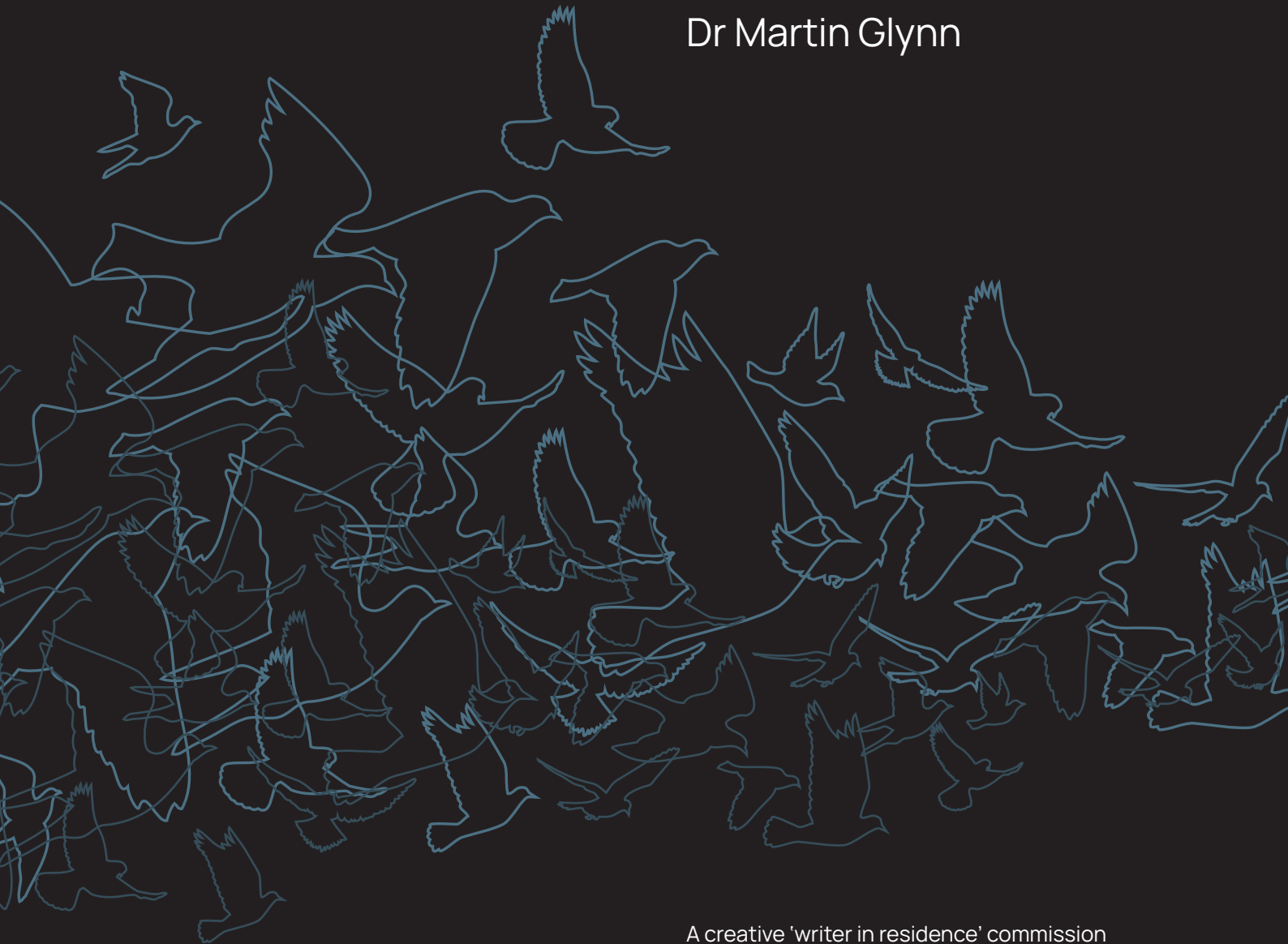


Freed Soul

Letters for and from Charlotte Bryant

Dr Martin Glynn



A creative 'writer in residence' commission
with the National Justice Museum curated by
Andrea Hadley-Johnson and Bev Baker



Welcome

The authentic spaces and historic collection at the National Justice Museum are infused with beauty and brutality, trauma and hope. The artistic programme uses this resource as stimulus to bring people and creativity together, to amplify voices that are less heard and experiences that have been marginalised or oppressed.

'Freed Soul' is the result of a creative residency with a Dr Martin Glynn. Dr Glynn spent time with the museums archive of letters and has crafted something extraordinary; a conversation that weaves itself through time and across genders. 'Freed Soul' has placed Charlotte Bryant's voice to the forefront of a tragic story, her words and character have sliced through the comfort of 'the archive' to make themselves known. This poignant correspondence will sit in the heart of our emerging capital punishment project. Charlottes words are uncomfortable and unforgettable, Charlottes story is relevant to now.

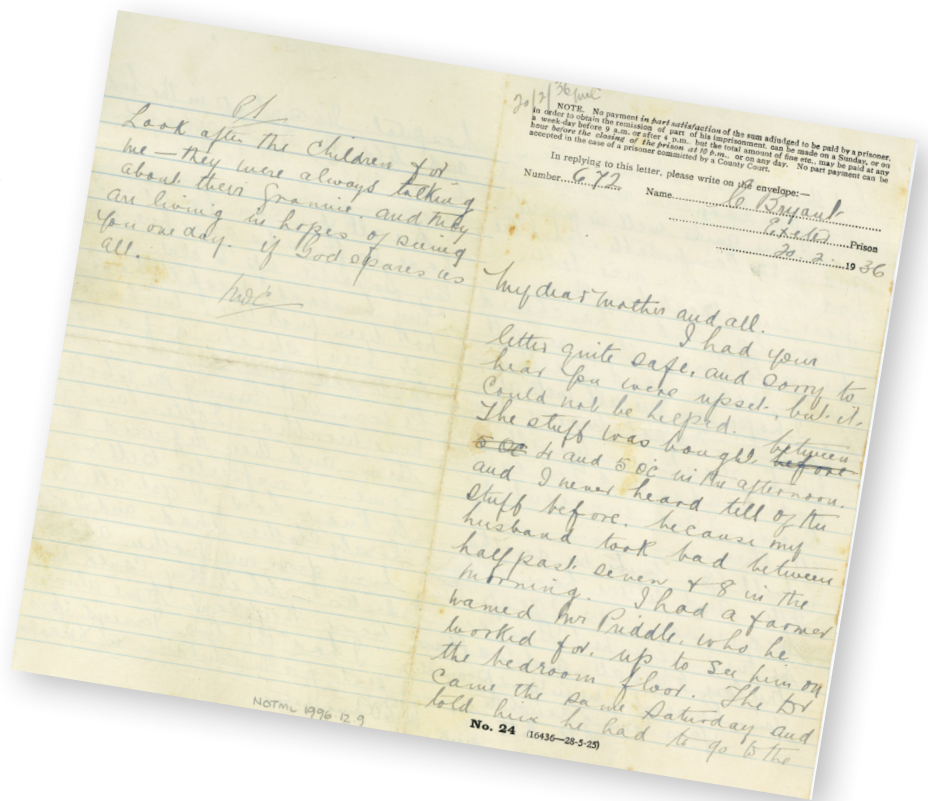
Note: Letters titled with a date are transcriptions of the historic letters from Charlotte to her family.

