

one
minute

20



twenty of the best

monologues

ONE-MINUTE MONOLOGUES

2020

INTRODUCTION

We are very happy to be continuing the fantastic work by Tom Flemons in running Lancaster's One Minute Monologues. Since taking over the project we have witnessed how writing such a short piece of work not only inspires more creative writing from those who do write, but also that it helps non-writers begin their writing journey.

This year has been unusual as a world-wide pandemic has prevented large groups of people meeting for any reason. Lancaster community has suffered as much as anywhere, yet we have seen people pulling together to help each other and to find new ways to meet. Writers have come together online to meet these challenges, and we have still been able to run our competition.

This year there were fewer entrants, but still with the same variety and quirky outlooks on life. The four judges chose 20 monologues as the top written contributions and they form the content of this booklet. The overall favourite was 'Classroom' by Claire Griffel and, because we cannot have a best spoken monologue, we have a second place in the written monologues. This went to Jim Huxter with his monologue 'Grim'. Some of these have been filmed and can be found here

<https://youtu.be/OYcOrS61WLC>

This year, once again we are very grateful to have had funding to produce this collection of the monologues, this time from the Lancaster Community Fund. We are also grateful to Tom Flemons, Tony Haslam and Jonathan at the Printroom in Lancaster for stepping in at the last minute with technical help.

We hope to continue this annual event, filming and recording the readings, to involve more people, more young people from schools, more elderly people with so many memories to share, and to become a permanent part of the larger literary community in Lancaster and the UK.

Hopefully you will join us in future years as writers, readers, performers and supporters of the Lancaster One Minute Monologues.

Thank you everyone for your support.

The OMM organising group

Wendy Haslam, Vivien Mautner and Maureen Cronin

Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/atticus1min>

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CLASSROOM

Claire Griffel

I am bound by the chair
I am bound
As soon as I enter the room
I paint a beautiful picture
Sitting on my chair
It is my best
All gold and yellow sun
I will treasure it

Why can't you paint like Peter
They ask

All I want is to
Run out to the fields
And lie down
To look up into the sky
Clear and blue

But they are setting me
Into a square

I take my picture home
To hide it under my pillow

And sometimes I take it out
To see the golden yellow

And when I sit in my chair
At my desk in the room
I think I will become

Square
And paint pictures of
Cars and rockets like
Everyone else

GRIM

Jim Huxter

I meet a lot of different people in my work. Most of them aren't very happy to see me. Some of them are expecting me, and that makes things easier. A lot of the people I work with try to make some kind of deal. They beg and they try to bargain with me. One guy even said I could take his kids instead of him. You can bet that he got the scythe real quick. I always tell them, "Mate. It doesn't make a difference what I want. A big rock fell on your head. You can't make a quid-pro-quo with gravity." But no, I love my job really. I get to go to lots of different places and meet new people. The recent *situation's* been a nightmare. I can't work from home, you see, and it's really hard to travel at the moment. But business is booming. I'm thinking I might upgrade to a lawnmower; it would be much more efficient.

I WANT TO MAKE TZATZIKI

Louise Vale

I want to make tzatziki, slice cucumber crunch,
tip cool chunks into the arms of a white bowl,
chop garlic, tear mint leaves, their sharp bite,
mix thick sheep's yoghurt from a barren hill.

Chop onions, melt butter, glaze, sweeten and
salten and simmer till golden, pour bouillon,
slice bread, carve Gruyère, grill till it bubbles,
float each cheese island on a caramel sea.

Shake ground almonds and raw cane sugar,
crack open five eggs cool in the hand, grate
orange peel slivers, chop flesh in quarters,
spill teardrops of rosewater into a mould.

Because this summer is imprisoned, everywhere
and nowhere, I need to ransack cupboards,
conjure flavours, whip up memories, speak
their tongues again, lock them down here.

GERTRUDE

Norbert Hirschhorn

We rummaged around our parents' credenza, my little sister and I, which we did whenever they were away. One day, a photo fell from an envelope showing a black-haired baby on its belly, lying on a white plush rug, head upright, bright-eyed. Who is that, we asked mother on her return. She was furious, stuffed the photo in her apron pocket, "Don't ask me again." Later, father explained, "In those days they didn't have penicillin." So, I wasn't the first-born after all. When I married out, I too was dead to her.

