



**PICK ME UP POCKET BOOK  
ANYTIME OF THE DAY**



# INTRODUCTION

This book of hugs was created by the Community Writers' Group. Our intent is to reach out to share some love and positivity during times of need. This uplifting book can be looked at any time of the day to bring you joy, upliftment and happiness.

We would like to dedicate the book to all the people in the community who use our services and the Epping Forest District Council Community, Culture & Wellbeing team.

We also give thanks to all the staff at Mulberry House for their endless support in supplying us with such a comfortable venue and wonderful surroundings.

The community writers meet every Thursday. Sessions are free to join at

**Mulberry House**  
Chelmsford Road High Ongar Essex CM5 9NL  
10am – Midday

Writing on your own can be lonely. Come along to our friendly writers' group for some constructive feedback on your work or learn to get started on your first ever book. Whether you're new to writing or a professional writer, this will be an effective way to stay motivated. It will help you write more productively and to stick to your writing goals.



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# THE COMPOST

I'm sure we have all felt desperate at sometime in our lives – desperate for something special to happen or desperate for the pain to go. If not, we all know what it's like to be desperate for the loo when we are sitting in a queue on the motorway.

Loneliness – disappointments – illness – bereavement all can make us desperate.

I remember on a warm spring afternoon pottering in my garden. Not that I really know much about flowers, but I do like the garden to look nice even though I've been known to cultivate a weed or two.

My husband was emptying our compost for me to dig into the garden. This lush rich compost, I was truly impressed, this was the first time we had anything like this. On my knees I started to dig in the compost feeling rather proud as I was trying to be ecofriendly. Then I looked with questions in my mind where are all the vegetable peelings, egg shells, dead flowers? They were nowhere to be seen just this beautiful compost. This that once was rubbish was now able to be used to help plants grow healthy. I started to realize the sadness – pain- hurts and disappointments could in fact be used for good. As a Christian with gods help. Yes, these painful things in our lives can be turned around even be made into something beautiful.

A little song I used to sing – Something beautiful something good all my confusion he understood. All that I have to offer was brokenness and stiff, but he made something beautiful of my life.

## FIVE PLUS ONE

Diana wondered what she was doing there. Why had Miss Wicks the teacher put her in the middle of the classroom all on her own? Why didn't she explain how and why you add five and one together? She said it was called "addition" but what did it mean? She knew that if she didn't work it out before the end of the lesson she would be punished by not being allowed to do the one thing she really enjoyed which was playing in the shop in the corner of the room. Here she could pretend to be a shopkeeper like her dad, selling imaginary sweets and toys. Here it didn't matter that she was seven years old and couldn't speak English.

The teacher let everybody else go out to play at break but not Diana. Diana had not been able to add five and one together. Her failure made her feel helpless and lonely. Things got worse that day when her parents were asked to come to the school and she heard Miss Wicks telling them how difficult she was to teach and would have to go to a special school.

Her parents were very upset but didn't believe that she could not learn so they asked her godfather, Stan, for help. He knew how to explain these mysteries to little Diana who found that visualising everything made everything easier to learn and remember. Before she was nine she was top of the class in English and Spelling and was not bad at Arithmetic either!

Many years later, a successful teacher, Diana still remembers every moment of that humiliating afternoon in the middle of the classroom.

## LOVE YOU LOTS

I love you, despite you making me eat Corned Beef Hash, your signature dish, the dreaded midweek staple you knew I hated. And bitter-tasting Brussels sprouts which my mature tastebuds have since grown to appreciate. Regardless of your insistence my hair must be cut sensibly short, making me look like a boy, I love you.

Aside from these few nitpicking disagreements, there's nothing about my childhood I'd wish to change. I am blessed. As I grew into adulthood, unwaveringly, you remained my living guardian angel, biggest fan and friend. The best listener on the planet. I could tell you anything.

