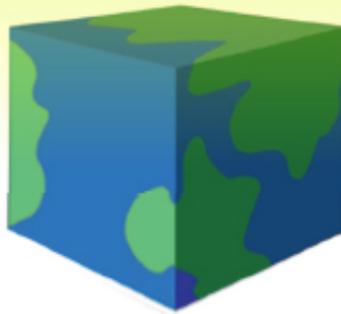
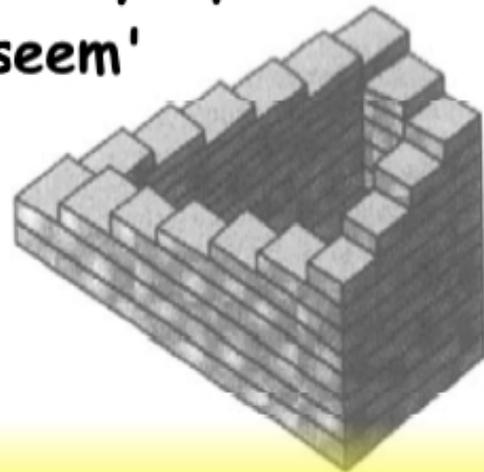


# In Short.. Some Stories

by  
Tom Goymour



'Things aren't always quite  
as they seem'



# IN SHORT . . . SOME STORIES

by

**Tom Goymour**

I love to write very short stories with a message that perhaps might make you think a little. In life we are all different and lead vastly different lives. We find ourselves in situations that are sometimes quite difficult to deal with, and how we may react is often quite diverse – never quite the same as the next person!

Come with me here to meet some ordinary folk at a particular moment in their lives.

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## **BACK WITH THE BOYS**

His body ached as he lumbered towards the tree line that lay thirty metres in front of him. He strained almost every sinew in his body desperately trying to get to the safety of cover. He didn't dare look back, nor even over his shoulder. All his experience, and all his past training instinctively told him, this was now a race against time . . . he had to be out of sight in the next five seconds or else, surely, they would find him and he would face an immediate state of impending doom!

It all happened so quickly, one man's fortune is another man's fate. As he'd scrambled for the trees he'd realised he'd drawn their attention, but at that same moment there had been a distant scuffle to the west - in the heavily scrubbed quarry dip . . . someone was caught! His heart sank to the pit of his stomach. His emotions were mixed, he was the lucky one but one of the boys was surely taken.

He crouched, motionless. The only sound was that of the wind rippling through the dry birch leaves through which he peered. He waited. Still silence! Where were they? He couldn't remain here much longer.

His left foot suddenly slipped and sent a cascading slither of slate and stone into the small hollow below. The noise echoed across the open quarry. Now, somehow he had to get back with the boys.

Creeping carefully onto his haunches he made his way to the top of the dip, camouflaged only by the dangling branches. This was his moment, just fifty metres to cover . . . he rose, his heart pounding, and with a final heroic effort he surged forward breaking into an emphatic run.

Suddenly, a shout forced him to look across, he knew immediately the game was up. He stopped, now horribly exposed and out in the open.

"Oooow you got me" he laughed to his little son as the six year old sprinted out in front of him. "If I'd made it past you I would never have got round James without being caught! Did I hear you catching Uncle Billy a few moments ago as well?"

## **LAST NIGHT THE CAR CRASHED, AND HE SUFFERED A GREAT LOSS**

He couldn't move as he strained his eyes to try and focus on the distorted shapes emanating menacingly through the glass. He turned to look across; he could see his wife was motionless, her eyes were shut. How could it have happened? Just a lapse of concentration and that was it - gone, in an instant!

He felt his pulse rate quicken as he was momentarily shaken from the hypnotic imprint the blue flashing lights were indelibly impressing on his brain. A hazy shape of fluorescent yellow, was moving ever closer. At least he'd come through - he'd actually made it home, but at what cost?

Lima, - the capital of Peru is Lima! Of course, he *knew* that now but hadn't been able to recall it quickly enough when required. If only *she'd* been there with him she could have helped with what was simply a race against time, and in that final unforgiving minute he had come up short. He always had the answers . . . except for that last round; if only he had concentrated - if he had not had that final drink things might have been different. 'The capital of Peru *is* Lima!' - he kicked himself.

He looked across from where he lay, her eyes were still shut. To him now it seemed they had been shut for so long. Her eyes had been open for just a few moments, but he was sure she couldn't see, although he reasoned, she could probably hear . . . they say hearing is the last sense to go, but he knew she wasn't listening. Now, he started to feel the first pangs of sheer desperation. Panic was setting in. His loss was heavy, and now, he couldn't ever tell her !

The hazy fluorescent yellow shape moved closer towards the house, away from the unfortunate crumpled wreck of the car he'd been gazing at through the window. There came the knock and, then, nervously he went to open the front door.

"Mr Petigrew?" The police officer enquired; "I believe this might belong to you, it was handed in having been found just outside the pub." The police officer handed him his lost, and appearingly intact wallet - carelessly dropped on the way home from the pub quiz. Inevitably; all the money was missing!

## **TIME AGAINST MELVIN**

Melvin Pumphrey sat motionless, staring out of his kitchen window on to the sunlight vegetable patch at the back of the house. This was the moment - his starting point. It had taken him very little time to make up his mind and so that very next summer morning he began what he had to do.

Firstly; Christmas; it was going to be very different this year, so he planned with meticulous detail before calling his wife Celia to cast an eye. Of course she had been taken aback but Melvin had a way of fashioning convincing reasons for everything he undertook. So, when a few days later Celia found him out on the patio in the warm July sun - writing, she was not as surprised as perhaps she should have been to find that his 'story' was finally taking shape and a publisher would soon be found for this literary work that he'd begun many years ago but spoken of very little in recent times!

