then they return, do it again,

(the screws and Governor return and beat him again)

beat me some more,

beat me again,

and again,

beat me differently,

beat me with feeling,

beat me with style,

beat me with concentration,

beat me with guile.

Do they hold off, do they tease me,

tease me to squeeze some extra drop of terror, some extra drop of
life, death's contribution.

What determines what happens next,

(screws and Governor leave)

how is this written,

how spoken,

who speaks of it?

How is it to end.

(moves body, clearly in pain) Oh, arrgh.

Come on Jon, go to sleep, go to sleep you idiot,

just go to sleep will you..

(he goes to sleep)

(Mrs F. is shown into the cell)

Mrs F. Thank you officer that will be all.

Screw. No I stay Madam, Governor's instructions.

Mrs F. (to Jon) Hello, I'm here to have a pre-complaint hearing
meeting, you should have been informed, is that correct?

Jon. Nope.

Mrs F. Oh, ah... right. As I said this is a pre-complaint hearing meeting, I will be chairing the hearing so wanted to have some time with you to go through your case, find out what you're feeling, being in here, the crime, your level of penitence, that sort of thing.

Jon. Penitence! Penitence?

Mrs F. Yes what you feel now about your crime and crimes, whether you feel remorseful.

Jon. Remorseful!

Mrs F. Yes, whether you are sorry for committing the crimes,

Jon. I know what it means. Bruising aside do I look stupid.

Mrs F. No you don't.

Jon. So there you are then, I don't look stupid but you think I am. Whether understood or not it's a bit radical to introduce such concepts.

Mrs F. Radical?

Jon. Dangerous too. Do you really think I want to discuss remorse or any other emotion with you, that's for the cap in hand freedom only way out or so they think parole board man, that's not you.

Mrs F. Right.

Let's try anyway. It's what I'm here for, let's get on shall we.

Jon. You should know better. You said you were here for a pre-complaint hearing meeting. This will stop at the slightest whiff of that sort of question.

I will ignore it and shout for a screw and you will leave.

Understood.

Mrs F. All right I won't.

Jon. Good.

Mrs F. Good. Now. First things first. May I call you Jon.

Jon. (nods)

Mrs F. Good. Right Jon tell me about the crime, when why where and so on. Will you do that please.

Jon. It's a in the records which you must have read.

Mrs F. Of course but I wanted to hear it from you in your words.

Jon. I did it, there is that good enough.

Mrs F. All right then why did you do it?

Jon. Who knows about why, short of money for food, clothes, the little luxuries of life you know, help me keep the mother of my kid, make me a better person, able to cope, the usual things.

Mrs F. You are not just saying that are you.

Jon. Your judgement Mrs Prison Visitor.

Mrs F. All right. And what do you feel about it now. Do you wish you hadn't done it or what?

Jon. Nope. It's done. I'm in here, I smell a whiff. However.

Mrs F. Yes, all right, go on, what happened?

Jon. I needed the money, it was someone's money, I hurt several people. I had no right to do that. I could say they were in the wrong place etcetera etcetera. I could say they shouldn't have been doing that particular job without some acknowledgement of the risks and danger but then you'd say they'd the right to do whatever job they wanted without expecting to be traumatised or attacked, etcetera etcetera. Remorse is interesting, I'm doing my time, accepting my lot in some sort of way but I expect to be treated in a humane and dignified way, don't you think?

Mrs F. Of course.

Well that's an answer, thank you.

You've clearly thought about this.

Jon. What do you think we do with our time in here, please.

Mrs F. Yes of course.

Now, your case, tell me about that, and what is it you want..

Jon. It's simple, I want to be treated like a human being, not laid into every day by the screws, him included. (gestures to screw standing guard)

Nothing gets done about it, it continues.

I've made lots of complaints. The prison's too strong for the governor.

Mrs F. What?

Jon. You know what I mean, the strong get their way, this lot (gesturing to the screw) just do what they want, our word against theirs. It's obvious to anyone who's been in this place.

Mrs F. Well I hope your hearing will sort this out. We try hard to take into account prisoner attitude to their crime, we don't need to, that's the job of the parole board as you say, nevertheless, we do which is why I asked you the questions about remorse and so on. It is not necessarily going to make it more favourable, after all this is a hearing not a request for parole. Hence my asking whether you were just saying those things about why you did the crime.

Jon. On the contrary, I'm inclined to defend my crime as you've heard. And, and this is important, I will be defending my actions in this nick cause I think I've acted right. No one else protected my dignity so I did, I fought, it was one against many. That's how it is in here but I guess more of this at the hearing.

Mrs F. Yes. Right I'll be off then. (leaves with screw)

(Jon starts to masturbate, couple of screws creep to door Screw 2 watches through spy hole)

Screw 1. (loud whisper) Give the man some peace, come on.

Screw 2. Hang on watch this.

Screw 1. No.

Screw 2. (bangs on door, giggles) Jon! Jon! Come on, think of England.. (they scarper away giggling)

Jon. You bastards, you bloody bastards. (gets into bed)

Here we go again (get under blanket)

Governor (enters, Jon does not stir)

I'm in charge you know, in charge of this place, all of it, in control of all that happens here, allegedly. Nevertheless what I say goes, top of the tree, important spur of the hierarchy, I'm the action man.

But it's not like that, they do what they want.

(Jon wakes, watches but is unseen by Governor)

Acquiesce.

Salute, stand up straight

pointing their sharp trouser creases all the way down to the floor, cutting it like the knife of reason unreason.

But it's unreason, it's the determined strength of practical hands-on done it for years we know best and we wear the uniform.

And never ever think about the consequences approach of you fucking men in suits.

And me, well less said the better..

How will I know who done this, who will tell me, yes Jon you will but to believe you.

I ask them and they say him, I ask him and he says he saw nothing, they say they heard nothing and saw nothing and anyway would we tell you if we knew, would we tell you it was us, of course not
Governor Sir! (clips heels and straightens)

Would we really tell you.