It's been six years since you physically left this world. I now have to make do with the infrequent chances we get to chat, in my dreams. In waking hours I realise there'll be no restorative, reassuring hug. I won't hear you say, "love you lots," as you always did. But I still feel the force of your nurturing, encouraging, encompassing love, enveloping me like a protective force field. It's depth, warmth and power, along with your imparted wisdom, continue to help me through life's minefields, deflecting the bad stuff.

Whilst I miss you every day, I'm simultaneously reminded of the most valuable and generous gifts anyone can give and receive. Time and love. And of how lucky I was to have you. Hero and role model, advising, supporting, influencing and inspiring me. Hanging out together.

I keep talking to you without any expectation of response. If I'm alone, these one-sided conversations are held aloud, so you must know Mum, with all my heart, I love you lots.



## SEASONS COME AND GO

The seasons come and then the seasons go. I hold you in my heart wherever I go. The memory of you I keep alive, you left so soon and I didn't get to say goodbye. But through the loss and the pain I took tiny steps to connecting with my life purpose again. As spring draws near and the brightly coloured bulbs appear I can feel you near. As I watch the hellebore flower heads unfold, each one reminds me of how I loved you so. The summer sun helping to grow the wheat fields glistening with gold, I stand tall and walk forward, I'm feeling brave and bold. When I pick my beans, I can hear you cheer. I remember you used to love fresh pickles, jams and homemade beer. Horse chestnuts are ripening, and the coloured leaves begin tumbling down to the ground. I think of the Autumn woodland walks we had and your love of trees. I know you are looking down, feeling proud that you passed on some of your horticultural knowledge to me. A cold chill is in the air now and the robins have started to appear, not long until Christmas your most favourite time of the year. I walk towards the festivities in honour of you. With every tree that I decorate and garland that I make I think of you. Until I see your lovely smiling face again. I will promise to take a moment every day to admire the forever changing seasonal view.

## GENO IN THE LAKE, BAVARIA

Gently, the voice spoke to her, saying 'Come, come in and feel the water,'  
But she chose to look away, - because she didn't want to hear.

She feared the risk – the threat of what might happen if she allowed  
one step to lead her away from the safety she had known.

But the voice continued. Softly it called her name. 'Come! Come and  
feel the freedom!'

You don't need to swim,' the voice assured her. 'Just step in and you will  
see. For its clearer here, and calmer too. Just one small step is all you  
need to face the future. Trust – give yourself a try.'

In anguish now she spoke again.

'No! No, I cannot come! It's far too murky, far too cold. I'll get caught in  
the reeds. There's too much to confuse me. There will be snags unseen,  
waiting to entrap me.

'So how safe do you want it? The voice it asked her. 'So safe you do not  
feel the change. So safe you do not feel the thrill. So safe there's no  
excitement, no reward?'

Listening now – she faded the water's edge – saw herself advancing,  
slowly to the verge. Then but one small step was all she took, to calmly  
drop her guard. Unwanting now to stay behind, she yielded – allowed  
herself to swim.

## BELOW THE SURFACE

Yawn, stretch those gills, quiver that tail, surface for a few delicious bubbles of air and let the water ripple through those scales on the dive.

"Morning Joan, fancy a swim and maybe a bit of a forage for breakfast"

"Hmm that sounds good Darby, suspended animation is quite relaxing but there is nothing like a cold splash of water in your face to wake up those muscles."

Swim, swim, hover, hover, "look Joan, here's a lucky find, a whole patch of sweetcorn, looks fairly fresh too"

"Hmm, nice Darby, you know all the best places to eat"

Suck and blow, tasty, suck and blow, tasty, suck and "whoa, Joan what's the matter?"

Garble, breathe, garble, faster, twisting body, thrashing, panic, dull eye staring back. "Joan, Joan, why are you surfacing, slow down, slow down, whoosh.

Joan gone, where has Joan gone? Swim, swim, paddle, hover. Must save Joan.

