

A powerful and distinctive voice with echoes of Martin McDonagh's work: dark, raw and blackly comic.

- **Andrew Bonner, BAFTA nominated *Film Producer*.**

Fabulously vivid characters and dialogue that dances off the page.

- **Sue Moorcroft, author and head judge, *Writers' Forum Magazine*.**

Your voice is so strong on the page.

- **Eva Lewin, Writer Development Manager, *Spread the Word*.**

Man or Mouse is up there with the very best Brit Grit I've read. Rarely have I read prose so direct, so stark. So brilliantly exposing.

- **Ian Ayris, author.**

Your dialogue is so strong, natural and entertaining.

- **Clare Fisher, Writer.**

Amazing. Fantastic read!

- **Mark Sanderson, Screenwriter.**

Cutting-edge description. Brilliant dialogue. Option this quick, Guy Ritchie!

- Caroline Lawrence, author, *The Roman Mysteries*.

I find your writing very raw and disturbing. I was sucked in completely by your words and certain images stayed with me much like an Iain Banks novel.

- Laura Millets, Actress.

Seriously, this is a great piece of work. Pulled me in from the first sentence and didn't let me go until the very end where you serve up a killer twist - pun intended.

- Cat Stewart, Screenwriter, *Nashville Film festival*.

One of the most compelling and original shorts I've read in a long time.

Jimari Jones, Film Producer.

Captivating and a good read all the way to the end, which...Wow! I'll just leave it at that so I won't give anything away. I thought I knew what would happen but was wrong. I love writing like that.

- Lisa Dono, Screenwriter.

MAN OR MOUSE

content warning: very strong language, drug use,
violence

1 EXT. STREET, EAST LONDON - NIGHT

MARK, 17, jeans, bomber jacket, hoodie up, scruffy as a stray dog, walks towards a pub called The Judge's Gavel.

The blue lights of a flashing siren on a parked ambulance outside the pub flash in his eyes.

Two MEDICS exit the pub carrying a stretcher.

Mark walks slowly towards the pub but stops to look at the YOUNG MAN on the stretcher with shards of glass stuck in his face, blinking blue in the siren's light.

The Young Man's pain-soaked eyes catch Mark's. But Mark averts his gaze and walks past into --

2 INT. THE JUDGE'S GAVEL - NIGHT

Mark enters.

It's a typical London boozer, old black and white photos on the walls, an Oliver poster, a portrait of Diana.

And on a wall-mounted TV screen a BBC news story shows Saddam Hussein being hung.

The subtitles read: **EXECUTION OF A LAWLESS TYRANT**

DEBS, (50's) the landlady, is sweeping up bits of broken glass and blood and lager.

DOGFACE (25) white, a nose that's been bitten off and sewn back on

and

TRIPPY (30) Irish, inked from head to toe, wears combats and a black leather jacket over his khaki Che Guevara T-shirt

are trying to put a leg back on a broken table.

There's obviously been a scuffle.

As Mark enters, Debs isn't surprised to see him but wishes she hadn't. Dogface ignores him and Trippy nods a silent acknowledgement of his entrance.

JIM, (60) a brutal, weathered, old school gangster appears,

calmly, from behind the bar, nursing his bloody hand like a bear with a sore paw.

JIM
(to Mark)
Alright, Son.

MARK
Alright, Jim. What happened here?

JIM
Never mind what happened here. I'm a man down for tonight. Are you in?

MARK
Who me?

JIM
No, Bill 'n' Ben the flowerpot men.

Jim leans his face into Mark's ear and whispers.

JIM (CONT'D)
Gotta serve someone up.

Jim offers his bloody hand.

Mark shakes it.

JIM
Eleven tonight. Outside.

Mark smiles, beaming.

MARK
Wicked.

JIM
Don't let me down.

Jim flashes a dazzling smile, puts a trilby on, slips into his long black crombie and swishes out the door like Al Capone.

Mark sees he's got Jim's blood on his hand.

DEBS
Made a pact with the devil, have you?

Mark wipes the blood on his jeans.

Dogface smashes the table leg on the bar, breaking it in half.

DOGFACE
Fuck this!

TRIPPY
(to Debs)
Sorry about the furniture, like.

DEBS
Go on, you two, get lost. Filth'll be here any minute.

TRIPPY
Mark, do you fancy a kebab?

Mark looks to Debs for guidance. Her eyes tell him not to.

MARK
Um...yeah.

Dogface hides the broken table leg inside his jacket.