As summer rolled into Autumn there came a great and sudden wave of visiting friends and family; some they'd not seen for years! It was then that Celia became suddenly worried. Realisation hit both of them sometime around late September.

It was some months later that Celia Pumphrey sat with her friend Diana sipping tea in the front room of the house she'd shared with Melvin for so many years:

"It became intolerably hard for us both, but he still had so much energy even though it was really taking hold."

"But surely he needed to rest, how could he possibly have kept going?"

Celia's eyes shone as she enlightened her friend.

"You've heard of the legend from Greek mythology where the soldier runs non-stop for miles and miles to the city of Marathon to tell of the battle being won?"

Her friend nodded slowly but still looked puzzled:

"Don't you see? The soldier died, but he'd completed the mission. Melvin knew his days were numbered, he knew it was terminal. For him to accomplish everything he could from the day he found out was a race against time - and *he* won that race."

## THE FALLEN

Anyone can fall, but what does that mean?

Brave men have fallen in battle;

Heroes have fallen from grace;

But sometimes in life, people just fall . . . but if they do, it's *a/ways* for a reason.

\* \* \* \* \*

What now?

He'd grappled with the cold stonework and swung his body underneath the viaduct just in time. They surely hadn't seen him! But as he felt that sudden cold cut of night air engulf his tired hanging body, realisation began to set in. There was nothing else he could do, nowhere else he was able to hide, he had to hope they wouldn't find him. But as the approaching vicious cries betrayed the violent anger of his pursuers, he knew his time was nearly up.

So here he was, hanging desperately from the bridge.

How had it come to this? In those few cold, lonely but very precious moments, he started to recall it all:

They'd taken some risks, him and Kat, but they'd thought it was safe, they never reckoned on being caught. Where was she anyway? He'd split from her a while back . . . they'd had to . . . safer alone - less chance of them both being found.

Suddenly the shouting was right upon him. His body ached, racked with fatigue. He looked across to the hillside opposite and he thought he could see someone looking back at him, but there was no light, just the darkness of the night. He felt so alone, he looked down, and as he did so he panicked. He knew they were about to find him.

All of a sudden he felt calmer, it was like he was in a different place. He found himself sitting on a grass bank rubbing his eyes. Had he fallen? He didn't remember. He strained his eyes to watch the folks in the distance. What was going on? As he looked back at them it seemed as if they were looking for something down in the valley. A group of people were scouring around in the undergrowth, and there was something else now as well; - it wasn't so dark! He could see across the valley enough to make out the shapes of people moving around.

Now, he remembered Kat, his girlfriend and as if he needed no more stimulus he rose shakily to his feet. 'Where was she?'

He started to head south towards the town. The light was stronger now, he felt different, kind of refreshed even though not quite himself. It was a bit like being on something but

he'd been clean for weeks now; and so had she. 'Where was Kat?'

He walked eagerly towards the city lights, he could cross the railway again a little further up and then the winding footpath would bring him out right on to the main street. Time seemed to pass so quickly and he felt as if the night air was lifting him.

Suddenly, as he found himself making his way down towards the bus station he could hear the noise of misspent youth - the sound of unnecessary anger and antagonism. He felt suddenly alert, and suddenly very aware, and, quite unusually, he found himself running *towards* the sound.

He had to find out what was going on and he knew he needed to find Kat.

So, what now?

She'd run as soon as she'd read the situation. It had taken her all of five seconds to decide! They weren't going to stop. She looked down at the pavement in front of her oblivious to the pounding noise made by those gaining on her by the second. She had to beat them, they surely wouldn't spare any mercy, this was big serious stuff they were into and she wasn't going to try and kid herself. She knew it like it was.

As she ran the pavement told her a story: each paving slab was a moment in time, a chapter of her life passing quickly - a step that took her further each time but towards what?

They were on to her and suddenly it seemed as if the pavement in front was her whole life - falling away, vanishing before her! The end was in sight, soon Kat would have nowhere else to run!

He could see her now in the distance . . . yes, surely that was her . . . and they were close - too close! He had to act fast, he had to concentrate.

The next sound was sickening. Somewhere, in the back of her mind she knew what was coming. The sound of gunshots pierced the cold night air, but *she* was still standing!

It all happened so quickly, as these things do, but to him it seemed in slow motion. All he managed to actually do was dive in front of them, but he'd felt so angry, and determined and so much in control. There was a rumble and a nearby wall collapsed shedding mortar and brick dust into the close vicinity. She'd got past it, but they hadn't!

He kept on running, not daring to look over his shoulder. Not much further now, he knew he must get home . . . or at least to that safe haven. They were still coming for him. Faster he ran and the more desperate he became as the violent anger from his remaining pursuers became evident.

'Was she safe?' he thought . . . 'had he done enough?'

In the next few moments he strived to turn this over in his mind. It was hard, he wasn't sure. It hurt! Like the athlete giving everything – going for gold, he felt pain. He felt it everywhere, in every muscle - every sinew of his entire physical being. But had he done enough?

So, what happened next?

Well, they ran. They ran and ran and continued to run until they were clear of it all. But he could still hear them, they were still upon him. . . and he had to get away. . . so this was it. There was nothing else he could do, nowhere else to hide, he had to hope they wouldn't find him here.

So here he was, hanging desperately from that bridge.