Letters 'To Martin' and 'To Charlotte' are a contemporary correspondence between Dr Glynn and the woman he researched and befriended.

Andrea Hadley-Johnson



Preface



Having written to people serving sentences including death row, for many years, I know the importance of corresponding with incarcerated individuals; as a way of making sense of that experience and providing some connection to the outside world. However, Charlotte was dead and no longer able to communicate her thoughts and feelings about the world. It was this situation that made me want to do something different. Reading Charlottes letters I was struck by the normality of her writing, considering she was languishing in intolerable circumstances. On conducting further research, I realised that in spite of the reams of information written about her life, there was a significant absence of her own voice. Not only did this obscure the person behind the crime, it reinforced the invisibility afforded to many women who transgress society's rules. Equally important was the time period in which Charlotte lived and died. Women were not seen as equal to men under the law. I wanted Charlotte to speak her truth in what can best be described as 'faction'. I took the research, court case and her letters, to construct a written conversation between us, as if she were still alive. Charlotte Bryant was executed at Exeter prison on July 15, 1936, for her husband Frederick's murder.

'Freed Soul' is not an attempt to exonerate Charlotte from her crimes, but to give voice to a woman, mother, and daughter, who if she had been tried today would not have forfeited her life in the way it happened in 1936.

Dr Martin Glynn

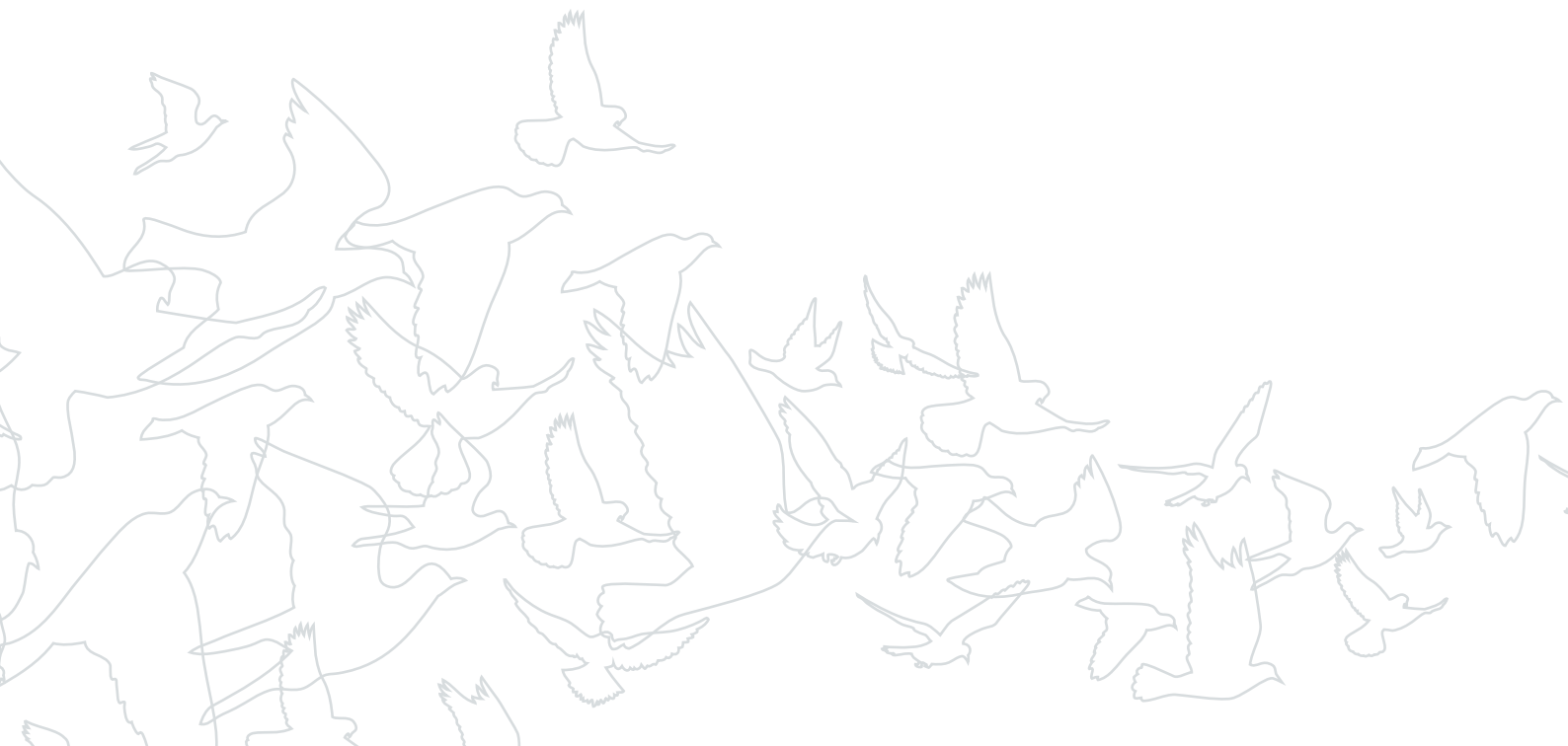


Letter to Charlotte

Dear Charlotte,

I hope you're well. My name is Dr Martin Glynn, a criminologist and currently the writer in residence at the National Justice Museum in Nottingham. Whilst at a meeting I came across your letters and was curious who you were. Having spent over four decades of my life writing to incarcerated people, I have become increasingly aware of the importance of bringing some hope to those who languish in the darkness, by using letter writing to hold open conversations and share thoughts. I believe that all human beings, regardless of their circumstances have a story to tell. Over the years I have corresponded with many individuals who have done all sorts of things and have found themselves in many situations. They have also done many things they regret and are now paying the price for their actions. During that time I've discovered new friendships, learnt many lessons in life, and more importantly am more informed about the things that really tie human beings to each other. In reading your letters I began to make a connection with you as a person, mother and daughter and wondered if you be open to sharing some of your story with me. I also wanted to offer you an opportunity to have some space to communicate free from judgement. So have a think about my offer and come back to me with any thoughts or questions you might have. I look forward to hearing from you