3 EXT. DALSTON HIGH STREET - NIGHT

Trippy and Dogface skulk along, Mark three steps behind, running to keep up.

Dogface keeps his hands in his jacket pockets, and his weapon concealed.

TRIPPY
Did you see the state of him, like?

DOGFACE
Prick deserved it. You don't call Big Jim 'B.J'. Everyone knows that.

MARK
Who was it?

Dogface whips out the broken table leg, grabs Mark around the neck and thrusts him against a wall, threatening to smash him in the face.

DOGFACE
What's it gotta do with you?

MARK
Nothing!

DOGFACE

What did Jim say to you, anyway?

MARK

What?

DOGFACE

I said what did Jim say to you?!

MARK

Nothing, Dog...I...

Dogface's eyes widen, his nostrils flare, furious --

TRIPPY

Dog!

DOGFACE

What did Jim say to you?

MARK

Nothing... asked me if I wanted to work, that's all.

DOGFACE

When?

MARK

Tonight.

DOGFACE

And you said?

MARK

Yeah.

Dogface lets him go, drops his weapon, snorts phlegm and phlobs it on the ground.

The trio walk on, Mark two steps behind.

4 EXT. KEBAB SHOP - NIGHT

Trippy exits first, followed by Dogface, then Mark.

On the step, an old Vietnamese landmine victim, begs with one leg.

Mark gives him his bag of chips.

5 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Trippy walks next to Dogface, eating their kebabs.

Mark tries to keep up. When he does --

DOGFACE
What d'you feed that scrounger for?

Mark looks at Trippy for an answer.

DOGFACE
Oi! I'm talking to you.

TRIPPY
Dog, you're a vigilante. Do you know
what that means?

DOGFACE
It means I do nonces.

TRIPPY
Anything else?

Dogface stuffs his face, staring at Mark, who tries not to give away his fear.

TRIPPY
It means you're a self-appointed do-er of justice on behalf of those too weak to defend themselves, and whom the penal system has failed to protect, according to the general consensus of the volunteer committee i.e. us. Now your man there, in case you didn't notice, was too weak to defend himself.

Dogface grunts.

TRIPPY (CON'T)
Oh forget it. It's like Educating fucking Rita.

6 EXT. STREET BENCH - NIGHT

Trippy, Dogface and Mark sit, finishing their kebabs.

MARK
Jim said we've gotta 'serve someone up'. What's he mean?

DOGFACE
It means 'do the cunt in'.

TRIPPY
Serve someone up? Deliver him...to
God, I suppose, on a platter, like...
John the Baptist's head.

Mark stops eating, looks at Trippy.

TRIPPY (CON'T)
Well what d'you think he meant? We're
all popping round to serve him dinner?
Do I look like Jamie Oliver?

DOGFACE
Fuck this.

Dogface goes.

Trippy chuck's his wrapper away, then grabs Mark by the arm -

TRIPPY
This way.

MARK
What? Where?

7 EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

It's dark. A few paces in, Trippy stops, releases his grip.

MARK
What the...Trip, what the, what's
going on?

Trippy lights a cigarette and offers Mark one, who takes it
and sparks up.

TRIPPY
Look, don't come tonight, like.

MARK
Why?

TRIPPY
Because violence is like sex and
drugs. It's not for kids.

MARK
I'm not a kid.

TRIPPY
Well you're not a man, either, are
you! How old are you?

MARK
Eighteen.

TRIPPY
Bollocks are you.

Trippy's vocal pitch drops. He whispers.

TRIPPY
Listen. It's dangerous. You could get
banged up for life, like...we all
could... Look, I know you wanna prove
yourself to the big boss --

MARK
What?

TRIPPY
I've seen the way you creep up to him,
looking for a fucking father figure.
That's why Dogface hates you...sibling
fucking rivalry.

MARK
What?

TRIPPY
Do you think you're the first lost
sheep to crawl in off the streets
looking for a shepherd? London's
crawling with you!

MARK
What are you on about?

TRIPPY
Fact is, the boss has taken a shine to
you, like you're the prodigal fucking
son or something. I mean, he never
uses people he doesn't know, if you
know what I mean. He isn't the type to
take risks. We've all been around for
donkeys. I've known the boss for
fifteen years, since I came over from
Dublin, like, done five long years
with the cunt. Dogface is like his
surrogate son... adopted him in prison,

like. They were both doing a ten stretch for armed robbery.

Trippy drags on his cigarette.

MARK

But...

TRIPPY

We're family. A clan. I mean, who are you? Nobody knows you. You've only been around five minutes, like.