How had it come to this? In those few cold, lonely but very precious moments, he'd recalled it all. His body ached, racked with fatigue. As he looked across at the hillside opposite he could see someone looking back at him . . . and he knew. . . he knew at that moment they were about to find him and his time was up.

He let go, and, suddenly, he felt calmer. And now, he *was* in that different place. . . a place that now felt familiar. He looked back towards the grass bank beneath the railway bridge, all the folk there . . . clearly they were looking for *him*.

Suddenly it all kicked in, he knew now what he must do. He *must* help Kat, his girlfriend . . . so, he let go . . . and he fell . . .

## THE WOMAN OF THE WOOD

It had been her idea in the first place so she couldn't really complain. Obviously the two men would want to pair together and leave her to meet the woman from 'Woodland Britain'. She didn't mind though, Sue Lamond had a habit of taking the lead role whenever needed.

'She'll be here soon' she thought to herself as she leaned on the small wooden stile that marked the entrance to the ancient woodland.

Their rendezvous was for six o'clock at the old outbuilding marked on the map at the far west of Trevalyon wood. Tim and Robin, she imagined, would probably already be delving deliciously into the deep undergrowth surrounding the rich woodland rides that, according to the map, were plentiful throughout. She could visualise Tim with his camera almost 'tasting' the insect life – he was a complete boffin, but a very likeable one. And Robin, with his knowledge of woodland plants would surely have a tale or two to tell when they meet up later that evening. But Sue had to wait for a Miss Evie Pollard, the lady from 'Woodland Britain' who should have showed up by now! She slipped her hand into her jacket pocket to reach for her mobile for what must have been about the fourth time - still no signal!

The rays of spring sun filtering through the trees concentrated a beam of warmth onto the back of her neck, and as they did so she felt a longing to be able to start her exploration of this invitingly ancient site. Her great love was for its larger inhabitants, she had studied the urban fox and its effect on woodland ecology at uni', the prospect of an opportunity for discovering any new colony of creatures inhabiting Britain's timeless greenery always excited her.

She strode vigorously through the narrow grass pathways lined with bracken, stick in hand. She had been walking for some time now and she was tired. Now and then her stocking-clad legs brushed against aggressive foliage, her skirt occasionally catching on bramble. On many a spring day had she trodden these parts and many a time had the birds sung her home. She needed that today more than ever, she actually felt quite faint, but she would soon be there, not far now. They would most probably be waiting for her, that was usually the case. She looked forward to seeing them every time, but this was different. Somehow, she knew her arrival at the cottage today was significant. She could see an outline image of the familiar building sharpen between the greenery, ever clearer as she struggled closer. Once there, she laid down on the wooden seat in front of the quaint old building. She felt tired and weak, but they would all be there and she was just glad to be there with them. At ease now, as she sunk into a deep and peaceful sleep.

She awoke with a bit of a start. She hadn't meant to fall asleep at all. The others should be there soon but she had apparently beaten them to this unusual spot at the west edge of the wood - their agreed rendezvous. As always with enthusiasm, she'd made both mental and physical notes on her way through. She'd seen much of interest. There were flowers, just so many natural spring flowers blooming! and the insect life was prolific, there seemed to be far more butterflies than she would usually see at this time of year. There was also the cottage, or at least the faint outline of what she'd thought to be an old cottage. Falling asleep however hadn't been in the plan, and was a slightly odd thing to do, even for her!

It was the sound of low voices nearby that woke her. She sat up quickly, quite shocked at having allowed herself to doze off. She rose to her feet ready to greet the two men as they came into view.

"By jove, you've beaten us to it!" exclaimed the stouter of the two men as he looked at his watch with mild surprise.

Both men were surprised to see that their friend had arrived before them, but she seemed to be alone!

"Not got her highness with you?" asked Tim, carefully replacing the lens cap on his camera.

"No." replied Sue. "Well, you see, I waited. I waited for ages - tried to ring her mobile but I couldn't get a signal. I'm hoping she'll just be here as agreed . . . like anytime now!"

"What did you say her name was again?"

"Evie Pollard, I think she's a 'Miss.'"

"Goodness, did you see that?" she remarked, instantly distracted by movement in the long grass. Both men seemed mildly surprised, they hadn't actually seen the fox that appeared suddenly from the undergrowth to their right; "Quite unusual - to see a fox in a woodland area like this." Commented Sue.

"This point we've agreed for a rendezvous, it isn't very significant," remarked Robin, the other man.

"No, I thought that." responded Sue, "The conservation map actually shows a building here but it just seems to be remnants. We were working from the same map though, I'm sure it won't be a problem. She seemed to be quite switched on when I spoke to her."

"So you have spoken to her directly?" Robin's eyebrows raised sharply.

"Yes, the other day, just briefly, it was a bad line but we were clear about the time and place to meet up. It's just that she was supposed to meet me at the entrance first and we were going to have a gentle saunter through. As it is, after waiting for ages I've had to rush

a bit to get here.”

A disturbance from above caused Robin to look up. Not just one, two, or three, but four squirrels were all busily scurrying between the branches. Suddenly their attention was diverted to shuffling sound coming from the trees behind them:

“Ahh!” came a voice. A woman perhaps in her late sixties emerged, stick in hand, dressed in a three-quarter length brown skirt that allowed just a glimpse of the heavily stockinged limbs beneath. Sue thought she seemed a little old fashioned and somewhat overdressed for such a day.

“It’s lovely to see you here.” continued the woman, “Have you seen them? Are they all still here?” She looked around at three puzzled faces. “The creatures . . . that’s what you’re here to see isn’t it?” Now the woman seemed puzzled;

“Well, yes, along with various other aspects.” replied a slightly bemused Tim.