DEVELOPED WORLD

Catherine McLoughlin

They started producing children
with the right side of their brains weakened,
making it harder for I-and-you,
for acknowledging betweenness.
It was especially the male ones,
who at first were awkward, odd,
quirky, nerdy, averse to eyes,
didn't fit where there was whole attachment.
But by degrees, they impressed
with their unrelenting computing skill,
mechanical skill, machine-like skill.
They made machines, computing machines,
such clever computing machines
that bypassed fuller connection with others,
bypassed contact with eyes,
were clever enough for the less machine-like
to use, to need, to depend on so wholly
that they couldn't wait to hold
more immediate, more distancing machines.
Adjusted to the maladjusted,
these stopped seeing babies gazing
up at their faces, which had become
as blank as their screens never were.
They stopped seeing their lives,
they stopped seeing their lives would end
and they would need their soul side
present when they met eternity face to face.

A TIDDLER IN THE THAMES ESTUARY

Ian Stewart

Dennis is reading a newspaper at the kitchen table. Carol is busy tidying up.

CAROL: I should have listened to my mother. She was right all along. Never trust a man whose eyebrows meet in the middle. That's what she said, "Never trust a man whose eyebrows meet in the middle! They're not right!" That's you, that is: a man whose eyebrows meet in the middle.

All I ever do is run around after you and what do I get? A TV that's so small the mice can't even watch it! Some knock-off fragrance from the Market that smells like lavatory cleaner! Eau de toilette, alright! And a hot tub isn't too much to ask for is it? Kate and David have one, why can't we? Answer me that! You're as tight as a hamster's arsehole, you are. Have you ever bought me a bottle of Chateau Paps? No. I even have to buy my own cava. I just wish you were more like David.

All you do is sit around all day reading your bloody books or watching bloody films. You don't know how to make a woman happy! You're bloody rubbish in bed. No wonder your last wife left you. Maureen. "It's like having a tiddler in the Thames estuary" That's what she said, "A tiddler... in the Thames... estuary!" And don't I sodding well know it!

SWIMMING IN THE OPPOSITE STREAM

Karl Miller

Cast of Characters

MAN Male approximately in his fifties.
 Rough.

Place Stage.

Time Contemporary.

(MAN enters with a bottle in his hand. Radiating wariness, he walks to center stage and stares at the audience for a moment, as though judging it.)

MAN

I'm not supposed to talk about it. I don't like to talk about it. (pause) But since it's just us . . . You probably know a lot of this already. We had the other side's "glorious leader" in a safe house outside a village in the countryside. We got word their army was approaching. When we heard that news, we knew what we had to do. You know, it's easy to be the other person looking in from a distance, but when it comes down to you – a man acts. The captain gave us orders. And we followed. We locked up the "leader" (sarcastic) and his family in a secure room, and said we were getting ready to move them to another house. The leader, the arrogant bastard he was, had no idea what was happening. We lined them up and told them we were taking a picture. They seemed to believe it – until one of the guys got excited and pulled his pistol. Then all hell broke loose. The leader started yelling at us but a bullet in his throat stopped that.

After a minute of craziness, some were still moaning so we finished them off with bayonets. We carried the bodies outside then lit them on fire. We burned them three times then poured acid on what was left, which wasn't much, then washed that down the drain. And that was it. (takes a drink) What's with the looks? Am I some type of monster? (pause) Let me let you in on a little secret. Violence flows all around us, like two streams - one that's coming at you, and one that's coming from you. Cowards try to sit on the sides, try not to get caught in the flow, but the streams are always going. I could tell you about a lot of people I knew that drowned in the flow from the other side. That day, we just let the other side know what it was like to swim in the opposite stream. And I'd do it all again if I could. (pause) Anyhow, I've said enough. I can see you don't understand. But deep down, I know I was in the right. (takes a drink, shakes his head) Whatever.

MAN exits.

SCAVENGED

Rat Riches

Met a fox the other night; smart chap.

We fell into conversation: lockdown, the new normal. Of course, fewer leftovers.

Surprisingly sophisticated palate, turns out. Claimed he headed the Sly Fox Urban Dining Club campaign once restaurants reopened, demanding they slop Reynard's favourite dishes into bins at the end of the night.

Chicken consommé, poultry velouté, cockerel ballotine, broiler fondant, rooster quenelle, and a trio of julienned bantam, capon, and pullet overwept with chanticleer foam.

Crikey, I said.

For dessert: millefeuille of cock, followed by a deconstructed platter of beak, feet, and gizzard. And the Châteauneuf Du Poulette '87 to wash it all down.

Stupidly, I asked if this was a national movement.

Dear me no, he sneered. We Sly Foxes are proudly urban, not to say urbane. Those hicks couldn't tell a Buff Orpington brûlée from a Rhode Island rarebit.

And we parted. Much later, I discovered my Mastercard missing, four hundred quid charged to *Le Gavroche*.