A loud meeeeow!

The two both jump and turn to see a black cat sneaking along the fence, back high, staring at them, green eyes glaring. It flicks its tail and disappears.

TRIPPY

You see! An omen!

With a final drag Trippy crushes the dog-end under his shoe. His voice intensifies, heavier, more dangerous.

TRIPPY

Listen, take my advice, fuck off and don't come back. I'll have a word with the boss, tell him you got sick or something, or had to go home, see your folks...

MARK

No!

TRIPPY

What d'you mean, no?

MARK

No. I shook on it. I'm in.

TRIPPY

You're an arrogant little gobshite!

His tone lightens.

TRIPPY

Alright then, suit yourself. Don't say I didn't warn you.

Mark watches him scuffle away, kicking the ground.

Trippy turns.

TRIPPY
Eleven o'clock. Don't be late.
(under his breath, which Mark
doesn't hear)
Cunt.

8 INT. SQUAT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Mark pushes open the door into his dilapidated squat. Closes it.

9 INT. SQUAT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mark makes his way to an old mattress on the floor.

He tries the light. No electric. Crawls under a dirty old quilt to keep warm.

Under his pillow he finds rizla and a lump of hash. He skins up in the dark.

The flickering flame illuminates the innocence in his eyes, and the squalid old 1950's prefab he's squatting in.

He lights the joint and takes a few puffs, head back on his pillow, then picks up a copy of Steinbeck's *Of Mice & Men*, opens to a page marked with a dog-eared corner, and starts to read --

Curley's wife / flopped like a fish

-- Mark dozes off, the joint in his fingers.

He drops the book.

In his thoughts / daydreams --

Moments later, Mark wakes, the joint burning his fingers.

He jumps up, runs to the --

10 BATHROOM -

-- splashes his hand with icy cold water and rushes out the door --

11 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Mark runs towards The Judge's Gavel.

Bright lights of a van blind Mark as it pulls up next to him.

Jim leans out of the driver's window.

JIM
You're late.

MARK
Sorry, Jim.

The door slides open. Mark climbs in the back.

12 EXT/INT. VAN - NIGHT

Jim pulls away.

It's dark.

A flash of street light illuminates the snake on Dogface's neck.

For a split second its red eyes stare at Mark, then it's back in shadow.

DOGFACE
I can't believe we're bringing this cunt.

JIM
Who? Trippy? I know, he's a fuckin' liability.

DOGFACE
Not Trip. This cunt.

JIM
Who? Bristol? He's my boy.

TRIPPY
To be honest, Jim, I have to say, like, on this occasion, for a change, I do agree with Dog, like...we should've had a vote.

Jim slams his foot on the brake.

The van screeches to a stop.

The three in the back bash into each other, Dogface and Trippy spit expletives.

Jim turns around.

JIM

Right. Now listen. I'm the chairman of this fuckin' committee. What I say, goes. If anyone's got a problem, you can leave now.

No one moves, or breathes.

JIM

Right. That's that, then. Let's go to work.

Jim drives on.

13 INT. VAN - NIGHT

As they move along Trippy takes a small see-through plastic bag from his pocket.

A flash of streetlight reveals its contents - white powder.

Trippy takes a pinch, snorts it, and hands the bag to Dogface, who does the same.

Mark watches, waiting to be offered. But he isn't.

14 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The van trundles along.

15 INT. VAN - NIGHT.

Jim parks. Turns the engine off.

JIM

Here we are, boys. The land of Oz. Now let's go and see the fuckin' wizard.

16 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Dogface clunks the toolbox down, opens it.

Jim grabs a chisel, Trippy a wrench and Dogface a spanner.

Jim hands a hammer to Mark.

MARK

What's this?

JIM
What's it look like?

MARK
Yeah, but...I mean, what's it for?

JIM
Well, I thought while we're there you
could put a shelf up.

Dogface smirks.

TRIPPY
It's for whacking the prize nonce,
like. Don't worry, it's not dangerous,
just your average, household, DIY
murder weapon.

JIM
Initiation, son. You're the virgin.
Gotta break you in. There will be
blood, but hopefully it won't be
yours.

Dogface smirks.

JIM
Now listen, son...

Jim holds Mark by the shoulder, and raises his chisel high
above his head.

JIM
...when you do him, hit him hard.....
crack...right on the crown!

Mark watches in terror as Jim brings his chisel down, fast,
towards his head, stopping just in time.

Dogface and Trippy laugh.

JIM
(to Trippy)
Ballies.