“Good, good.” replied the woman gazing dreamily towards the setting sun.

There was an awkward pause before the elderly lady looked around then suddenly turned. She prodded her stick into the ground as if expecting to find something.

“Well, this is all wrong!” she muttered, peering into the long grass as she began shuffling away from the trio towards the trees with some haste. “Wait a minute . . . Evie!” called Sue, but the quaint old figure didn’t respond, she just walked off into the trees from where she’d come. Sue glanced at her companions. After just a moment’s hesitation all three made after her. Surely they were owed an explanation, she couldn’t simply turn up late as the representative of a national conservation body and then just leave without so much as word on the subject!

The three followed her into the trees but to no avail - she was nowhere to be seen - gone as quickly as she had come!

“What a cheek, and after I spent half the day waiting for her.” protested Sue indignantly.

They had not to wait another moment before they heard movement in the trees once more. They looked up, but it was a different face that now burst through the foliage; a much younger one;

“Ahh!” began the cheerful enthusiastic voice; “Evie Pollard,” she offered her hand to the two men, “and you must be Sue Lamond? We spoke on the phone. . .”

The three were silent as they looked blankly at each other. Evie continued enthusiastically;

“I’m so sorry for the delay, as always I got caught doing some research. – Not actually been here before you see, and I always like to research a new venue thoroughly.”

The new arrival looked around slightly awkwardly at the three somewhat bemused faces. Perhaps now would be a good moment to share what she'd found.

“You know it's amazing what you can discover online. This woodland has a quaint old history. There was apparently a 'Woman of the wood' that once lived here in an old cottage. She had an affinity with animals and they used to gather at her cottage. . . in fact, it would be just about here where we are standing! Well, one spring morning she was found dead outside her home, it seemed she had passed peacefully away in her sleep. She lived a solitary life but was well known to the locals and she had often stated with some passion that whom so ever enters this wood always has a duty to care for all wildlife. Apparently she went on to say that when she was no longer on this earth she would still be watching over them and checking up on everyone who ever passes through.”

## **DISTANT KARMA**

So you see, he couldn't really have understood why we were so shocked. Alan and I haven't had the chance to talk to him since - about what he said to us the other night over dinner.

Even though I've been in this game a long time it's still left us both feeling very cold. However, I as much as anyone should know that these things happen for a reason, even if we can't always see it. Some call it fate, I call it faith; a faith in just believing that doing good will lead to a good outcome and bad will lead to the opposite.

It all started back in the eighties, the part of my life I consider that really matters. I've been trying to help people for the thirty odd years that have passed since simply because I said 'okay' to that first offer. It's funny how things work out, I certainly never did any of it for the money!

It was Auntie Helen that got the ball rolling when she persuaded me to help out in a soup kitchen in Bradford during the late seventies. I found it fulfilling, being of some comfort to the less fortunate. I kind of realised I was helping them just by talking, it didn't matter who they were. So, I took the courses, did all the voluntary work; you know the stuff, charity shops, helping the old folk of the village, listening to their stories etc. That was what really got me the job in Leeds, helping out with Victim support, *and* actually getting paid for it! My life certainly took on a different shape from then onwards, and it all stemmed from that day in the spring of 1981, the day I first met Alan.

He just wandered in to the victim support centre quite churlishly as if he'd been sent and I should deal with him. He has never actually admitted that to me in all these years, but he arrived it seemed with a sense of formality, as if someone had said to him;

'You better go and see victim support, they'll sort you out.' So there I was, ready to listen. When he talked he felt at ease and we hit it off right away. He really opened up and let me know how sad and angry and insecure he was really feeling even though his parents were on their way. Being just a few years older than him really helped, if I'd been seventeen or something at the time it would all just never have happened.

He told me of the events of that day. He hadn't passed his driving test but he did own a car, well, sort of a car - one of those three-wheeler Reliant Robin things that were about everywhere back then. It was his pride and joy but he'd had to leave it in the high street and when it was time to go back to it things were hotting up and the police wouldn't let him through. Maybe that was just as well, I hate to think what might have happened to him if he'd got there and tried to put up some resistance.

The riots that summer were a tame thing compared to recent times where God knows, people have actually lost lives! Back in 1981 in Leeds city centre discovering your pride and joy rolled over and smashed up in the aftermath of a riot would have been very distressing for any teenager. This was made worse for Alan because of the reason he was there in the first place: A cousin he'd not seen for years had apparently run away to the city, Alan had offered to go and look for him with a friend and with very little else to go on. Well, the friend got frightened and caught the bus home before it all kicked off, Alan was left alone and before his parents could come to bale him out late the next day, he'd met me!

I must say the experience did mess him up a bit - not the meeting me you understand, but the loss of his vehicle. He found it hard to come to terms with. I know people will say it was only a car but human nature tends to pass off crimes we hear about happening to others with superficial sympathy, when it actually happens to you it always hits hard.

So that was my first real counselling job, and I've never really looked back. Therapeutic Counselling has been what I've done in one form or another ever since. It's over thirty years now since Alan and I first met, we've been happily married for twenty seven of them.

So, you see, I've met many people, had many clients, heard many stories from all over the north of England, but since that day nothing had made quite the same impression . . . nothing, that was, until Darrell Granby walked into my surgery three months ago.