What shall I do? Yes, the launch, I shall propel myself at lightning speed through the water to the surface. Now, do it now!

Whoosh, gasp, flip, flash! trees, giants, Joan, dangling in mid-air heading towards a large net. Splash!

They've got Joan, breathe, garble, hover, oh no, they've got Joan, suck and blow.

Pretty Joan, golden scales like mirrors, sensuous barbules, lips so soft and kissable, lean fit body, fins like gossamer, suck and blow, suck and blow, swim, hover, Poor Joan, gone from my gaze like a beautiful dream.

Ripples, turbulence, "Joan! You're back! What happened?"

"Give me a minute Darby" hover, breathe, hover, breathe. "Joan, your lip is all swollen, if they hurt you, I'll..."

"No, I'm ok, it looks worse than it is, but my mouth is a bit sore"

"Look swim over to the reeds with me, tell me all about it, we can eat later."

# HOPE

Now it is unbearable, the sadness permeates your  
every waking moment.

It feels as though it will never end.

But there is hope, and there is love and there is  
those who care.

Take heart from kindness and concern from family,  
friends and strangers.

The dark clouds will pass. Not today or tomorrow  
perhaps.

But unexpectedly, in dribs and drabs.

Time will not cure sadness, but it will be helpful.

You may not think it now but you are strong and  
brave and will survive.

## THOUGHTS FROM MY PATIO

The last few minutes of the news jaded. "More disasters" she said to herself. "Why oh why can't they tell us something good!"

Turning the television off she noticed that the patio was still bathed in warm sunlight. She made her way out- sat – breathed deeply. She could hear the children near the door playing. Their excited voices full of life – full of enthusiasm. Clearly, they had not been listening to the news – she thought. "Oh, for one day as a child, she found herself singing out loud. "One day of freedom and innocence" Shocked by the sounds of her own clear words she chastised herself! Why should I be feeling so? – Look around – what do I have. A home – a life – friends – good memories. What more could I want- than to just "enjoy the moment" – and leave behind, in a locked and sealed bad – all this rubbish of life about which I can make no change.

## THE STORM

The lighthouse stood on the top of the cliff whilst the waves crashed below on the cliffs and the rocks.

A lonely sailor struggles to sail his small yacht under the blackened sky with gales pushing him forward into the crashing waves. Weak and weary he fought to survive hoping to reach home safe and alive. A clap of thunder rang in his ear followed by flashes of lightening upon the rocks as the storm gathered momentum.

Feeling all was lost he turned his yacht toward the shore when a beam of light beckoned, as the lighthouse lamp was lit and glowed from the cliff top above to help guide him through the foaming waves and rocks until he had reached safe land.

## AWAKENING

Sleep left me, like slowly dissolving morning mist as the sun appears.

Insistent fingers of light try to prise my eyelids apart.

'No, not yet! It's too early!' my thoughts protest to no one in particular.

'Just five more minutes.....'

The sun is not listening.

The sun itself is a cause for celebration.

A shaft of warmth across my face coaxes a lazy smile.

No grey skies this morning.

Eyes still shut, my mind begins to whirr as consciousness arrives.

And as I expand my lungs to full capacity, my arms involuntarily reach  
upwards To greet the day.

## AWAKENING 2

How many years have I been hidden?

Afraid I was not what others wanted.

Presenting what I thought they would rather see...

Instead of being the me I was designed to be.

Inside my self-made cocoon something stirred.

Gradually, imperceptibly, a change occurred.

As if life itself had been a cosmic womb,

I began to break free from my dusty tomb.

And as a metamorphosed caterpillar becomes a butterfly,

I discover I have wings.