Yours, Martin

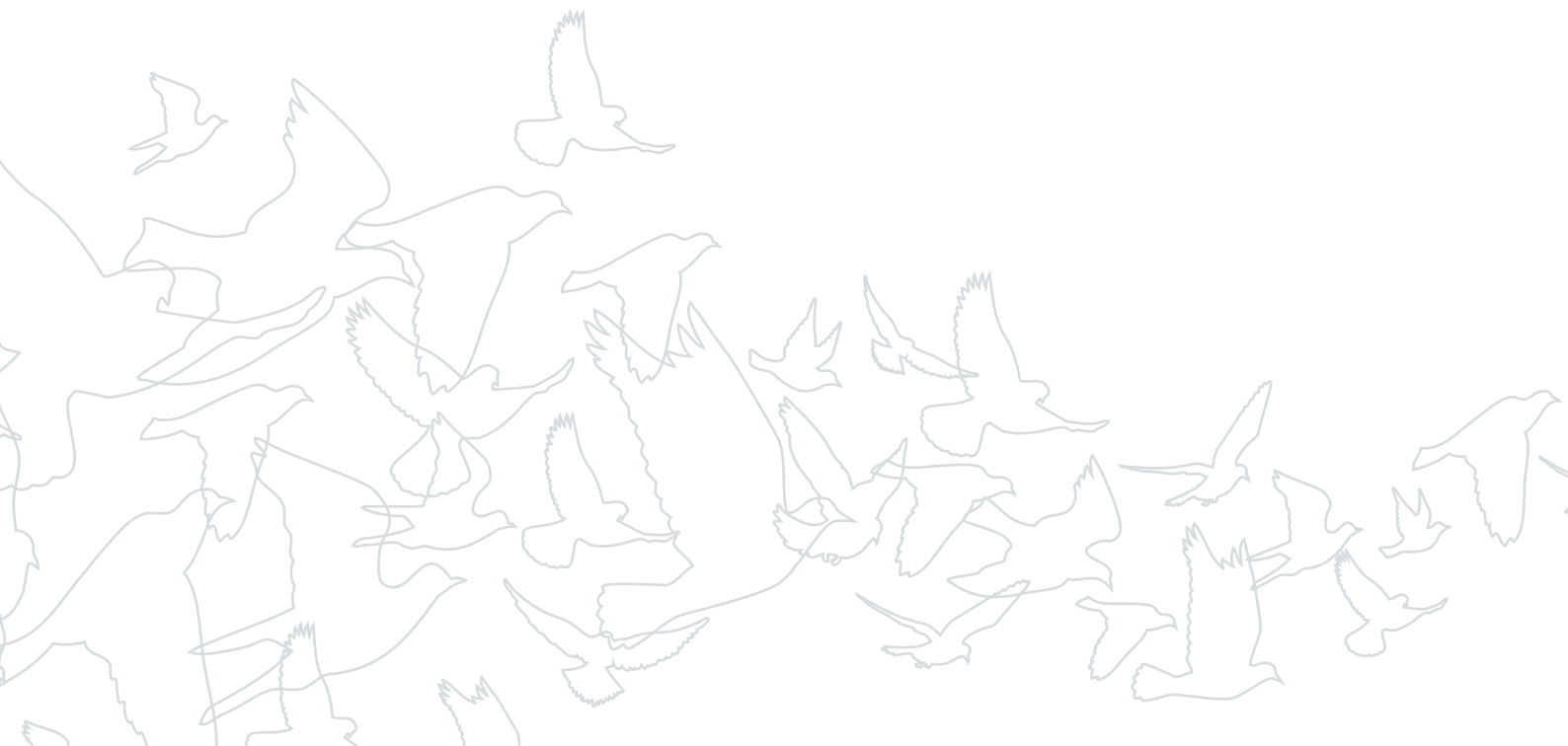


Letter to Martin

Dear Martin,

I hope you're well. Firstly, receiving your letter was a pleasant surprise and I am grateful for your inquiry. If I'm being honest I don't know what it is I can share with you other than my own personal story, which is really not that interesting. Since my trial I have experienced how cruel people can be, and indeed, being here in gaol is not the best place to be at this moment in time. In my current circumstances the only people I communicate with are my mother and children. So I am happy to write to you and will try to be as honest as I can. I have only recently learned to write, so please bear with me if my spelling isn't always correct. I look forward to hearing from you.

Charlotte



Letter One: 13.2.36

Dear Mother and all

I am very very sorry this has happened but I have nothing to worry about thank the Lord. Do not upset yourself about me. I am very comfortable here. Everyone is very nice and kind. I shall be going to court on Tuesday. You will have had this letter by then, so say a prayer for me. Tell my sister Kitty when she goes to mass on Sunday to offer up two candles for my intention. I am sure all the people at home are quite surprised to hear of this but it is only my misfortune in life. I had the parcel, and the stockings, and I thank you very much. Will you always remember the children, especially at Easter and Christmas time? I think I have got a very good lawyer. If you are still alive will you look after my oldest boy, and maintain him, and always let him know he has got a mother. Also his aunts to remember the other children especially the one with one eye and the two babies. I hope when this is all over I hope to see you all and do not take it as a disgrace. I am not the only one. My husband had been ailing for the last nine months up to the 22nd December. I think this is all I have to say this time. I hope to hear from you soon.