Darrell was from Manchester. A likeable chap of around fifty but he'd suffered the ultimate loss; his wife of over twenty years had passed away and he had no one that could really understand how he was feeling. I would listen to him and once he started to tell his story I could feel his suffering:

"She was a good to me was Carol, always kept me on the straight and narrow." I remember him saying, "If only we hadn't gone out into town that night perhaps it would have been different, but then again, maybe it would have just prolonged the inevitable, or, we wouldn't ever have found out?" I remember him pondering heavily over this point and I had intended to use it as the very essence of a starting point by which to counsel him. They'd been caught up in the riots in Manchester in the summer of 2011, only peripherally, but his wife Carol's reaction to it all was catastrophic. Although not really hurt she had gone into some sort of traumatic state that lasted for days. Tears rolled down his cheeks as he recalled the events. It was sad to hear;

"I don't know when it took hold, I just know she weren't ever the same after that night in August. Just a few weeks later the Doctor suggested the tests. . ." – he found this

conundrum the hardest to deal with . . . “and that very thing just made her condition worse . . . if she hadn’t gone for tests maybe she’d have recovered?” He always felt the knowledge of her condition had made it worse. The truth is she had a brain tumour, a large one, and it wasn’t so much a matter of if, more just a matter of when it would take hold. She went downhill very quickly, she didn’t even make it through the winter!

So you see, Darrell was a man in a pitiful state, but there was hope. Shining through his deep sorrow came a genuine sense of regret, a sense of feeling that he perhaps hadn’t always gone about things the right way. I knew I could work with him, I listened and he responded, but I was not to get the chance!

It was one day when Alan came to pick me up early and we were still in session that things really took a different turn. On the way out the two met face to face, they started chatting away as if they’d known each other for years and in the space of thirty seconds they’d hit it off! They both seemed to have so much in common. They’d both supported Leeds united as boys but had later defected to the Reds of Manchester, they discovered they were of similar age and both got married within a couple of months of each other. It really was incredible to see my ‘patient’ suddenly and unwittingly being whisked away by my husband! That’s how it seemed that evening, and of course, he couldn’t now continue being my client - that first session had to be the last, I couldn’t allow personal involvement.

Things moved on and Darrell quickly became our friend. All he really needed was friends he could talk to about life in general. All this makes the other night even harder for us!

So, the two men had chemistry and it seemed good. One evening when he came round to ours I just listened in, hardly needing to join the conversation. The two guys were going deep and they didn’t need my input. I suppose it was inevitable really; Alan drew comparison between their marriages, he paid me glowing tributes and considered he’d just been luckier than Darrell. Darrell for his part sort of understood that things in his life were bad right now but it was all kind of okay. Every now and then he’d give some account of past events and paint them in a different light followed by his justification such as, “I should have spent the money on something better but you know what it’s like when you’ve just been paid,” or, “Yeah, silly really - shouldn’t have done it but we were young back then.” Darrell, for all his sadness could still look back on things a little frivolously at times and often it seemed with little sense of guilt.

Alan only ever mentioned his cousin because of the connection of time and place. From some of his earlier accounts it seems that Darrell lived in Leeds at around the same time

that Alan's cousin had supposedly run away to the city. This cousin Alan had only ever met once as a very small child, the cousin he was looking for that day back in 1981 and had only ever known as *Daz*. I know Alan never knew the surname of his mother's sister's first husband, there was some big family fall out and his mother had deliberately kept certain facts from them. But the two were connecting that night at our house, and as the conversation went deeper, something from the past was drawing them closer!

So I suppose it was inevitable really that night at dinner, I should have seen it coming really. Almost nothing in life is a complete accident. Ultimately we are all responsible for our actions and if there is a price to pay, we have to pay it. I guess that has played out for Darrell Granby over the years, it's just still hard to get one's head round!

We were talking of times past, good and bad, what we did, what we liked and what we didn't etc. and it's just one of those odd things that occurred - Alan and I had never actually told him how we'd met! - so you see he couldn't have really understood.

“ Those were good days the eighties” *that was how he began*. “I was a bit of a lad in them days, living in Leeds.” *(this much we'd known, but we hadn't made any meaningful connection!)* “I remember one spring evening, I know I shouldn't have done this but, what the hell, it was all a bit of a laugh.” *(at this point we started to feel a little uneasy.)* “Everyone was rioting right? - you couldn't get done for it, the police weren't in control. I remember we were in the high street and there was this tiny little Red Reliant Robin three wheeler just sitting there.” *Alan's jaw dropped as Darrell continued grinning oblivious to the growing unease forming around him* “. . . So we rolled it . . . it smashed up pretty good . . .”

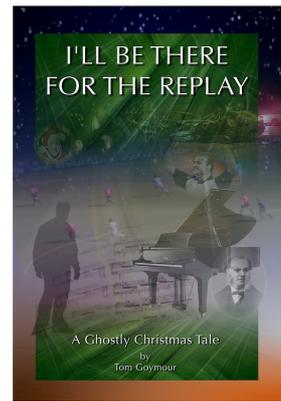
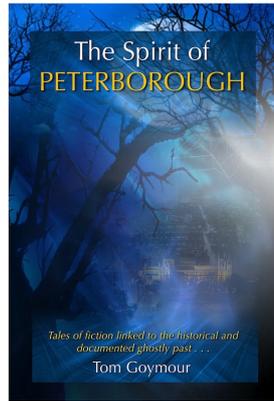
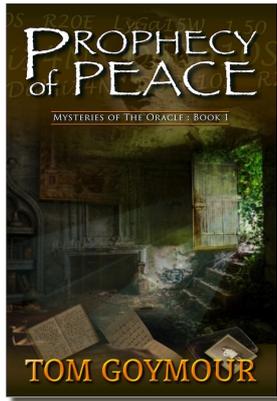
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Books by **Tom Goymour**

## **BONUS MATERIAL**

**These stories are just a taster - something to inspire you to not only want to read more but perhaps to try and write as well?**

**The books above are all available through my website as unique, signed first edition printed paperback copies. And of course, they are available as ebooks for instant download through all the usual channels.**

**What I'm giving you here is an exclusive preview and some insight into the nature of the books.**

**Click on one of the book images above to be taken to an exclusive preview/extract.**

### **PROPHECY OF PEACE**

Sometimes strange things seem to happen - powerful events leave their mark in history and the good and evil are exposed to the world in a way that we can't make sense of. But what if really everything that happens to us is pre-destined? If all events had their place in time and always it was for a reason? What if through the oracle we could someday discover all the answers . . . ?