Cunning, you've got to admit.

MONDAY IN MORECAMBE

Jenny Jones

(to be spoken in a broad Lancashire accent!)

Helen and I went to Morecambe
On a Monday in early July,
It were blowing a gale
And the mist came down,
And the sea were as grey as the sky.

We thought we'd walk out to the cafe
For a nice cup of tea and a scone,
But when we got there,
The place was all bare
And deserted - the cafe had gone!

So we stood and looked out at the ocean
Though there weren't a great deal to see.
The Lake District mountains
Were covered in mist -
And all we could see - were the sea!.

By now we were feeling quite peckish
So we wandered back into the town.
Fish and chips, and a beer -
Soon restored our good cheer
After being so badly let down....

... by the weather and absence of cafe.
Then we got in the car and drove 'ome,
But the day weren't entirely wasted
'Cos I got the idea for this pome!

AFFECTED

Catherine McLoughlin

She can understand how this poor woman must be feeling, with her determinedly murderous son on trial for prison or his life, because, she says, *I'm a mother* and that is how to demonstrate the compassion equivalent of a doctorate or two. Yet, all the same, she votes to dispatch him.

What you, despite your unfeeling womb, can understand is that the blows he directed were much less numerous than the ones he got through his small, weak years (*I was quite hard on him - a sad smile*); but much harder and heavier, concentrated, as if he had her under his sledgehammer.

HORITHMETICS: THREE LITTLE WORDS

Myram Huey

And when the mice were gathered the mousechrist said, 'Love your cats.'

And that, as they say, was that. Only of course it wasn't. Far from it in fact. Especially for mice.

The carnage that followed ushered in an epoch that would be known as 'The Mayhem of the Little Things.' The silence of the garden said it all. Bodies everywhere... including those of several sparrows, finches, voles... But it was the scattering of the mice brought the horrible arithmetic home... Dozens of them... their broken bodies strewn like spilled pouches in the mulch of that autumn morn...

'Love your cats,' the mousechrist had said, and many mice had done just that. Here was the garden, there were the mice.

And that, as they say, was that. Only of course, as ever, it wasn't.

THE ROOM

Sandie Perrins

O.M.G. This was perfect for me!! I fell in love with it immediately. You could almost describe it as “bijou”, a bed with a mattress that suited my “dicky” back, ensuite washing facilities and WC. Meals were also included in the deal. I would have a limited social life (I wasn’t too keen on lots of people around me) but there would always be a few people to exercise and “hang out” with. Due to my lack of possessions I didn’t need much space and as an “added extra” there was also a doctor on call. If I needed money for luxury items, I could bag myself a little job - money for old rope as the saying goes. I was never big on responsibility so this suited me down to the ground. I’d been searching for accommodation like this for a while, but everything was out of my price range. Even the lady who showed me round was pleasant enough. I think I was going to settle in well here.

Who would have thought that my years of shoplifting would bag me my perfect living quarters !!

HOW TO BE

Myram Huey

Tell me, why decide to “do” something when you could just as easily elect to implement a course of action?

Hm?

Similarly, why *use* when you can *utilize*? And why on earth *ask* when it’s perfectly possible to *enquire*?

For that matter, why ‘talk’ when you’ve instant elevation to hand by engaging in discourse?

And the same applies to this “lie” of which you speak. Whatever happened to being terminologically inexact?

You allow to be “broken” what could so very readily be rendered inoperative.

And like a simpleton you say “I think” when you could just as well feel impelled to express.

You didn’t “steal” anything; you misappropriated certain valuables – and their absence has been duly noted.

Likewise there was no great harm done to “people”, but there were certainly unintended consequences for personnel.

However, this being a transitional period, it behoves me to say – and I’ll not mince my words – that this entire affair is nothing less than regrettable.

SHISHYPHUSH

Jomar de Vridn

Ash alwaysh, Zeush came round thish morning to gloat at me and throw the boulder down the hill. You know? The one that I shpent all day rolling up the hill the previous day!

And ash per ushual, he made fun of my lishp! Bastard . . .

“Shishyphush, my friend,” he conshtantly shtarts, “You shee thish boulder you shpent all day rolling up the hill yesterday?”

“Yesh?”

“How dare you?”

“What?”

“Make fun of my lishp!”

And before you know it, Zeush Almighty gets very crosch and shouts that he wash going to make the boulder dishappear and shet me free, but becaushe of my insholence - making fun of the lishp of the father of the godsh - I have to be chastished.

And sho he hurlsh the boulder down the shlope into the valley and reminds me that I should be glad I don't have my liver eaten out every day by a ravenous eagle and tellsh me to mind my tongue tomorrow and buggersh off in a huff.