We expect you to find out the hard way, do the rules, earn your money, talk the walk, walk the walk of your position, be in charge and make the fucking difference, go on do it and make the difference, we know you want to. (leaves)

(table outside cell, governor and 2 prison visitors sitting)

(governor presiding)

Governor. Bring in the prisoner.

(Jon brought/dragged in by screws, he is battered and bruised)

Please sit down.

Firstly this is a formal hearing about your dissatisfaction with the outcome of a complaint you made against me for not properly protecting you from physical assaults and bullying from undisciplined prison officers. And negligence of my duty of care to you with humanity and dignity, your words.

We are here to hear this complaint and come to a decision today. Prison rules state that complaints are heard by me and two prison visitors, here on my left is Mr Brown and on my right is Mrs Fisher, our decision will be final.

Please remember this is a formal hearing, we follow a procedure.

This is your only chance of redress. First we hear from you, your dissatisfaction with the way the complaint was handled, then we speak to any witnesses, then we consider our options and what

happens next. We may dismiss or uphold your dissatisfaction with the outcome of the complaint, we may request further information then consider what action to take. Is that clear?

Jon. No. My original complaint was about your bully boys, who beat me up, you, that is you Governor Sir, dismissed my claim as fatuous or some such, you said my wounds and bruising were either caused by fighting with cons or (shaking head) I did it to myself deliberately or by accident. Now.

I'm here today with fresh wounds, new bruises. I asked for a Doctor so I get a nurse, nevertheless, I ask for you to examine me and all you do is peer at me across a table with your two flunkies shadowing you. What am I to make of that.

We deserve better, somebody with the balls to deal with this, this despair and more, it doesn't seem to be you then does it.

Governor. We are only able to deal with the first complaint today so let's get on please. Mrs Fisher has some questions for you.

Jon. What's the point in considering my first complaint when there is a course of complaints, a procession of assaults, none have been properly dealt with.

It's stupid, I can make a complaint about a complaint but only one complaint at a time.

Governor. Please wait Jon Prisoner, you will get your chance later, I will have no hesitation to stop the proceedings if you continue to interrupt in this way. Mrs Fisher.

Jon. I'm not interrupting. I'm helping.

Governor. We do it our way, you are in prison, we have rules we are following, you do it our way, so we will get on. Mrs Fisher.

Mrs F. Mr Prisoner, please tell us in your own words what is it exactly you are dissatisfied with, take your time.

Jon. OK. I've made some notes.

(reads) My reaction to the basic respect I'm entitled to in this place has escalated because that respect has not been given, has in fact been withdrawn, deliberately withheld. I was put in solitary because I was fighting, why was I fighting, because of how I was treated, how was I treated, I was bullied and the victim of taunts and deliberate attempts to force a reaction from me. My own mistake was not to play the system, but I'm not clever enough as the screws plot and scheme, their common currency is to do that, surely you know that. They do all this primitive sort of pleasure being in charge, having physical and mental control. I reckon it's like rape, at least they haven't buggered me yet except in my dreams.

So. The examples. Cold food, gave me only a bible for reading, told I'd have the time to kill myself so in effect why not get on with it.

Then I get the chaplain, a pathetic attempt to win me over. Not a bad chap in fact, he gets nine out of ten for trying.

Mrs F. So your complaint was about how the prison officers did, do not respect your basic rights?

Now tell me about this dissatisfaction with how the complaint was handled, in your own words.

Jon. It wasn't.

Mrs F. Yes, go on.

Jon. Nothing happened. Nothing. The governor made a couple of half hearted attempts to talk to me but gets frustrated. I got my TV when I reminded him of not having one as a result of him agreeing before then. Nothing, I suppose it's reasonable to expect something to change when you've made a complaint, at least someone to tell you nothing is going to change, if that was the case, if you see what I mean, with maybe a letter, just something at least.

And on top of it all I've been beaten up twice since the complaint.

Yesterday.

You see all this bruising, well I think they did it because of today, but I won't go on, you can see for yourselves.

Mrs F. We certainly can. Who beat you up.

Jon. The screws, isn't it obvious.

Mrs F. That will have to be investigated separately I would think.
Governor?

Jon. Their word against mine.

Mrs F. Yes.

I'm afraid so. But let's not pre-judge this, we must try to reach a resolution today. At least to find a way forward to resolve this clash of positions.

Now what do you think we should do?

Jon. You asking me?

Mrs F. Yes.

Jon. Sack the governor, sack the screws, put me in charge, consult with cons, have a joint management committee or some such thing to run this place. Share decisions with the cons, have a cons council, I don't know, I've never really thought about it. Are you seriously asking me.

Mrs F. Maybe not, I was wondering what we do about this complaint.

Jon. Of course, something else not taken seriously.

Mrs F. Now about this complaint, what should we do?

Jon. Get me examined properly, list the injuries. Tell the bully boys not to do it again of course. That's it basically.

Mrs F. Thank you for that. Now, do you have any witnesses?

Jon. I could call the screws, what's the point.

Mrs F. You tell me.

Jon. No.

Mrs F. No?

Jon. My only witness is the chaplain.

Mrs F. Governor, does the chaplain know about this?

Governor. Yes, but unfortunately he will be late as he's officiating at a funeral, I think he said an hour from now. May I suggest we take a break, we can have an informal chat, maybe an early lunch, reconvene when the chaplain has returned so we can hear from him. (Mr B and Mrs F confer, then nod)

The prisoner will return to his cell and will be brought back when the chaplain returns. Please. (gestures to the screws who remove Jon)

Mrs Fisher, where is this taking us. It will be their word against his so we won't resolve the issue of blame, not that we have to anyway.

Mrs F. I think we must address it even if we don't have to, we might have to tackle it sometime. It's not as if we don't know how they behave. No matter how often you tell them it continues. It's probably six of one and half a dozen of the other in most cases, from what I've heard and seen I'm not convinced he should carry much of the blame anyway. The sexual assault was regrettable

Mr B. Regrettable! It was indefensible, shocking for the poor woman, and look what happened in court, he got four extra years. Now, if that's not the starting point for today I don't know what is.