This first story sets the scene. The events that are taking place on one particular specific evening build to a climax that our characters find themselves drawn into. Slowly, the answers start to appear, but not before we've been hauled through a web of intrigue, mystique and desperation. The answers are not always what you expect!

'It's not the end, nor is it the beginning of the end, but it is I believe the end of the beginning.'

(Now where have I heard that before? And did I say there was an oracle involved?)

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## Prologue

The noise came again, growing stronger all the time. He could hear that dreaded sound of shell fire echoing all around him. A cold fear he'd come to know so well once again began to crawl its way deep into his flesh, there was nowhere to turn, nowhere safe to go. Suddenly he felt exposed; he was isolated and alone and as the sounds became intolerable, he knew he probably didn't have very much time left.

Broken by the noise he huddled down in the dark with his arms up protecting his face and head. He was shaking, and he could feel the intense cold, but with each trembling second that passed he knew survival was all that mattered. He couldn't die right here and now, he wasn't ready - today wasn't his time. As is often the case in times of great desperation, the next few seconds seemed to him to pass like an eternity as his mind recalled the past:

He and a couple of lads from the village had caught the train to take them to sign up south of the Capital, they were aged fourteen and sixteen, but he was older - certainly old enough, so he had agreed to go with them to add sheer authenticity to their plight.

Nobody had stood in their way and they were able to join up easily. *They* wanted to fight – to defend the country – to do their bit – play their part in the war that was supposed to have been the war to end all wars – the war they said would be over by Christmas . . . but *he* didn't. War was always the wrong option in his eyes and from the day it had started he'd known he would always carry the burden of guilt of not wanting to be there right from the start. He had felt that way long before anyone else had worked out the pitiful horror and hopelessness of the situation. It was kind of strange to him that the others didn't really get it at first, there was such an atmosphere of courageousness about the place he hadn't been able to show his fears. But it wasn't long before that bubble of hope had been cruelly burst. It soon dawned on his comrades that the war - that war that people had said was to end all wars, was *not* going to be over by Christmas and that many hundreds of thousands of them were going to die before it was finally so.

Christmas eve 1914; he'd never forgotten that night. Something happened- something that seemed, just for that short while so wonderfully hopeful; they'd played football with the enemy that night . . . on the eve of the Christian festival celebrated the world over. Someone from a distant trench had started to sing 'Silent Night'. They'd listened intently for a few seconds until a small chorus joined the lone voice in the still of the night. He could hear it in his mind right now, deep amongst that sound of shell fire that thundered through his head he could still hear those magical seconds of silence - those moments just before

they arose from the trenches, and, holding hands a high, placed down their guns. Then, they'd all followed suit - every man, and moments later they'd found themselves embracing the enemy. Someone produced a football and jackets were enthusiastically thrown on the ground and a game was begun.

He remembered Gustav – *his* German, the man with whom he'd struck up that wonderful but purely momentary friendship. He wondered now if he was still alive! They'd given each other their full name with a kind of optimistic hope that one day, when it was all over, they might meet again.

It could have lasted, all it takes is for both sides to give, even if just a little at first, then would come trust. The prize of peace is always wonderful - but the stakes of risk were so high. As his memories dwindled in that moment of daydream, it became slightly comforting to realise that on that night at least they'd all been in the same boat; the young german men hadn't wanted to be there fighting any more than they had.

He clasped his hands to his head even tighter and curled his aching frame into a more complete bundle. Still those hostile sounds came from all around him.

How many had he killed? He would never know, no one would. He felt suddenly sick, war shouldn't be like this . . . war just shouldn't be!

His mind jerked back to the present moment. Where to go to take cover? Suddenly now he got a grip of reality, and in desperation he started to crawl across the cold rough surface.

'Shelter . . . he would be safe if he could get to shelter,' (he'd always believed that.) Now, here he was in a place where he could shelter and he knew deep down that he *would* survive. This was his safe haven - at least, for now.

His leg scraped against a hard edge, he dislodged something and a flutter of paper fell towards him. Through the darkness he could see it was an envelope that had landed almost right into his hands. He grabbed it and held it tightly and the minute he did so he felt something quite strange but very powerful, he knew it held some sort of secret that mustn't be lost. He mustn't let it get into the wrong hands, not at any cost.

Right at that moment he was safe, he felt sure of that, and it was right then that he got the vision that was to become so important to him . . . this place would always be safe – today, tomorrow, and at any time in the future, but only this very place - right here, in this very room.

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## **I'LL BE THERE FOR THE REPLAY**

A homely 'cozy mystery' Christmas ghost story.

Paula Patterson's big day is looming shortly before Christmas. She is an amateur pianist giving a concert, but something else seems to be shaping events around her and her family . . . it all seems to be telling them something. There's an accident, and a Christmas book she was given, someone must surely know what happened in the family's past all those years ago? Why now? Why does it affect Paula at this critical time in her life? And, what is about to happen at the replay?

