

Survival on Tap

By

Chris Statham



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The Ugly Glory series showcases authors who are homeless or have lived experience of it, writing about their experiences in a realistic, down-and-dirty fashion. **WARNING:** some works in this series contain harrowing, explicit or sexually offensive words or images that may disturb or shock some readers.

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About the Author

I'm an entrepreneur and business consultant by day, novelist and poet by night. The son of a British Army officer, I volunteered as a teacher in rural Tanzania in 1997 before going to university to study marketing. I have lived and worked in Ethiopia, Germany, Kenya, Jordan, Ireland, Malawi, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania and the UK over the last 28 years; my varied experiences of culture, relationships, food, music and everything else that makes the world go round are the source of my inspiration.

Introduction

In this collection, I offer a window into the raw and unvarnished realities of life. While I have not personally experienced the depths of deprivation, my experiences have allowed me to witness the struggles that many endure daily. I have walked through slums where hope is a scarce commodity, sat in makeshift shelters where resilience is the only currency, and listened to stories of survival that defy comprehension. These encounters have left an indelible mark on me, shaping my understanding of humanity's capacity to endure and persist. I have been humbled by stories, other lives becoming part of my own.

My own experience has been far from pristine. It's been a rollercoaster of challenges and adventure, some of which many would deem unsavoury, even taboo. I have battled mental health struggles that left me feeling like a stranger in my own mind. At times, I have fought alcohol and insecurities' relentless grip. I have navigated the complexities of sex work—a world that exists in the shadows of conventional respectability. These experiences, though fraught with pain and vulnerability, have also revealed moments of unexpected beauty and strength. They have taught me that life's grittiest corners often hold the most profound truths, and that survival itself is an act of defiance and artistry.

This is not just a series of observations or personal experiences, but a mosaic of lived moments, reflections, and people I've met as I give voices to the unheard. It is for those who seek truth in the raw, the broken, and the unapologetically real. These poems are not meant to romanticize hardship and differences, but to illuminate it. To honour the unique resilience of those navigating life's harshest terrains. They are a tribute to the quiet heroes who find light in the darkest places, who rebuild themselves from the fragments of their struggles. Through this work, I hope to bridge

the gap between the seen and the unseen, the spoken and the silenced, and to offer a glimpse into the stark beauty that exists within life's most challenging realities. This collection is a testament to the unvarnished truth of the human condition.

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Sex work

I explore sex work and desire through the raw, stripping away the gloss to expose the gritty, unvarnished truths of human connection. These poems delve into the messy, often contradictory nature of longing—the ache, the sweat, the moments of tenderness and brutality that define our most intimate experiences. Fleeting encounters laid bare in all its complexity, revealing the beauty and chaos of what it means to want and be wanted.

Buy Me

A loaf of bread or jam doughnut,
buy me also.
Condoms in a pharmacy,
beer in every store,
why not buy me?

Buy a tram ticket,
five fruit and two veg,
pet food...
buy me also.

Pencils sharpened and exercise books,
wherever you go,
whichever shop you might enter,
everything is for sale...
and so am I.

I am on the street,
this my home,
darkness my natural habitat.

Alcohol and sex,
so present in my past,
this my now,
I expect my future also,
everything,
me,
a commodity that has its price.

To some,
whether John or hooker.
I live the unthinkable
others, the ordinary;
I say,



I'm living honesty in its most pure form,
sex and desire.

In this world of lies,
deceit,
Facebook pretending,
Instagram famous,
being not who you are.

Consider work...
yours or mine,
people you share a building,
sit with for eight, ten or more hours,
but what do you know of your colleagues or they you?
Most hide the truth of messy lives.

Family?
Christmas dinners and false bonhomie,
fake smiles for a few hours;
please,
pull the other cracker!

Religion,
praying to a god in the hope of eternal salvation,
few willing to make the sacrifices demanded to live by the
Word,
kidding themselves there's something more,
a hereafter.

The world full of untruths.
Many say,
you're not a man if you have to pay for sex,
but they prefer porn,
live in denial of their true sexual selves.

Us women or gigolos,
this is a life of choice,