Mrs F. Exactly. Our job would be easier if it had not happened. He was an angry man before the assault and he is an angrier one now. It's his anger we have to deal with and

Mr B. His behaviour is just bad, what do you expect of them then?

Mrs F. And, yes, and whether we like it or not we have to deal generally with how the officers behave towards him.

Their attitude. How to help them help him to contain his anger. It's no mystery you know.

Mr B. It is to me, why does the man have to fight all the time, why does he just not get on with it.

Mrs F. It?

Mr B. Being a good prisoner of course.

Mrs F. That may be so but we've got to do something. Governor, we will have to hear from you at some stage. There are big questions about what you've done and not done and I think it would be helpful to look at that now. What exactly have you done to resolve this.

Governor. (measured) Well, I interviewed the prison officers who deny it of course. There is no doubt about the sexual assault as he admits that. I didn't know about the most recent beating but it's

pretty obvious as there's no one else who could have done it and I doubt he did it to himself. Mr Brown?

Mr B. It's the result of fighting, he starts it, this is the result. He shouldn't do it, he should keep to the rules.

Mrs F. It started long go. He challenges everything, they retaliate and so it escalates. I think that if we reach a decision broadly in his favour we might get better behaviour from him. But, before we can get to that point, Governor, I will have to question you with the prisoner present.

Let's take a break now.

Mr B. We can't do that. What will the prison officers think. We have a responsibility to support them. Heavens they do a difficult enough job as it is, get assaulted, particularly by this man and as a result you suggest we swing the decision in his favour to get better behaviour. It's preposterous.

Governor. I agree with Mrs Fisher, we surely have to balance this, take in all sides, feelings, and everything else, We have a duty to everyone here.

Mr B. Well in that case please record I disagree with both of you.

Mrs F. Gentlemen, let's consider this after we've heard from the Chaplain, we'll take a break now.

Governor. Yes. (they all leave then return including the Chaplain and Jon)

Mrs F. Thank you for coming straight here Reverend Chaplain.

As you know this is a complaint hearing, I am chairing, you know Mr Brown.

Chaplain. Yes.

Mrs F. I've some questions then the prisoner may have some questions for you, do you have any questions about the procedure?

Chaplain. Yes. When will you reach a decision, I hope soon followed by speedy action?

Mrs F. We hope so.

Now, my first question.

How well do you know the prisoner?

Chaplain. I have had several meetings with Jon, the first was in his cell when he was in solitary, when I visited out of my concern, the second meeting was in my office. We talked about how best to resolve his frustration with the system and how he is caught somewhere in the middle. Then we met a couple of times more.

Mrs F. The middle?

Chaplain. Yes, the conflict between how the prison is run and how the prison officers want the prison run. The total culture you might say.

Mrs F. Yes, Thank you.

Mr Brown, I think we should ask the prisoner if he has any questions of the Reverend, do you agree?

Mr B. Shouldn't we leave it to later.

Mrs F. I don't think, so (to Jon) do you have any questions of the Revd Chaplain at this stage Jon Prisoner?

Jon. Yes I do.

What sort of person do you think I am then?

Chaplain. You are in prison, and all that means.

Jon. What does all of that mean, in simple person's terms so we understand.

Chaplain. From what I see and hear prisoners are pushed around, over controlled, put down at every opportunity, minimum opportunities to find and get spiritual and emotional sustenance, fighting a complexity of rules, at the mercy of various interpretations of those rules, too much time on their hands and minds chronically bored. Shall I go on.

Jon. That's a pretty good description. I like this so yes please go on.

Chaplain. You are contained as a result, you don't suffer fools gladly, like me and my attempts to help you. I tried too hard and too quickly. I think you are a proud man and that's understandable in the circumstances, for as most here it's a centrally important part of survival.

Jon. Why did you come to see me at first.?

Chaplain. At the time I lied to you. I told you the Governor wanted me to see you, you saw through that. I decided to see you as I thought I might help you, be independent maybe and the gossip was that the officers would go too far and you'd be badly injured or worse. So I came to see you.

Jon. Yes and

Chaplain. Well, one of the prison officers was worried they'd pushed you too far so I thought I'd see you. I didn't tell the truth at first, you were cross and linked me being there to the bible being thrown at you.

Jon. Thank you for that. Would you trust me. Do you think me honest, truthful, basically. Well would be in a different place.

Chaplain. From our meetings I would say you are essentially honest, you certainly are principled about justice in this place.

Mr B. If I may interrupt, how many meetings have you two had?

Jon. Is this correct, should he interrupt just like that?

Mrs F. Not really, Mr Brown, please ask your question at the appropriate time, thank you. Please go on.

Jon. Do you wish to add anything to what you've just said.

Chaplain. Yes. I think I would trust you on the outside of prison.

Jon. What's the difference between inside and outside.

Chaplain. Well, inside we are all pushed into a way of behaving.

Jon. Yes and.

Chaplain. Well I've already commented on that, we all know what that is. Those in control over control those without control who want more control over what is in essence a rather miserable existence. I guess it's all to do with coping and survival. Look I don't think I need to tell the visitors this they should know it.

Jon. No harm in stating the bleeding obvious to those who think they understand. Just to clarify please say it again.

Chaplain. Those with fewer rights are pushed around by those who control the rules.

Jon. OK. Who makes the rules.

Chaplain. The system, society, civilisation, history, the governor, everyone in this place contributes differently to the rules, how those rights are exercised, negotiated, changed, consented to, and so on. We are contributing to that process today, now.

Jon. And will it change much then as a result of today, now.

Chaplain. I don't expect so, do you?

Jon. That's no question for me.

Nevertheless, thank you for speaking your mind. Now. Do you have questions for the Governor?

Chaplain. (looks for assistance)

May I, is that allowed.

Mrs F. Oh, all right.