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### **“Saturday 15th December**

It was Saturday and the children had now broken up from school. David was Paula's other half - her husband and her soul mate. Their family life was good and with David's job in graphic design they could afford to live in their large spacious house in the quiet village of Marlston not far from the small market town of Irminster they'd always felt was home. Even though they'd lived there quite some time there were still parts of the village they didn't really know.

On this uneventful bitterly cold Saturday David decided they should go for a walk out of the village, - the kids were bored and the afternoon was moving on.

“Come on,” he called “Liam, Annie . . . get your coats and wrap up, we're going out.”

There was the usual slight resistance to putting down the Nintendo DS and having to be enticed away from the football half times, but five minutes later the three of them were heading off down the high street.

“Dad, it's cold.” Liam was shivering.

“Cold enough for snow I shouldn't wonder,” replied his father excitedly, “come on boy, where's your Christmas spirit?”

“This way you two.” Annie led the way.

They had some distance to walk down the high street before they reached the outskirts of the village. Past the Post office on the corner they went. Then, bearing left took them past the shops. There was a mini supermarket, the Chemists and then the Bike shop which Liam had often visited. After a slight incline they descended passing the last few houses before the Blue Boar public house situated on the outskirts of the village known to many simply as *The Tavern* came into view. The light had suddenly faded and the wind was now stirring a little stronger. In the seven or eight minutes it had taken them to reach the pub the temperature had certainly dropped. As the three walked vigorously along their

attention was caught by something they could hear.

“Listen.” said Liam

“What?” replied Annie.

“Ssshhh!”

“Oh yes, I can hear music playing.” replied their father.

As they were drawing level with the pub they could hear it was coming from there.

David could recognise '*Oh I wish it could be Christmas*' booming out once they were near enough to pick up more than just the base line. . . (you know how with loud distant music you can only ever hear the base line until you get close.)

“It's a Christmas party.” Annie declared.

“I know that one, it's that old one from when you were little Dad, the one Mummy hates!” said Liam.

“Yes, that's right,” laughed his father, “funny thing is, it's a bit early in the day, and, I never knew they used the Blue Boar for parties!”

“Daddy, you've never *been* to the Boar pub have you. You always say you have better things to do with your time so how would you know they don't have do's and things going on?” Annie always had a way with words.

The trio moved on and flakes of snow started to fall. The sky was now black. The street lights were on but everywhere seemed suddenly dark as they started to move out of the village boundary. There had been the occasional car passing them but now, all was silent. Suddenly it seemed there were no cars, not a sound other than anthems blaring out from the public house that was now a hundred metres behind them. As they headed into the dark David could just make out the lilting voices chanting 'Mary's Boy child' to a very 'seventies' beat before it finally died away in the distance;

'Another oldie' he thought to himself.

They were cold, and it was strange as they headed away from the village into the dark, all was now completely silent. Only minutes earlier it had seemed so different, now it was like being in another world. They were out in the countryside, the high street had become the remote road leading in and out of the village. Their father became suddenly unsure of where they were! It was so dark, and now snow was falling, and quite fast!

“Dad where actually are we? It's got dark so quick?” Liam was a little frightened.

“We're on the edge of the village silly. Aren't we daddy?” chirped Annie.

David Patterson felt a little uneasy, in fact, even though perhaps only ten or twelve minutes from his own front door, if the truth be known he was lost! However, he wasn't

about to admit that to his children. Instead he brushed it aside and drew their attention to the snow.

The talk soon turned to the possibility of a white Christmas. Liam reckoned the odds were as high as 5 – 1, they'd been researching it at school. His dad reckoned it wasn't as high as that and he must have his facts wrong. David remembered only two really true white Christmases from his childhood, - either end of the nineteen seventies. He also remembered as a boy getting lost in the snow in one of them not a million miles away from where they were right now! 'We can go on a little further then I'll say we'll turn round and get these kids back for a late tea' David thought to himself.

Just then they could make out a faint shaft of light across the field to their left, then a distant spot light started to come towards them. There was an accompanying sound as another light in close proximity gave it away. They kept to the side as the vehicle approached and suddenly the noise became louder, the throaty rattle converted itself to the sound of a roaring car engine.

“Wow' exclaimed Liam as an odd looking car thundered past them. “That looked old!”

“It was” replied his dad, you don't see many of them now -”

“ - Look!” shouted Annie interrupting her father as she peered into the distant snow now settling across the fields.

The others looked.

“Okay kids, we'd better head back.” David, realising what they were looking at was concerned, this wouldn't be very pleasant so close to home and he didn't really want the children to see any more of it.

“We gotta check it out dad, - you never know what might have happened.”

Such is human nature that these things become magnets for our curiosity and David Patterson soon found himself inching forwards.

As they got closer to the scene they could hear sounds,- sounds of car engines petering to a stop. They could see the build up of at first just a few lights, then as the undulations in the landscape gave way to a clearer line of sight through the blizzard, banks of car headlights building up. Liam could now make out a blue flashing light but he couldn't see what was next to it, he couldn't quite get the view that would give him the information he wanted.

“Come on, there's been an accident or something . . probably nothing too serious” David felt cold shivers run down his spine as he spoke the words, there now seemed to be something quite major that had happened perhaps a hundred and fifty metres or so in front

of them and he, like his children felt the urge to find out a little more before they headed back. Now they could hear another siren, a different sound, - just the two note pitch 'An ambulance with the old style siren?' he thought.