I remain your loving daughter

Charlotte

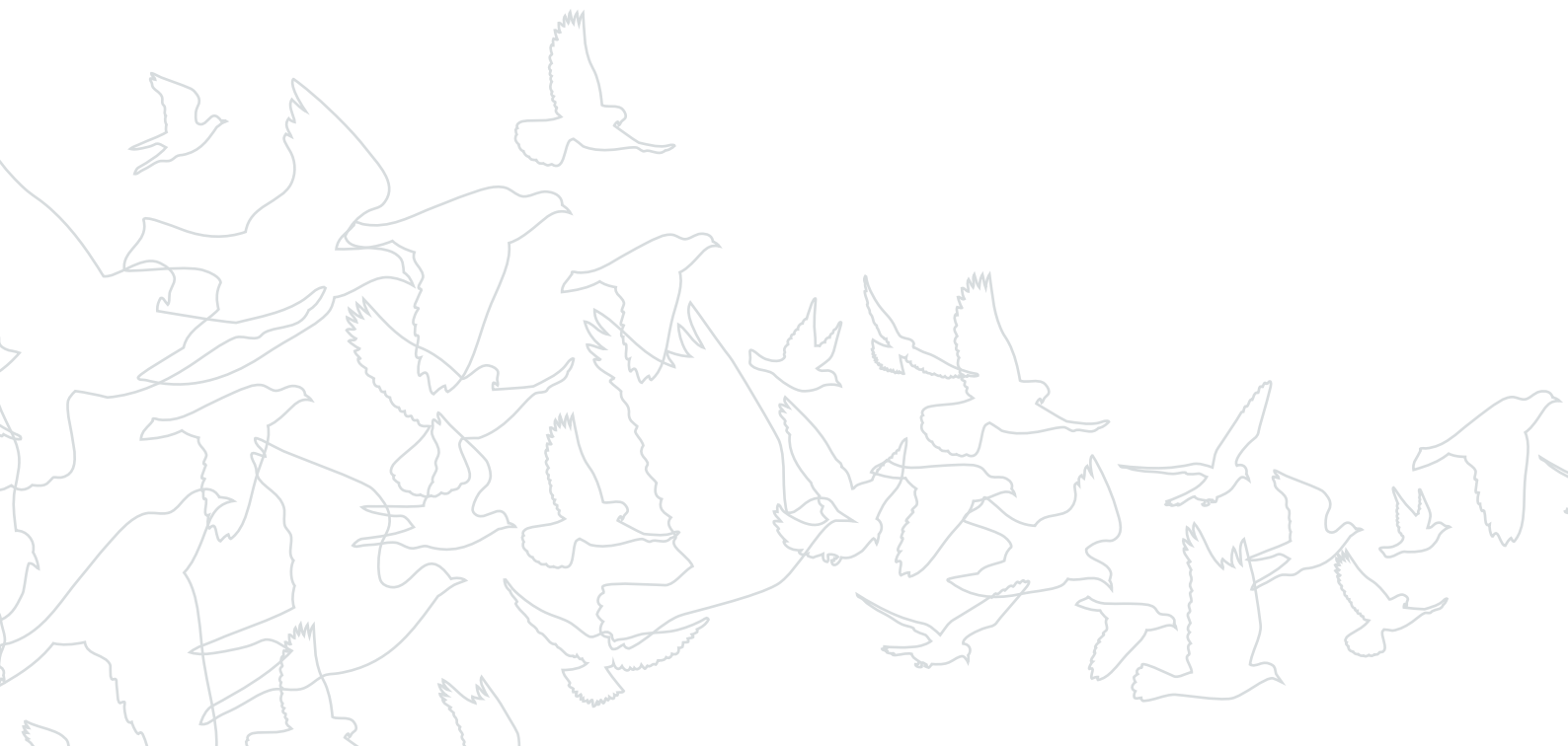


Letter to Martin

Dear Martin

Received your letter today. I hope all things are well with you and your family. I'm sorry that my current situation is the basis of how we have connected but I am happy to be in touch. I am very grateful that you have taken interest in me. I will move on to the matter at hand and give you a bit of a background on me. I'm a bit nervous. So here goes. I was born in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, in 1904, and my maiden name is McHugh. Like anyone growing up I was young and foolish with a sense of adventure and wonderment, unaware of what life had in store for me. Many years later I met John Frederick Bryant who was eight years older than me. He was a serving military policeman in the Dorset Regiment. We married and in the 13 years of our marriage, I gave Frederick five children. I wasn't always well behaved, but in my defence he didn't really care what I did. I now find myself sitting here in gaol charged with murdering my husband, which I deny. Needless to say this is the worst experience of my life. The hardest thing for me at the moment is being separated from my children, my mother and my sisters. The days here are lonely and pass by slowly. However, I am trying to use my time well by writing letters and trying to make sense of what's happened to me. I need to stop now as I'm feeling a bit upset. I hope you understand. I will try to do better next time

Charlotte

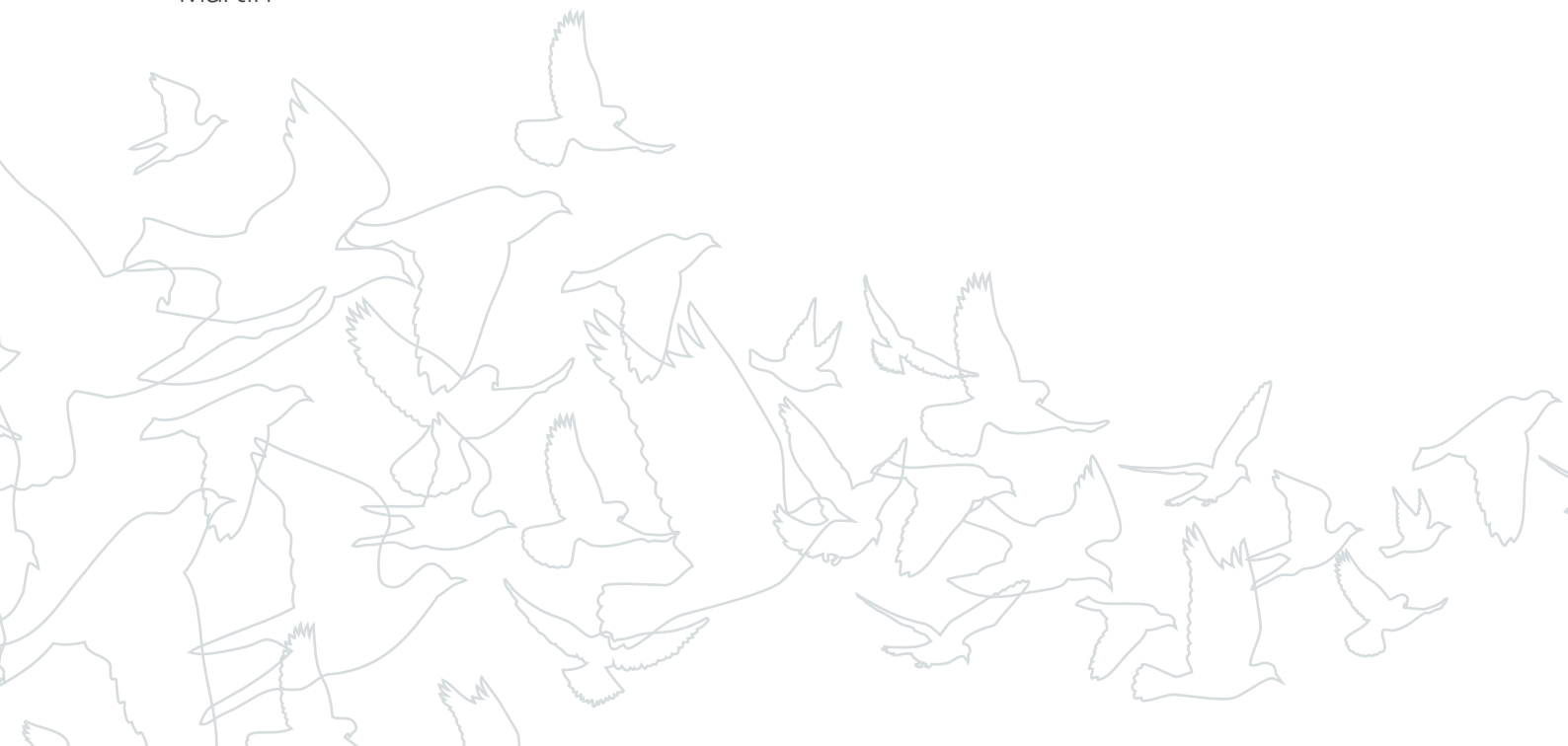


Letter to Charlotte

Dear Charlotte.

First let me say a big thank for being in touch and sharing your story. This letter is by way of introduction with no agenda other than wanting to share space whilst we can. I know your time is precious., so thank you for enabling me to reach out and share thoughts with you. I have no desire to pry into anything that you feel isn't relevant to our discussions. Like you I'm a parent, married, and live a normal life. My children are grown up and I see them less and less. It's not the same as your situation, but I can relate to what it feels like not having those you love, close at hand. One of my biggest passions is to give voice to those who have none. Growing up, many people around me were poor, never had a good education, and ended up on the scrap heap. Growing up I was encouraged to read and write. I became interested in telling the stories of people I met, I wanted to tell the world about the people I met along the way who as I have described were ignored by society and had no voice. There's a certain sadness at hearing your words. It reminds me of my mum's life. She like yourself was stigmatised and labelled because she met a Jamaican in the 50s. Ironically, my step father called me 'darkie' on account of me being mixed race. My step father was also of Irish descent, which gives us something else in common. I am hoping over time we will get to know each other and share some interesting conversations. I look forward to our next one.