Chaplain. Well, er, yes, er, what are you doing about the larger question; the relationship between er the officers and prisoners. What are the plans.

Governor. We are instructed to develop and improve and initiate how to bring in some of the ideas being tried in other prisons. Where everyone works to overturn the old culture of the controlled and the controlling, where internal security and relationships are more relaxed, where prisoners have a named officer. Full occupation, weekend leave, weekend prison where prisoners keep their jobs during the week, overnight visits from partners, more counselling, psychology and anger management, healthy food, ideas like that, but making the changes is proving difficult.

Chaplain. Mrs F, what do I do, may I continue, do I ask questions, or what.

Mrs F. Do as you think, this is important.

Chaplain. Thank you. Governor, is this actually happening or just a dream?

Governor. At this stage there is still resistance and we've got a long way to go. We are experimenting with named officers.

Jon. Experimenting!

Mrs F. OK, enough of that. Chaplain have you any further questions of the Governor?

Chaplain. Lots I suppose but not really relevant to this hearing. No I think not thank you.

Mrs F. Thank you. Now, do you need to call any other witnesses Jon Prisoner?

Jon. No point is there?

Mrs F. Are you sure.

Jon. Solitary is a way of taking us out of circulation, if some of this had happened the rest of the nick I could have asked other cons to speak at this hearing. But would you have believed them, well that's always in your favour. What do you expect.

Do I want to call any other witnesses?

Do I want to be the judge and the jury. Of course I do.

Do I want to be out of this place, of course I do.

No thank you.

Mrs F. Mr Brown did you want to ask anything?

Mr B. Yes, Chaplain how many meetings did you and the prisoner have together?

Chaplain. It was four, the last one only a couple of days ago.

Mr B. And how long did they last?

Chaplain. Variable, about an hour or so. The second was cut short.

Mr B. Why was that?

Chaplain. We had a disagreement, I think I was a little insensitive.

Mr B. Let's ask the prisoner. Prisoner. Why was the second meeting cut short?

Jon. No it wasn't his fault, it was my fault, it was me who was insensitive. I swore a lot and told him to go, you could say his kindness was rather overwhelming and it sort of made me jumpy and hostile. That's it.

Mrs F. OK? Right Jon Prisoner any more questions of anyone?

Jon. No point is there.

Mrs F. Are you sure.

Jon. Yep.

Mrs F. Sure you are sure? Any questions of the Governor for instance?

Jon. No point.

You do it.

Mrs F. Are you sure.

Jon. Yep.

Mrs F. Governor, let's hear from you then. If you please.

(governor moves to witness position, Mrs F. moves to governor's chair)

Firstly, Mr Brown, did you have any questions of the Governor?

Mr B. Governor; do you have to deal with much violence in this prison, and, how do you do it?

Governor. It would be an understatement to say we have to deal with chronic violence.

Mr B. Lots then.

Governor. Every day.

Mr B. The causes, you would say are what, do you know?

Governor. Violent men with little to do in a system bursting at the seams that can't cope anymore, not that it ever did.

Jon. (to Mrs F.) He'll lose his job.

Mrs F. Shh. Mr Brown.

Mr B. What do you do about it here.

(gets up and with finger wagging approaches both the Governor and Jon berating and hectoring them)

I'll tell you what you should do here. These men should be put to work, there's bound to be work to do, no matter what, cleaning, painting, repairing, digging. There's bound to be something. Keep them busy is what I say, so there's no time for them to brood, fester, think anger and hatred and I've no doubt plan it. This man is a prime example, he had hours of time on his hands, rather than give him books and a TV, he should have been made to work, alone if needs be. It's reprehensible and wicked that all this is locked up and wasted.

And to you (moves to Jon) you must have responsibility in this place. From what I've heard and seen it is clear you have some

influence in this place, influence the way the prison works, for the better, for your own improvement, and others. What. I'll tell you you can't expect to be waited on hand and foot, expect not to obey the rules and get away with it, expect not to be pushed around if you are breaking the rules in some stupid one man revolution. It's bound to fail man so wake up and be real. It's got to stop.

Mrs F. Mr Brown. Please, sit down, thank you.

(he does so)

Mr B. Over to you then.

Mrs F. Right. Jon Prisoner do you wish to add anything.

Jon. Governor let me say it for you, it's safer that way. Stating the bleeding obvious I know, we know, you know, how it is.

Mrs F. Yes, but we have to hear from the governor.

Minister. (sweeps in with an entourage of screws, men in suits etc.

Mrs F, Mr B and the Governor stand, Jon is removed)

You all know who I am.

We have got to be absolutely certain, open, transparent, without a shred of doubt, without the merest sliver of suggestion of conspiracy. You will exam every scrap of detail, every word written and spoken. There must be no attempt whatsoever to cover up, to lie, alter the records, to protect yourself or colleagues, disciplinary action will follow if anyone is caught.

We will pursue every lie, every contradiction, every dodgy statement. We will get to the bottom of this. You will be required to report back to my team on a regular basis. Questions should be addressed to my office via the Governor.

(leaves with the entourage)

(Mrs F. Mr B. and Governor, seat themselves as they were)

Mrs F. I will be the chairperson of this investigation into the suicide of Jon Prisoner. No objections, good.

We will hear from the Governor first, then each of the relevant prison officers, then any prisoner who may have information and the Chaplain I guess.

Mr B. How will we know if they are relevant or, indeed, which prisoner might have information, we would have to speak to all prisoners on the wing as a minimum.

Governor. If I may speak? There were only a few other prisoners who had any contact with him, it will easy to list them if you wish.

Mrs F. Yes, do that if you will.

Right. Now, we have to give an estimate on how long the review will take, my suggestion is two days maximum. Mr Brown?

Mr B. We clearly have a duty to do this well, to balance process with outcome, to produce a result conducive to the smooth running of the service. To reach too speedy a conclusion could suggest great efficiency, too long and it's prevarication. The public need to

know we know what we're doing , but are not very concerned about the occasional suicide I suggest. I think we should try to do it in one day, make a stab at it at least and see how it goes, extend if necessary, concentration of minds is invaluable.