Arshole!

BROUGHT UP PROPER

Rosemary Brockbank

I was brought up proper, knew right from wrong, was punished hard if I did something wrong, but life wasn't as simple now, and it certainly wasn't fair. 'Not raining either', my dad used to say, but it was definitely pouring now.

It wasn't my fault I lost my job. That bitch of a boss needed telling, and I told her in no uncertain terms, yes, I admit it, I swore, that was wrong, so then I was done for gross misconduct. I thought that was stealing from the till, shooting up in the bogs, not just telling it like it was, but there's no justice in this world, not in my world anyroad.

I've still got a pad, somewhere to live, but I'm skint. I've been given a voucher for the food bank, second time, more beans, beans, beans. They seem determined to make us all into old farts. But what I need is a drink, something to cheer me up a bit. They don't give you beer at the food bank, and that bottle of beer looks good, I could murder it.

No-one is looking, I've got a big coat on, inside pocket, so I'll just pick it up and walk out casual-like. Case of beginner's luck. Don't hear any bells ringing yet. Cheers.

WINCE WITH HORROR

Rosemary Brockbank

It still makes me wince with horror, dread, and touch wood when I think of it, warding off evil. It happened, or thank God, didn't happen thirty or more years ago on a dark and stormy winter's night, not late, evening rather than night, but dark and wet and windy, waiting to cross the road, gathered at the curbside, our little family group, Caroline and the little ones, the youngest in the push chair. The middle one thought I said 'now, go now', but I hadn't, and he set off across the road. I shrieked, he stopped, spun round on one foot, and came back, came back from certain death and destruction, as an unmarked police car whizzed past to someone else's death or destruction. Thank God, not mine, not my child's.

MACHINE INTELLIGENCE

Reg Howard

Once the 'Non-human Intelligences' were introduced through society there were massive improvements for all. Everyone enjoyed more free time, less work, better healthcare.

But one day the N.h.I.'s suddenly and unexpectedly began to delete electronically stored images. Some people said this was OK - binary code didn't need pictures and the trade in original works of art which flourished was thought to demonstrate a return to creative values which showed the superiority of humanity. Then on routine visits to the Non-human Doctors people were surgically blinded by the intelligent objects which had determined eyes were unnecessary.

Only when retired engineers tried to adjust the machines was it discovered that the circuit diagrams had been the first images deleted.

JUNK RAP

Julian Edge

I wake up in the morning to my Hotmail junk file.

It always gives me a boost and starts my day with a smile.

They're talkin' millions of dollars up to some crazy amount

And I can get my cut if I just run it through my account.

They've got Asian Lovelies and Slavic Beauties,

Nordic Divas and South American Cuties.

There's diet-free weight loss and hair retention,

A six-pack, bigger biceps and a penis extension

Makes it longer, thicker, harder and there's also an unction

To get the whole thing goin' despite erectile dysfunction.

There's even brain supplements to help you figure out

What this item on Trumpcare is actually all about.

There's mortgage pay-offs, bonuses, lotteries everybody wins,

Profits from bitcoins and free roulette spins.

The only thing that stops me is this sneaky little voice

That says I could, you know, I would, but I'm just spoiled for choice.

GOTCHA

Richard Payne

Woman, 60 plus, sitting reading Lancaster Guardian. Jim, her husband of 40 or so years is physically present but engrossed in a book – and generally detached. Jenny herself fluctuates from short bursts of certainty to uncertain, perplexed, bemused.

(Enter fly. Woman folds paper and tries to swat it but fails)

Dratted things.

(looks around room, agitatedly for fly)

Disturbing me ... leaving their traces ...

I read about the best way to approach them.

On foot, obviously, but ... from in front ... or was it from the side?

I can picture the magazine clear as day. Top right ... above the petunias.

(looks towards Jim) See it isn't that bad is it?

(sees fly again, takes paper and tries to swat it, failing again)

Bugger.

Perhaps it was from on top? Not from underneath ... unless they were on something see-through, like a ... oh bother, like that thing I can see our garden through.

They have those ... ant ... ant ... what's it things?

(pause)

They spoil things. Disturb my peace.

(beat)

It's only a few words. If I could just get hold of them.

(pause)

(she notices the fly again, takes her paper and successfully swats it)

GOTCHA!

(pause)

(looking at remains of fly on paper and sighs)

What a mess.

(pause)

(Looking away from paper, to Jim and then back to camera - deep sigh)

What a bloody mess.



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Atticus

PRINTROOM
LANCASTER