Martin



Letter Two 20/2/36

My Dear Mother and all

I had your letter quite safe, and sorry to hear you were upset, but it could not be helped. The stuff was bought between 4 and 5 o'clock in the afternoon and I never heard tell of the stuff before because my husband took bad between half past seven and eight in the morning. I had a farmer named Mr Puddle, who he worked for, up to see him on the bedroom floor. The Dr came the same Saturday and told him he had to go to the hospital. He sat up in the bed and told the Dr, he refused to go and the Dr called him a damn fool. Do all you can for me – I have no friends over here only my solicitor up to now.

My husband's people have not been near me. We have not been speaking for the last six years and when he was ill during the whole nine months I often sent for them and they refused to come. Inspector Bell wanted to know how I got all the lovely clothes I had and I told him from my mother and my sisters – what they could not wear they sent to me always. I had the two jerseys you sent for the children at Xmas time but they have not worn them yet – they have them at Sturminster. I am quite well in myself and quite comfortable thank the Lord. I had a nice letter from my eldest boy this morning and it has cheered me up to know they are all well and in good health. I hope you are all well at home.

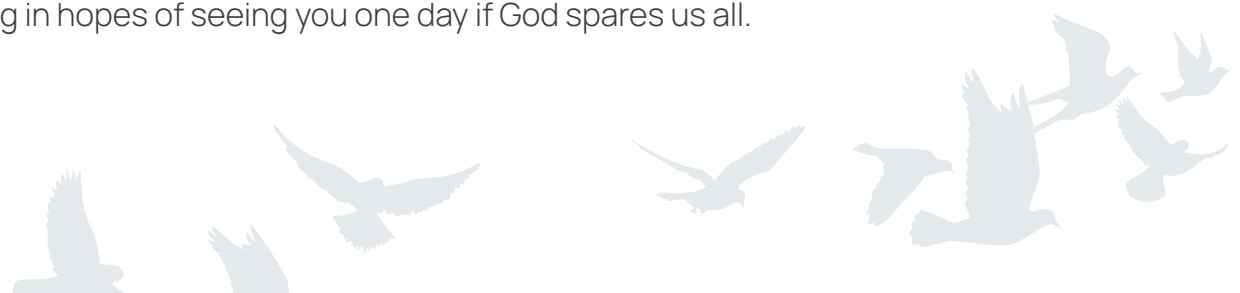
Do not worry too much about me – tis all in God's hands and God only knows I am innocent of all this. Will you write me another letter and let me have it by Wednesday as I go up to be tried again next Thursday. My love to you all and God bless you. Remember me in your prayers

Your loving daughter

Charlotte

P.S.

Look after the children for me- - they were always talking about their grannie they are living in hopes of seeing you one day if God spares us all.



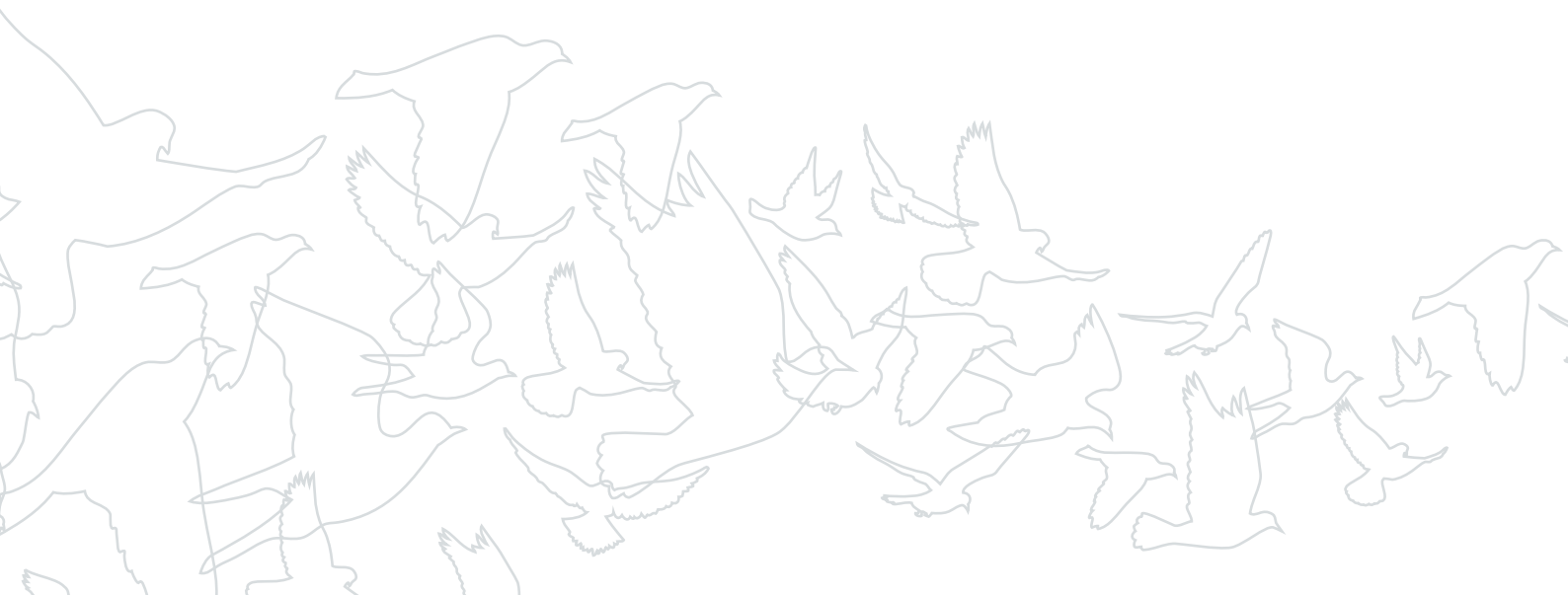
Letter to Martin

Dear Martin

Received your letter today and good to hear from you. I hope all things are well with you and your family. I'm not feeling too well today, as my mood is quite low. Being separated from my children and my mother is not easy and taking its toll. So please forgive me if I'm not as bright as I would normally be. I wanted to share something with you that has laid heavy on my heart and I trust that you will keep it private. People who have never been convicted of a crime imagine what an innocent face looks like. The unjustly convicted like me are alive and trying to survive. Spending time behind bars is lonely, filled with regrets, disappointments, betrayal and anger. I can never get beyond the reason behind my conviction. The truth doesn't need to be debated. It just needs to be heard. Unjust convictions grow from seeds of hate and confusion. Justice in my view is blind, making decisions with its eyes closed. It never has to see the lives of those it has broken. A person cannot be faulted just because of a lack of knowledge. However, I am here and not free. My hope is that one day, justice will no longer be blind and that society will not only know about the convictions carried out in its name, but be able to accept them and sleep at night. That would be wonderful for me. Sometimes reflecting is too hard. You can't change the past but it invades your life.