Governor. Excuse me we owe him something, a little dignity of properly looking at the information and reaching a good outcome which is not number of days determined. What will we do if we go with one day and find we have to rush the afternoon.?

Mrs F. Determining the number of days does not limit the extent of this enquiry, if we run out of predicted time we just agree more, and more if necessary. The purpose of the time prediction is to indicate, no more than that, how long it will take and to keep us focussed. Satisfied?

Governor. (nods) But it seems rather bureaucratic, why is this time limit a requirement?

Mrs F. Keep us focused, time scale for the relatives and other interested people, meaningful targets, efficiency.

Right. Let's try to hear from witnesses on the first day, then sift the evidence, reach our conclusion and write the report the second.

Mr Brown, questions?

Mr B. What about family, relatives, that sort of thing, shouldn't we be speaking to them? Throw some light on this business, there's the mother of his child to start with.

Mrs F. Good idea, that will probably add more time so perhaps we should extend to three days. Now, when can we start.

Governor. May I suggest we start immediately you will be able to see most staff including me for the rest of today. In the meantime we will contact the relatives to arrange for them to be here as soon as possible.

Mrs F. Right, let's get going then.

(witness box is wheeled in)

Governor, please take the witness box.

(he does so)

This is an enquiry into the suicide of Jon Prisoner. Please tell us what happened.

Jon. (from cell) Er excuse me, I haven't done it yet.

Governor. As you know his sentence was extended by several years as a result of many assaults on prison officers. Then there was the issue of the complaint.

Mrs F. Complaints.

Yes yes, we know all about that, let's get on.

Governor. Then there were more assaults after the complaint hearing.

Mrs F. Do you have any thoughts on whether there was any provocation in these assaults. It is something that didn't really come up in the complaint hearing is it?

Governor. Well it did, he accused the prison officers of bullying, taunting and so on. If you recall I sort of agreed with him.

Mr B. But you didn't say it in front of him, he didn't hear you, I think you only said it to us.

Jon. (coughs loudly)

Governor. Is that significant?

Mr B. Well, if he heard you say it it might have ameliorated him somewhat, led to better behaviour.

Governor. Mmmm.

Mrs F. Please go on.

Governor. Well, he had just been transferred here, he had the new prisoner talk and was allocated an officer.

Mr B. New prisoner talk?

Governor. There is a list of things gone through with new prisoners, things like emotional support with moving in, informing prisoners of the bullying policy, how we are striving for discipline, opportunities to talk to the named officer about troubles, that sort of thing.

Mr B. You mean the anti-bullying policy.

Governor. Yes of course.

Mr B. Thank you. Please go on.

Governor. Where was I, yes, he was allocated an officer, there was some trouble over reading material whilst he was confined,

and he reported an officer threw a bible at him.

Mr B. I thought we came to the conclusion that the allegation was false, we believed the officer.

Mrs F. Well that's interesting, my memory is we didn't check it out. It will be recorded.

Mr B. Well it doesn't really matter now does it. I take the view that officers do not provoke, usually tell the truth, what have they got to lose?

It is the prisoners who usually do the winding up and the provoking. Maybe on occasions, on occasions mark you, officers might react unfavourably, but it probably always starts with the prisoners, that is obvious.

Mrs F. Well I'm not sure, however it's only part of the issue, we can only go on what we hear, are told and if there is difference have to make a judgement. The point still needs to be followed through. We didn't check out whether he was provoked. Now we have listened to the Governor who states that the officers will protect themselves and deny accusations of bullying. We could ask other prisoners who the officers are then see them individually. Ask some searching questions.

Mr B. That will take time Mrs Fisher.

Mrs F. So be it. Please ask the officer accused of throwing the bible to give evidence.

Governor. It is, was the prisoner's allocated officer.

Mrs F. That is useful as there are other questions we could ask.

Would you arrange for him to join us?

(Governor leaves)

William, this appears to be going well, do you have any suggestions to improve it.

Mr B. I don't Grace, if we conduct it like we do complaints, punishments, early release and so on I'm sure we will get the information we want, we can always recall and review as we go along.

Mrs F. We can but try.

(Governor returns)

Governor. The prison officer is waiting outside, the mother is on her way, be here in a couple of hours or so. I'll get the officer then?

Mrs F. Yes, thank you.

(Governor does so)

Ah, officer, come in, thank you for attending please sit down. We will be asking you some questions, you must tell the truth, we will be comparing your evidence with that of other witnesses. Please tell us how Jon Prisoner appeared to you when he arrived in this place?

Screw1. He was very touchy, he was cynical when I told him I was to be his allocated officer, I don't think he believed what I said.

Mrs F. What else?

Screw1. He thought it was all a wind up, he accused us of putting the boot in. He didn't believe he could talk to me about problems, he thought I was lying about the anti-bullying policy and treating all inmates equally.

Mr B. How did you know he didn't believe you?

Screw1. He was offensive, swore a lot, just dismissed what I said. I asked him to give me a chance, I told him I meant it but he continued to swear and said he wasn't prepared to discuss those things with me.

Mrs F. What sort of things.

Screw1. How he was feeling, how he was settling in, doing his time without arguments. I clearly remember him saying, 'I'm not going to discuss my admission of guilt and then said something about remorse was not a legal requirement.

Mrs F. Clearly.

Screw1. Yes. I mentioned that to some colleagues.

Mr B. And what did they say?

Screw1. Some said they were not surprised and thought he was a hard case and not going to accept our attempts to change things for the better for him.

Mrs F. He says in his complaint you threw a bible at him. Did you?

Screw1. I gave him a bible, he asked for books, he was in solitary, he didn't have books, I was going to give him more books, I found the bible near his cell so I gave it to him, I just put it into his cell, I had intended to return with more books.

Mr B. Why didn't you?