“Come on you two, let's go back” he said.

Then, suddenly! They were startled by a voice in front of them repeating those last two words . .

“Go back . . yes, go back, you can't do anything here.”

The man was almost shouting at them as he walked swiftly towards them with animated arm gestures. He appeared no more than twenty feet away. “The emergency services have it all under control, you mustn't go any nearer, turn back I tell you, please, go home.”

The individual in front of them spoke with such authority that all three of them found themselves turning to head home almost before the words had left his lips. The man wore strange clothes, a sort of sleeveless body warmer, and very odd trousers Annie thought.

“We're on our way back now anyway.” Their father spoke to the gentleman.

“Good . . good.” replied the stranger, and with that he turned and disappeared into the night.

Nobody spoke for a second or two as they walked back towards the village. Liam broke the silence;

“How odd . . where did he pop up from?”

“I don't know,” replied his father, “suppose he must have been sent to clear the area!”

“If he was a policeman he would have had a yellow coat on.” Annie pointed out.

“I didn't say he was a policeman.” replied her father. “Anyway, we need to get home. The snow is settling and I'm cold even if you aren't.”

“It looked serious . . I hope no one is badly hurt . . or even . .”

“ . . Try not to think about it” interrupted her father. “There's nothing we can do now. Let's just get home safely”

“And, he had funny trousers . . did you see? They were all big at the bottom.”

Liam managed a grin at Annie's last remark.

As they strode back towards the lights of the village they could hear again the distant base beat coming from the Tavern. Once near enough they could tell what was now playing . . 'So here it is Merry Christmas' rang out Noddy Holder's voice.

“Might not be a merry Christmas for someone if that turns out to be serious.” moaned Liam sympathetically.

“I know, but it's out of our hands.” replied his father. “Another thing . .” David

continued . . . “they don't seem to have any modern songs in that place? Everything we've heard has been from the nineteen seventies!”

“I thought you liked the old time songs?” said Annie.

“I do . . . but . . . oh never mind.” her father was tired, he just wanted to get home.

“I like those old ones, they play them every Christmas because they are the best, - nobody writes any decent Christmas songs these days.” Liam had strong opinions about music, that side of him took after his mother.

As they passed the Blue Boar and found themselves heading back down the familiar surroundings of the high street all three noticed something quite odd!

“It's stopped snowing!” proclaimed Annie.

“Yes, in fact, it doesn't even look as if it's been snowing here!” her father was slightly puzzled as this seemed unusual to say the least.

“Yeah,” said Liam, “and you know what else . . . it's actually getting lighter!” ”

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## **THE SPIRIT OF PETERBOROUGH**

Peterborough, just an ordinary city full of people like you and me, steeped in a history, totally unique. We all know the past can affect the future, but what if it was more than perhaps you might think!

These are stories about fictional people of our time who are drawn into adventures of 'ghostly mysteriousness.' Some contain true historical links and some are tales of strange happenings based around well documented ghostly occurrences. All are ghostly tales one way or another.

The *Spirit of Peterborough* can see through all of time as he dips in and tells us these stories as they unfold before him.

You'll never see Peterborough in quite the same light again . . . and if you are not from the area I pledge you'll enjoy a truly unique experience reading this.

[Get book](#)

I believe that writing stories works best when you have direct experience of the thing that has caused you to write, however small it is. Never has this been truer than what became the catalyst for me writing this book.

Yes, the stories are all set in Peterborough (UK) - my home town, and yes, they do contain a lot of local references, but they are all told as stand-alone stories. Peterborough is an ordinary city, just like any other. It has a history formed by its people, their lives and experiences. I tell some strange, ghostly and spiritual tales in this book, they are all based

on some degree of true historical fact but feature contemporary characters of fiction. They will make you think . . . 'what if something like that that could happen to me . . . today . . . right here in my home town?'

***But right now, here's a story what I want to give you***

You see . . . there is a story that's NOT in the book . . . I just couldn't find a place for it this first time around but it is the reason why I got the inspiration to write the book in the first place. Allow me a paragraph more to explain:

One night back in 2011 my son came home very late one night having walked from a friend's house about 3 miles across the suburbs of the city, (a common thing for him to do back then.) He passed by a well known railway bridge, and, stopping to catch his breath as he had been jogging he looked back under the bridge to see (he claims) a faceless figure staring back at him! Needless to say he made a run for it. I learned of his experience the next day.

That following day saw the taking place of a big football match in the city with the right result for the home team and it occurred to me that two decades or so earlier the same sporting feat had been achieved by the club.

So, for a bit of fun that evening I made up a story for my two younger sons about this guy who saw a ghost one day and then found that the other big event of that weekend (the football match), played a massive significance to the events going on around him and the ghost he'd seen. Also events ran in parallel to a similar match 20 odd years previously. I won't give any more away here - this particular story *is* in the book . . . BUT . . . here's the point:

My oldest daughter caught me telling this story and said I should write it down - so I did, and a sort of unusual format was born; I researched true past mysterious events, all with a ghostly twist, and I combined them with modern day fiction to create creepy contemporary stories.

Now, for the first time, here is the story that is NOT in the book. I wrote it some time later when reflecting back on that very first night of inspiration when my son experienced the ghostly sighting. I kind of stereo-typed him as the main character, but there is a lot more to the story than that.

This story isn't available anywhere else unless you have acquired it as 'free' in a package with this book.

Here exclusively is the complete story:

[A Day in a Life](#)

Thank you for bothering to read, and I hope you've enjoyed this little jaunt.



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