I miss the children dearly and of course my mum. Isn't it funny how two people like us who are strangers can have so much in common, but have never met? If only strangers did meet, did love each other, and stayed together for life. Maybe I wouldn't be here. I'm tired right now and will write to again soon. Please give my love to your family.

Charlotte

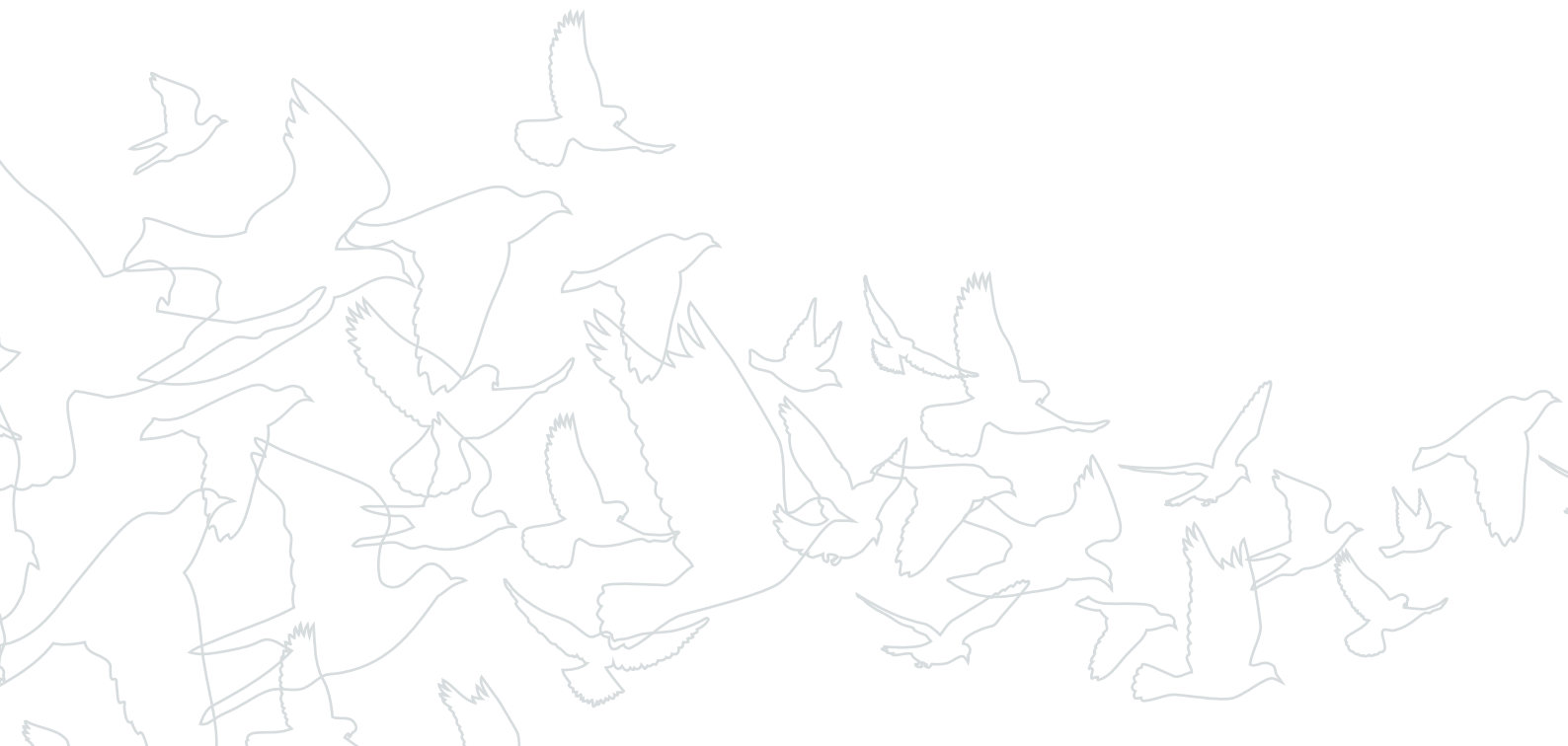


Letter to Charlotte

Dear Charlotte,

I hope you're as well as you can be in light of the circumstances. I'm glad that you're maintaining a link with your mother. I'm sure it can't be easy not having a connection with your children. It's evident from your letters that you love your children. Life sometimes walks up to us and disables our ability to the most basic of things such as express love to those we care for. It's a sobering thought knowing what you're facing, have faced and how you maintain a positive view of life. I can't imagine what it must be like being in a dismal cell, wondering what's happening to your life. I was wondering how confident you feel about being released or getting a reprieve at some stage? Your mother sounds like an amazing woman. You write to her with so much love and conviction. It must be hard on her and your children as I'm sure they miss you terribly. Many years ago I was corresponding with a woman called Brenda who became ill whilst in prison. On her release, she died, never having created a family. I hope that in years to come your children will grow to know that they had a mother that loved them, so they can take some comfort in that. For Brenda, there was just life, prison and death. It's a crazy time right now in the world and I wish we could all stand still for a minute. However, I'm grateful for the time we share and am equally happy that you are taking some comfort from our conversations.

Talk soon, Martin



Letter Three: 26/2/36

My Dear Mother

I received your letter and stamp and thank you very much. I have not got anything to say in the court as the solicitor will say it all for me. I am glad to hear you are keeping all right and all at home and pleased to know you are not fretting about me and that you believe me innocent. The solicitor told me when he came here to see me on Friday that he had a very nice letter from you and he said he did not think I had very much to worry about. You must not had all you read in the newspapers. I got a lot of witnesses but I did not know what they have got to say nor yet to do with it. I was always with my husband. There was a man lodging with us and they have arrested him as well. So I do not know if they thought there was anything between him and me but I know he was always asking me to leave my husband and I know he was a very bad man and always enticing me to leave my home.

My husband threatened three or four times to take his life but then they were always getting about in the pub drinking together. I always looked after my husband and my home and the children. I had a letter from the Institution where the children are and they are all very well. Inspector Williams wanted to put the children in Dr Barnardo's Home but the solicitor would not let him as he said I could have my children when this is all over. That is the only thing I am looking forward to, is my children and I hope to God they will not take them from me. I had a beautiful comfortable home but I do not know how it is now as they shifted all the furniture to Sturminster Newton where the children are. I hope and trust you will do all you can for me. Also my sisters as well. I have not much more to say now. So I remain your loving daughter