Screw1. I forgot. And when I gave him the bible he told me to f off.

Mr B. In your opinion did you or any other of the prison officers provoke Jon Prisoner in any way?

Screw1. No. He provoked us, he seemed to take every opportunity to do so. I we all kept good control and didn't react in a negative way.

Mrs F. Tell us about your involvement in the suicide risk assessment?

Screw1. We did the regular risk assessment on at least three different occasions, it is clearly recorded by myself and colleagues, we had the usual meetings after the assessments and concluded I mean concluded he was a low risk. All prisoners who we consider vulnerable, new prisoners, recently transferred prisoners, violent and hard men, argumentative prisoners, those who are mental and so on get an assessment. We thought he was a strong possibility, was consistently giving officers a hard time and

Mr B. Hard men?

Screw1. Yes.

Mrs F. Did anyone ask him if he thought he was at risk or in danger.

Screw1. No we don't do that, it might put thoughts into their heads.

Mrs F. Do you think you should have done so, I mean he would be the best person to know perhaps?

Screw1. Maybe, but we don't, as I say it might provoke them and give them ideas.

Mrs F. Mmmm.

Mr Brown, more questions?

Mr B. Yes. The prisoner said he was beaten by officers on several occasions, is that true.

Screw1. No. He tried to fight with us on several occasions, we had to restrain him so that is where the bruising and broken bones came from. You will know we have clear restraint policies, correct positions, how long to hold them and so on.

Mrs F. Mr Brown?

Mr B. (shakes head)

Mrs F. That's all thank you, you may leave now.

Screw1. Thank you. (leaves)

Mrs F. So, do we believe him, what do you think?

Mr B. Of course, why shouldn't we.

Mrs F. Well the complaint, it left so much uncertain and unknown. The different accounts didn't add up did they. And the prison officer is maybe lying to protect himself and colleagues, it's entirely plausible isn't it?

Mr B. I do not see it that way, it's my view and experience of life they wouldn't all be prepared or able to keep the conspiracy going, one of them will crack.

Mrs F. So perhaps we should see them all?

Mr B. Let's ask the Governor. What do you think.

Governor. Well I've sort of done that and the result is all those involved deny any instigation of violence towards the prisoner, of course one of them may own up at some stage, until then there's not much we can do.

Mr B. We have to take a view, mine is the prisoner was a bad lot through and through, had a history of violence, was wanting revenge, had nowhere to go so the final revenge was to kill himself but of course his is the only loss I guess.

Mrs F. The chaplain didn't appear to think so when we saw him earlier.

He suggested Jon Prisoner was proud, fighting for some sort of justice, that being here would have been manageable if that justice was practised, necessary in the circumstances, hitting out at the rules as operated and interpreted differently by different people, he

was pushed into a particular way of behaving. And the chaplain mentioned gossip around the prison at the time of the complaint hearing, that the prisoner would get hurt badly or even killed as the officers would go too far.

Mr B. I don't think we can put too much relevance on prison gossip, they'd feed information to the chaplain who they probably think is a bit of a softy who would then tell us. We all know that prison conversion is a means to an end.

Mrs F. Meaning.

Mr B. They start to believe in god for all sorts of reasons, most of them suspicious, and seeing the chaplain is part of that..

Mrs F. Maybe.

Mr B. Anyway Mrs Fisher, what do you think.

Mrs F. I think we should see the chaplain otherwise this will be incomplete, to ask him his view now this has happened.

Mr B. If we must.

(chaplain appears)

Mrs F. Reverend Chaplain thank you seeing us again. Please sit down.

Now, you know what's happened, this hearing is a required process, a statutory instrument, to determine the circumstances around this apparent suicide, make recommendations for the service.

Now chaplain, you gave us a comprehensive view when we saw you for the complaint, what is your view now Jon Prisoner has killed himself.

Chaplain. It's very sad, and I'm afraid I'm not very surprised, the anger boiled over many times before there was so much anger inside it had to come out some where, some when. He was in many ways very disturbed which was exacerbated by his being here. My view is the culture here does not support men who plan to do this final thing. No amount of policies or practices will make much change unless the culture is changed. I guess that's difficult but there are lots of things that could be done to change that, such as training, a different approach to suicide awareness and prevention, involving other prisoners as confidantes or mentors, properly engaging prisoners about their mental health and the effect of prison on it, that sort of thing. I failed him too, I did not properly talk to him about suicide, it should have occurred to me to do so. It is a lesson for me.

Mrs F. Yes.

Questions Mr Brown?

Mr B. No thank you.

Mrs F. Revd Chaplain, Thank you for your comments and candour, we will be discussing the information and writing our report probably tomorrow.

(chaplain leaves)

I think we should see some of the other prison officers, governor please arrange it.

(screw 2 appears)

Mrs F. Thank you for attending, you know why we are here, we have questions to ask. Mr Brown.

Mr B. Tell us please what contact you had with the prisoner, in your own words please.

Screw 2. I didn't have much contact, escorting, doubling up with other prison officers, a couple of restraints, that was all.

Mr B. How much did you know him.

Screw 2. Not much contact as I said.

Mrs F. Had you met him before?

Screw 2. O yes, I've met him before when he's been in this and other prisons.

Mrs F. So you know him well.

Screw 2. From a distance you might say.

Mrs F. And you must have formed an impression of him, like he was a hard man and liked to fight.

Screw 2. Not really, I mean I knew about those things but I hadn't really seen it first hand so to speak.

Mrs F. But you thought he was violent and would cause trouble?

Screw 2. Well I'd heard from other officers, all prisoners come here with reputations, if they haven't one when they come here at first they soon get one.

Mr B. Did you ever assault the prisoner.

Screw 2. No sir.

Mrs F. I know you didn't know him well but what is your opinion of his apparently killing himself, why do you think he did it.

Screw 2. He did it all right, I mean he had no future and was full of contempt.

Mrs F. Contempt?

Screw 2. Well, he was always having a go, challenging everything that went on in the prison.