Not fully formed, limp and without shape, the process wasn't straightforward,

But pushing towards the light, I find strength comes in the struggle

And as new life surges through my instruments of flight, beauty is revealed

Now I can fly

## PIVOTAL MOMENT

She cycled up to me as I waited in the shade. Her floppy flowerpot hat gave her an elfin look. Half her face was cast in shadow, half was bright with the flaming sun. A round, happy face: toffee nose, shiny almond eyes, a candy twist in her smile. So sweet! My diminutive woman. A string of beads graced her neck, shining on her nut-brown skin like a white halo. She wore a skimpy black bikini top flecked with navy blue, soft summer shorts and faded canvas shoes. The locals told me she roasted by the sea. A sun child with skin as dark as caramel. Adorable! She sat astride her bicycle, one foot on the pedal, tiptoe on the ground, applied her brake, and watched.

There was an old stone fountain in the square with a crude protruding spout which poured water down the worn rock face into a dark pool. Embedded in the edifice was a warning sign. Refraining from drinking, I splashed ice-cold water over my burnt face and chest, intoxicated by the thrill of its refreshment. She rang her melodic bell. 'Ring me anytime!' it chimed. And then I made my wish.

She cycled up to me as I waited by the wishing well. I held her in my arms, and we kissed. That was the moment I fell in love with her. The moment I knew I wanted us to spend the rest of our lives together.

And I haven't regretted a single moment since.



# THE LUCKY DUCK

Pootling along a narrow, country lane in my car, I spotted a pretty green bird in the middle of the road ahead. It looked like an upside down duck.

As I drove closer it remained statue still, on its back, crunched into a tiny ball in a knees to chest yoga pose. It appeared this poor duck's luck had run out. It's waddled up to the great duck pond in the sky, thought I.

I told my sister-in-law, who was travelling with me, I didn't want to make matters worse for the hapless duck by running it over. So I purposely drove right over the top of it, making sure my wheels didn't damage the beautiful bird.

As I checked the rearview mirror to confirm my steering was accurate and I hadn't transformed the sitting duck into a two dimensional, ugly mess, something most extraordinary happened.

The bird sprung upright onto its feet, making me wonder had the delinquent duck been playing a high stakes game of chicken? Then at top speed, in the style of Roadrunner in a Wile E Coyote cartoon, the nimble bird ran across the road, diving headlong into the safety of the hedgerow.

But there was another even more remarkable surprise. Clearly the dead duck was not deceased. Nor was it a duck but a magnificent, lively, lithe, very lucky pheasant.

It reminded me that even when you're certain things look utterly desperate, the unexpected, surprising or even miraculous, can and do happen. You cannot predict the future. Things are not always what they seem or even how you see them.

## ME TIME

Put struggles aside just for the day  
Let the breeze clear your mind to keep your troubles at bay  
Watch the wings of a bird as it soars through the air  
Catching some thermals no worries no care  
Be nice to yourself bring peace to your mind  
Just for a moment be happy and kind  
Aware of your breath like the tide ebb and flow  
The miracle of life is all that we know  
Blood pumps through our veins, the perfect machine  
It just takes a minute to make you all clean  
Life is good, life is sweet, be calm now my friend  
Well rested you'll know it's good wishes I send

# FATHER CHRISTMAS – MY THEORY

After extensive research I offer the following theory.

“Father Christmas” is actually a benevolent, shape changing Alien who exists in a separate Space – Time Continuum. His sleigh and Reindeer are cloaking devices for the vehicle in which he travels, and this may have some indirect bearing on the UFOs seen periodically in our skies.

Consider the facts:

He must be benevolent as he gives away presents with no thought of reward. He must be able to Shape Change in order to access property via chimneys, under doors etc.

He must operate in a different Time. This explains how he manages to achieve so much in what is one night to us. This is probably a whole years work to him.

Since reindeer on this planet do not fly a cloaking device turning an alien vehicle into something we can understand seems to be logical although there is no evidence to support this. It is possible that the “Reindeer” are actually Extra-Terrestrial beings.

This is my theory. The only other explanation is that he does not exist which is, of course, ridiculous.