Charlotte

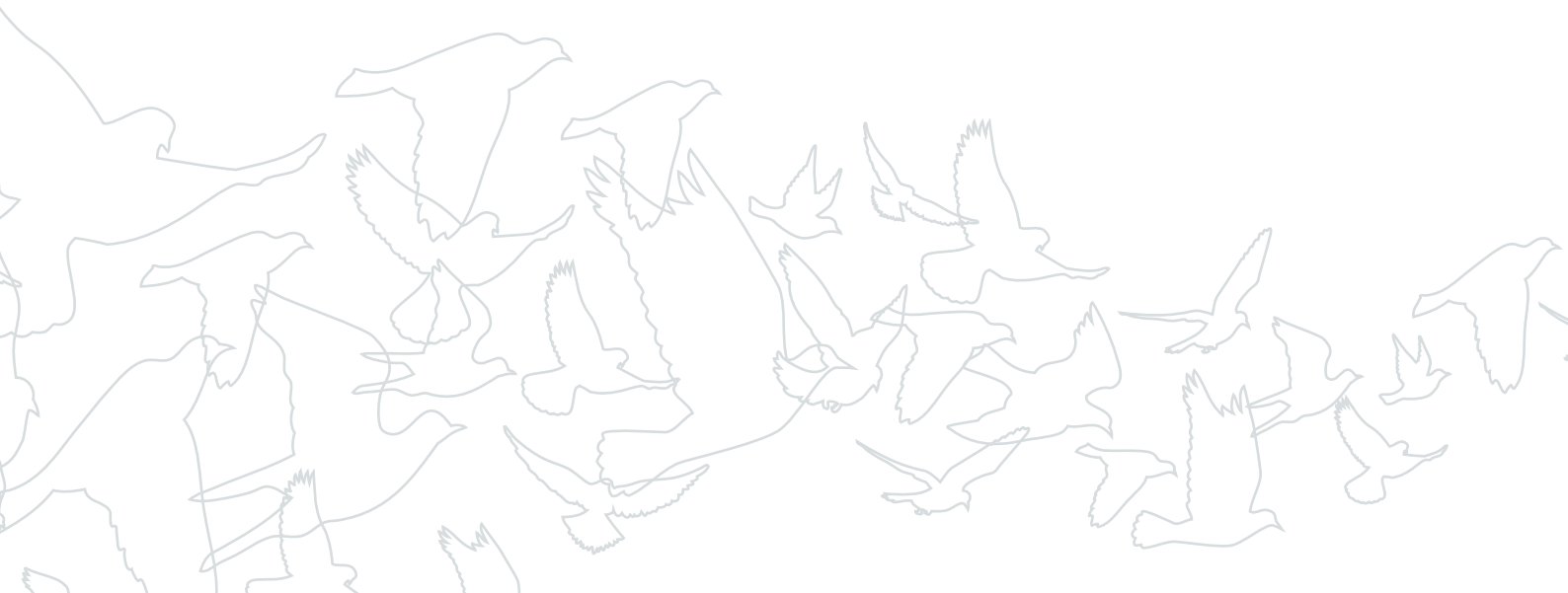


Letter to Martin

Dear Martin

Received your letter today. Hope all things are well with you and your family. There are days when I can't seem to get started. When the reality of my situation affects me greatly. In the corner of my cell I get lost in my thoughts about freedom that seems more and more to be like a dream than a reality. I am standing at the door of a life I know nothing about. Yet I know I must follow in the shadows of so many others who have woken from their slumber to struggle with this unfathomable future. But what great changes must I face? What great alterations in my life or even those around me must I make to enjoy the state of happiness and success without thoughts of sorrow and disappointment? Must I forever through my existence uncertain of my future? Oh what a friend I have found in solitude. It has proven to be not only a friend, but a wise teacher. It has become a comforter and holds good conversations. However, solitude is sometimes miserable taking all my energy making me lonely and sad. I hate the disappointment of the sunset. I'm still waiting for the happiness each day is supposed to bring. I grow weary of gazing into the depth of my existence. Allow me to stop now till another time.

Your friend Charlotte

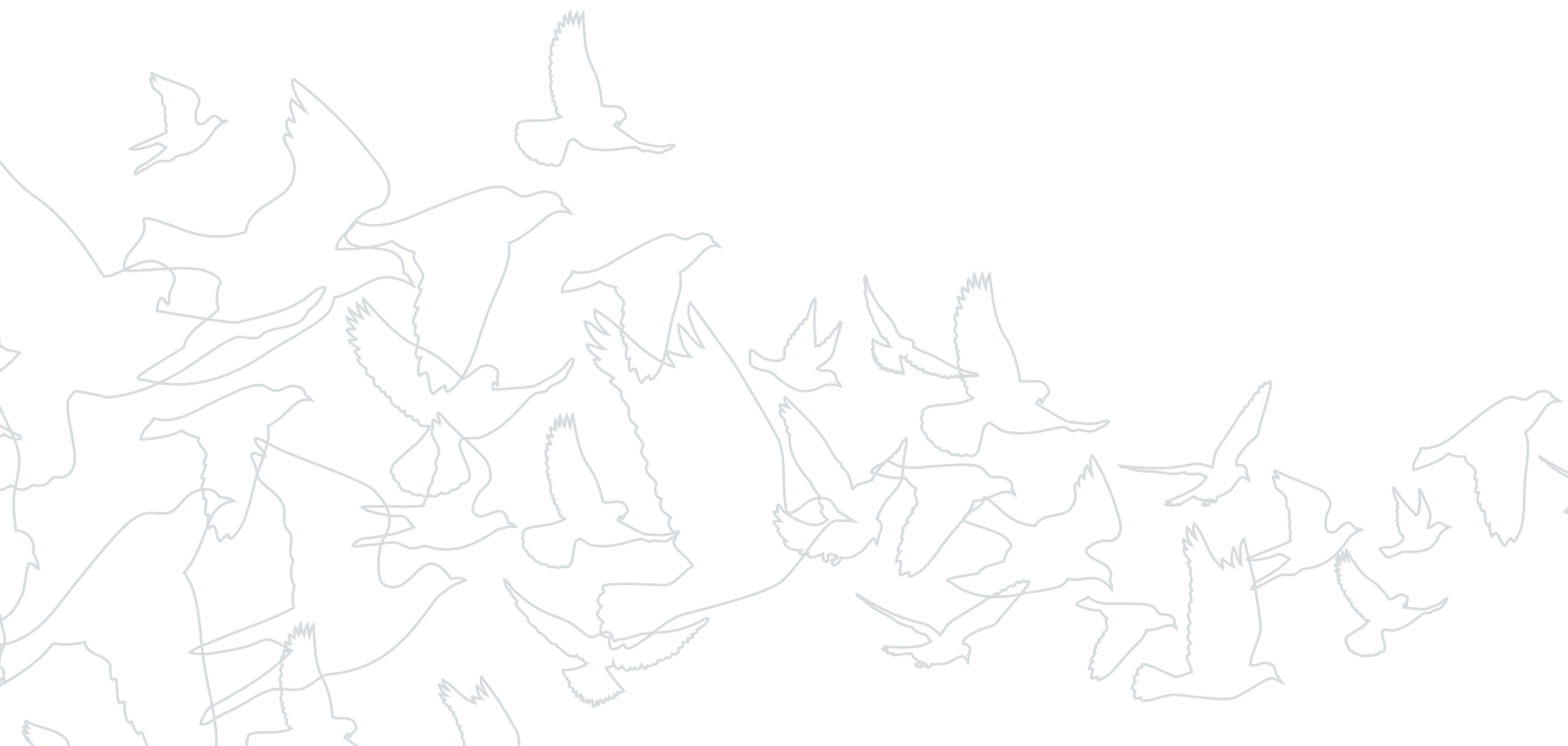


Letter to Charlotte

Dear Charlotte

Thanks for the update and insight to your circumstances. Again, I completely connect to where you've come from in terms of your life experiences. Like you I have suffered a lot of rejection and negative labelling. Like you I've also suffered from and at times have drifted into certain behaviours. Luckily my mum never judged me and guided me to a new place. I think my mum and your mum would have got on well. Silent and strong is how I would describe her. When my children were growing up mum was always there when I was out gallivanting all over the place. Sadly, she has now passed and her presence is sorely missed. You never think you're going to get over losing your parents, but memories are the things that keep her alive in my heart. I'm so grateful that you've been able to find the time to write and share your story with me. In a strange way it's enabling me to open up and share with a stranger also. Like two people meeting for the first time on a park bench. I find communicating through letters and sharing hugely beneficial on so many levels. I live in a world where many people don't speak to each other, have lost touch, are separated through death, whilst others lose contact for many other reasons. I hope you finding some of what I'm saying is of some comfort. Of course it's no substitute for freedom and human contact. I will be in touch soon.