Mrs F. Did you provoke or goad him at any time?

Screw 2. No madam I did not.

Mr B. I don't think we're going to get anything else from this officer are we.

Mrs F. Perhaps not. All right, that will be all thank you, you may leave.

(screw 2 leaves)

Governor. I think the mother has arrived, I'll go get her?

Mrs F. That's good timing, if you will.

(governor leaves)

Mr B. You'd better speak to her, women and all that, I don't think I'm going to like her very much.

Mrs F. That's as maybe but we ought to balance this, make it comfortable for her.

(governor returns)

Governor. The mother has arrived shall I bring her in.

Mrs F. Yes please.

(governor does so and sits to oneside)

Mrs F. Ah Mrs Prisoner, thank you for attending today, as you know are here to try to find out why Jon killed himself and what we can recommend to prevent other prisoners killing themselves. We would like to ask you some questions about him to help us understand what might have happened. If you are comfortable with that shall we go on?

Mrs P. All right, ask away, I'm used to places like this.

Mrs F. I'm Mrs Fisher and this is Mr Brown, and the prison Governor. This shouldn't take very long for you.

Now, Mr Brown has some questions for you.

Mr B. Yes, mm, thank you Mrs Fisher, now Mrs Prisoner please tell me how often you visited Jon here.

Mrs P. Every couple of months or so, it's not very far but far enough you know.

Mr B. Yes. Did he say much about how things were here, how he was coping.

Mrs P. No.

Mr B. He must have said something, surely?

Mrs P. He's always been the secret sort, not much to say it seems but he was thinking all the time.

Mr B. So what happened when you visited, did you sit there in silence?

Mrs P. You know, the usual, I did most of the talking, tell him about Damien, the people down the street, neighbours, gossip, you know.

Mr B. Did he ever get angry with you or when you were visiting?

Mrs P. Yep, at me about most things, sarky like..

Mr B. What did he do?

Mrs P. Shout, I'd tell him to be quiet, but he carried on telling me I wasn't doing that or this right, most of what I told him was wrong.

Mr B. What was that about?

Mrs P. I don't know, he was just angry.

Mr B. About being in here maybe?

Mrs P. He's been inside enough to be used to it I reckon.

But I also reckon he never really did.

Mr B. Did you ever speak to him on the phone.

Mrs P. We tried that but he was never reasonable and I couldn't see him.

Mr B. See him.

Mrs P. His face.

Mr B. His face?

Mrs F. To better understand him, carry on.

Mr B. How old is Damien?

Mrs P. He'll be eleven next birthday.

Mr B. Is he a good boy?

Mrs P. The school is always complaining about him, he's a clever lad, likes to do his own thing so the teachers get cross with him.

Mr B. Do you get cross with him?

Mrs P. Not now.

Mr B. You used to then?

Mrs P. Yes, there's no point now.

Mr B. So there's not much discipline at home for Damien.

Mrs P. He does what he likes. Look is this important, I didn't come here to talk about him.

Mrs F. Mrs Prisoner, tell us about why you think Jon killed himself, why do you think he did it?

Mrs P. I don't know.

People who know him, friends in the street reckon he didn't do it. They knew he often did things on the spur of the moment, but he wasn't that sort of person to do that sort of thing even if he was in here. Angry, oh yea they all knew he was angry, but not like that.

Mrs F. Was he angry with himself do you think?

Mrs P. I don't know, perhaps he was sometimes, he'd get frustrated if he couldn't do something, he's swear at the paint brush or whatever and storm off shouting. It got very messy sometimes.

Mrs F. What else?

Mrs P. What else what?

Mrs F. What other sort of things happened as a result of his being angry with himself?

Mrs P. Being out of work, not having money for Damien, but he often spent what money he had on himself so he left us with nothing. He didn't like me going out with my friends, us doing normal things like.

Mrs F. What normal things?

Mrs P. Going down the pub, having a good time, that sort of thing you know.

Mrs F. What did you do about it?

Mrs P. Told him not to get so worked up, calm down, look at other people doing normal things but he'd say they weren't normal anyway.

Mrs F. Mrs Prisoner, do you think Jon killed himself?

Mrs P. Not really.

He was determined to sort himself out, he often said he'd sort himself out when he'd got out.

Mrs F. Something to aim for.

Mrs P. I suppose so.

Mrs F. Did he kill himself do you think?

Mrs P. No he didn't, if anything it was this place that drove him to it, he sometimes did talk, about how he was pushed around, it really got to him.

Mrs F. What did you understand by that.

Mrs P. What?

Mrs F. Being pushed around.

Mrs P. Being told what to do all the time of course.

Mrs F. And who pushed him around.

Mrs P. The screws who else.

Mrs F. Did he ever have mental problems?

Mrs P. Oh no, not in the slightest. He was like everyone else we know, had a laugh, had a drink, knew what he wanted, couldn't always get it though. No he wasn't mad, crazy maybe.

Mr B. Did he believe in God?

Mrs P. What!

Mr B. Did he believe in God?

Mrs F. Mrs Prisoner, I think we've finished here, but before we do have you anymore thoughts or ideas about why he might have killed himself as, as you know, the official verdict is that he did kill himself. Like did he ever talk about how prison effected him?

Mrs P. No not really, I sometime used to ask him, but he said it was none of my business.

Mrs F. Do you think he killed himself?

Mrs P. I told you, no, someone else did but that's not for me to say, that's your job.

Mrs F. Yes.

Well I think that's all the questions we have for you. Mr Brown?

Mr B. No, no more from me, thank you Mrs Prisoner.

Mrs F. Mrs Prisoner, that is all we have to ask you, thank you for attending today and answering our questions, you have been very helpful.

Mrs P. What happens next.

Mrs F. I was just about to tell you, we will be reporting back as soon as we have completed this hearing, you will receive a copy of the hearing report which will include recommendations, so on behalf of the prison service thank you for your assistance today. You may leave now

Governor. Mrs Prisoner, please come with me.