Trippy produces four balaclavas and dishes them out to Jim
and Dogface, and finally to Mark, who watches the other three
put them on.

Mark copies, stretching the balaclava over his head, his eyes
pop through the two holes, shining in the street light.

17 EXT. LANE - NIGHT

In their balaclavas, and gripping their weapons, Jim leads the trio along the narrow lane, running between houses and a school. On the right, the fence is wired, and leafy, guarding back gardens. On their left, the school playground.

JIM
Must be where he hunts his prey.

Jim leads Trippy and Dogface into a residential street.

Mark follows, trying to keep up.

18 EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

Jim marches across the road, chisel in hand.

JIM
(to Mark)
Come on! You're with me.

Mark skips up behind Jim and follows.

19 EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Jim knocks the door.

Dogface and Trippy stay back, out of view.

A light comes on, a curtain moves.

MRS. MARLOW (70) comes to the door.

JIM
Police. There's been a burglary. Just
need to ask you a few questions.

Jim winks at Mark.

A chain unlatches. The door opens slightly. Jim pushes violently, knocking Mrs. Marlow backwards.

JIM
(to Mark)
Come on!

Mark follows Jim in.

20 INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Jim barges past Mrs. Marlow.

Mark follows.

Mrs. Marlow steadies herself.

MRS. MARLOW
Excuse me!

Jim headbutts her.

Mrs. Marlow hits the deck.

Mark can't believe it.

JIM
(to Mark)
Come on!

Mark is dazed.

JIM
Oi!

Jim bounds up the stairs.

Mark follows, but looks back to see Dogface kick Mrs. Marlow.

TRIPPY
(to Mark)
Go!

Mark follows Jim up the stairs.

21 INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, STAIRS - NIGHT

Jim runs up.

JIM
Come on!

Mark follows.

22 INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jim hits the lights.

A middle-classed, comfy, suburban bedroom.

A small, grey-haired man, MARLOW, 70's, in pyjamas, cowers in the corner.

Jim grabs him.

JIM
Come here you fuckin' nonce!

MARLOW
What do you want? Please, please don't hurt me. Please don't hurt me...

Jim locks his arms behind his back.

Marlow thrashes out, kicking, wailing.

JIM
Now! Do the cunt!

Fear in his eyes, Mark just stares.

JIM
Do him, now!

Mark just stares at Marlow. Marlow stares back, eyes pleading.

Mark slowly lifts the hammer behind his head.

JIM
Now! Now! Do him, son! What are you waiting for? Do him now!

MARLOW
No, no, please, no, please, don't hurt me...

JIM
Do him! Now! Do him you cunt! Do him, or I fuckin' do you!

Mark hesitates.

JIM
Do him now! What are you fuckin' man or mouse!??

Mark swings the hammer forward and down with full force.

CRACK!

Steel meets skull as blood SPLATS Mark's face.

A THUMP as a body hits the floor.

Mark stares, wide-eyed.

He drops the hammer, and, sweating, heart racing, he runs down -

23 THE STAIRS

- three at a time, trembling, breathless, into the -

24 HALLWAY

Dogface and Trippy wait, poised, weapons ready.

Marlow's wife lies unconscious.

In the distance a SIREN sounds, getting louder, getting closer.

Trippy and Dogface stare at Mark, BLOOD on his hands.

DOGFACE
Where's Jim?

MARK
Upstairs.

DOGFACE
(calling up)
Jim? Old bill! Come on. Let's go!

TRIPPY
Jim! Let's get the fuck out of here,
like! Let's go!

Mark runs past them, out the front door.

DOGFACE
Oi! Where's Jim?

Mark's almost out the door, he turns around.

MARK
Upstairs. Jim's still...upstairs.

Mark runs.

Sirens get louder, as Trippy and Dogface look up the stairs,

waiting for Jim.

Trippy turns and calls after Mark.

TRIPPY
Hey, Mark!

But Mark's gone.

25 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Blue lights flash.

Sirens scream.

Mark runs for his life, blood gleaming on his face in the street lights as sirens get closer and closer.

26 INT. MARLOW'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Trippy and Dogface race up the stairs.

27 INT. MARLOW'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Outside sirens are getting louder, getting closer, as Dogface and Trippy charge in.

And stop.

Wide eyed.

Shocked.

Staring at

-- JIM --

Dead.

Blood oozing from his smashed head.

Marlow, trembling, cowering in the corner.

28 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Mark runs. A cop car approaches, screaming sirens. Mark hides behind a wall. As the car speeds past, his bright, scared eyes blink blue in the light.