(they both move to one side)

Thank you for coming today, I expect it's been a bit of an ordeal. Look, I am so sorry about what happened to Jon, we did our best, it was not easy.

Mrs P. It's a bit late for all that, he's dead. Please show me out.

(they leave)

(Governor returns)

Mrs F. I think that is all. Governor, we will now consider our report and conclusions, I hope we will be able to report tomorrow. Thank you.

Governor. I'll be in my office if you need me. (leaves)

Mrs F. Right then let's get on with it.

(they leave)

Screw1. (enters cell) Recreation over.

(locks cell door, leaves)

(returns with Governor, unlocks cell door, both enter)

Governor. (walks in)

Jon. Did you knock?

Governor. Jon prisoner, I've come to tell you the outcome of the hearing.

Jon. It's funny you know but the vicar knocks before he comes in, asks if he can, asks if it's OK. He's a good guy here. But if you want to be a good guy here don't start 'cause no one would believe it.

You're going to tell me whatever you want whenever you want so get on with it.

Governor. Your complaint about the complaint was rejected. It was concluded the complaint was dubious and amounted to no

more than an attempt to discredit the smooth running of this prison. This outcome was unanimous, we all agreed your action was scurrilous and aimed to discredit this institution.

Jon. This cheerless, monotonous, soul murdering bin of lost souls and dead brains, perpetuated by the obsessional hysterical or should that be historical obsessional, the fucking screws in this place, taught in the knowledge of correctness, or whatever bollocky sort of words you want to use to describe this goddam excuse for an existence.

Sentenced to a twenty first century axe, blunt too.

Anyway, what's the point, that's enough of me in this place, I'm off and well, you're off, leave my fucking cell, please Mr Governor. Go. Fuck off.

Screw. You watch you bloody language in front of the Governor.

Governor. It's all right, we will be going

Jon. So you've told me at last.

Governor. Correct

Jon. Some agreement.

Governor. You are unable to appeal this outcome, the rules don't allow it. So there is nothing you can do about it. May I strongly request you conduct yourself within the boundaries of acceptable behaviour in this prison. I don't really need to tell you what that is

but I am going to; no violence, provocation, co-operation with prison staff is crucial for the orderly and humane function of this place.

Jon. More argument.

Governor. Please wait. For this institution to function properly all prisoners must co-operate, so they can finish their sentences with the minimum amount of physical, emotional and psychological disruption. I'm sure you agree with that.

Jon. Well. Maybe I do and maybe I don't.

Why argue, so if you're finished perhaps you would leave. Thank you.

Governor. Thank you. (leaves)

(the minister, flunkies, screws, men in suits enter, together intoning after a screw like a gospel choir)

Screw1. We will pursue every lie.

Everyone. We will pursue every lie.

Screw2. We will examine every detail.

Everyone. We will examine every detail.

Screw1. Every lie

Everyone. Every lie.

Screw2. Every contradiction.

Everyone. Every contradiction.

Screw1. And on and on and on we go.

Everyone. Questions addressed to me.

Via the Governor.

Determining the number of days.

Does not limit the extent of the enquiry.

Into the suicide of Jon Prisoner.

Take the view that officers don't provoke.

He accused us of putting the boot in.

You gave him a bible.

Screw2. Shut up.

We did not provoke.

Everyone. Did you provoke.

Screw1. He suggested the prisoner was proud.

Everyone. He suggested the prisoner was proud.

Screw2. But there was so much anger.

Everyone. Lots of anger.

And disturbed.

Exacerbated.

By being in here.

The culture.

Support men who plan to do.

Everyone. Support men who plan to do.

Screw1. The final thing.

Everyone. This final thing.

Screw2. Why do you think he did it.

Everyone. We know. We know. He had no future.

Screw1. He had no future. So provoke and goad.

Everyone. Provoke and goad?

Screw2. I did not.

Everyone. You must have done.

You must have done.

Jon. There's only one thing left then, joining them, na, sort of joining them.

Brain dead, shot my bolt long ago, convinced myself I was indestructible, live for ever, no-one, just no-one able to touch me.

That was then.

(whilst talking ripping thin bits of sheet he ties together)

Now is now.

In this nick

Boring.

(makes noose)

No visitors anymore.

No association to speak of.

No work.

No money.

No friends.

No inspectors.

No opportunities to fight.

No revolution.

No fucking anything.

What's the point.

Make a rat

I can only do one thing at a time.

Put it in the piano.

It's time to cook the goose.

Or some such familiar similar rhyme.

The rabbit in the road.

The doe eyed deer.

(gets chair, stands on it feeling a fixture)

The anxious rat.

(puts noose around neck and fastens sheet rope to ceiling)

The nervous lizard.

Knowing imminent death.

The cow in the slaughter house

The lamb not knowing a thing

(jumps whilst holding the sheet rope above head, but doesn't kick
chair away)

(not very loudly) Screw, screw

Screw, where are you in this moment of need.

Screw I'm calling you.

Screw.

Screw.

(swings and puts feet back on chair, takes deep breaths, takes noose off and sits, then slumps on bed)

(cell door open, several screws pile in)

Screw2. Come to this has it, you bastard, taking the easy way out, well, we'll just leave you to it, your word against ours and I know who will be believed, don't we.

(they leave, slamming the door)

Jon. The unexpected expected right on time, or is it the expected unexpected? Whatever, another go then.

(he does and appears to succeed)

(screws return, one feels for a pulse)

Screw 1. The bastard's finally done it.

Screw 2. Well done I say.

Screw 1. No mouth to mouth.

Screw 2. Certainly not.

Screw 1. Here take a picture. (produces a camera from pocket)

Wait let me put my foot on his head.

(gives screw 2 the camera, who takes the picture)

Come on let's go, leave him, we can find him later.

(they leave)

Jon. (after a while sits up) Easy way, easy way, this is no easy way, is this escape.

(screws return)

Screw 1. Come back to life have we.

Screw 2. Can't have that can we.

(they lay into him)

End