Martin



Letter Four: 2/3/36

My Dear Mother

I expect you got very upset when you read the paper but I am not worrying – it will all come right in the end with the help of God. You have seen the man's home in the papers that was living with us – well mother he was the leader of it all. He took me away from my husband several times and threatened three or four times what he was going to do to me if I did not go with him. My husband knew everything about it and that was when he was going to do himself in. He did not look up and tell me he was going away from my place the morning he went for he left the trap and harness and a big greyhound dog. I carried off my husband's boots the same morning he went away. My husband grumbled over his boots having gone he said it was not what he wore himself it was what other people wore belonging to him. So he said he might as well be dead as alive because Parsons was taking away all the comfort from the home. He was a man with a family of four children she was a gypsy woman and they were not married for she was a woman living apart from her husband and Parsons parted them for the woman told me out of her own mouth herself.

My husband knew everything that was going on. He went away to Weymouth once and he sent me a will and I could not read will and I gave it to my husband to read. So he said he was going to the police with it. So when my husband took the police to him he promised he would leave me alone but my husband had him back in the house the same night again and they were like two brothers. I did not think very much of what Mrs Ostler said after all I done for her for she saw more in my house than ever I did. Well mother I can honestly say I've never seen weed killer nor handled it. I only saw the tin they were showing in the court. Parsons said my husband took down the tin of weedkiller from the shelf and my husband asked me what it was and I was supposed to answer it was weed killer. The tin was one I had from the farmer with some paraffin in but had this? I did not know what was written on it. The children have carried it down to the town and got me paraffin in it many a time. I never cleared away any hattles? Away from the house.

P.T.O



Letter Four: 2/3/36

I cannot say much more – all I am worrying about is my little children. My witnesses are not called on yet – only the police witnesses. Pray for me. God bless you all
Mother your loving daughter

Charlotte

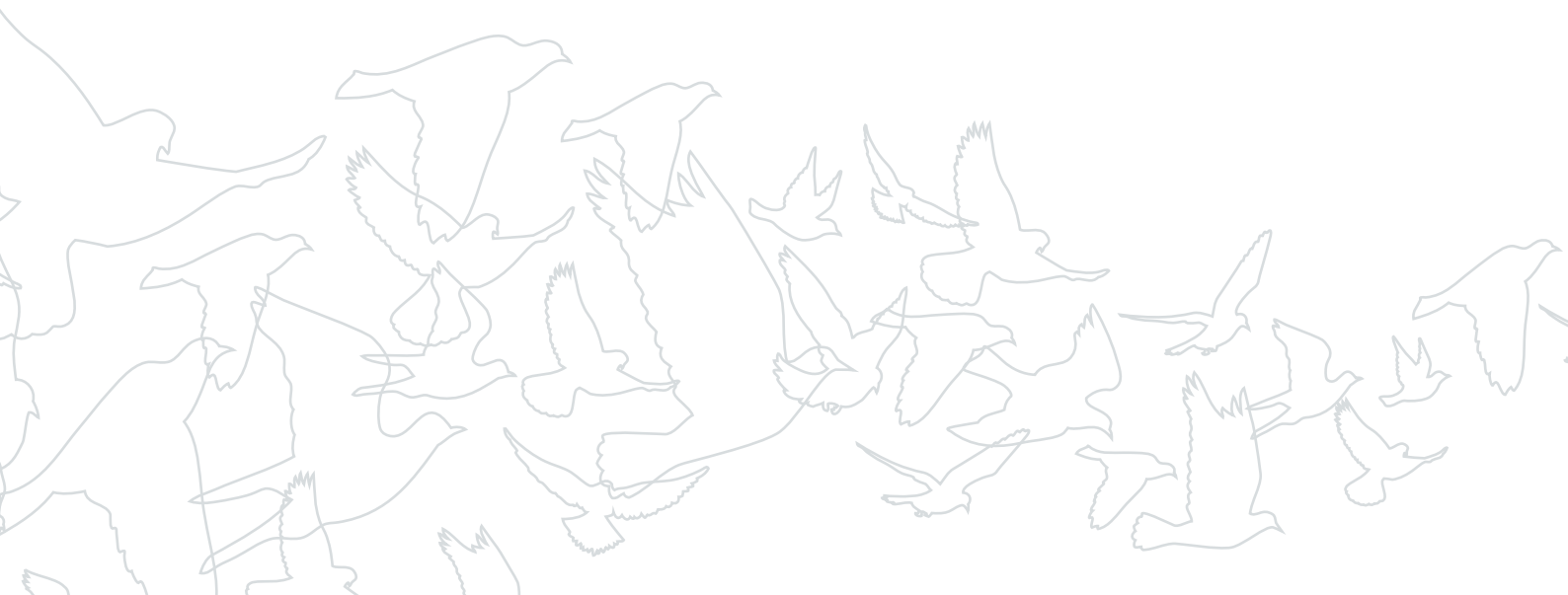


Letter to Martin

Dear Martin

Received your letter today. It's been a difficult time, but I will try to be as open and honest as I can. The weight of everything that is going on is beginning to get to me. However, I am grateful that we can share time and space. I find myself in a difficult place. The nights are feeling longer as the fear creeps in. It's funny how when things get really difficult, powerful thoughts enter into your head. Have you ever felt like that? I did not choose the day of my birth, but I'll I choose the day of my death. I feel that I am due at least one more chance at life that will give me an opportunity to be somebody, mean something, do something, get noticed for being who I am. I want to accomplish something of value. I've never had a thing of beauty, something to worship or honour, respect or cherish. In my search for an identity I've done wrong things, not intentionally, but have drifted into the lives of others who have done me harm. Yet none of those people gratified the purpose of my existence or revised anything that made me special. I went backwards and forwards through time. Yet my search was fruitless and all I discovered was that everything was bound together by a single thread of fate. Sometimes I wondered if I really existed in the minds of those I met. As the realisation of my existence matures I realise all too soon the bubble must eventually burst. I only wish that one day I will find out who I am between the realities of birth and death.

Your friend Charlotte



Letter to Charlotte

Dear Charlotte

I hope you're well. Wondered how you're feeling and how you're managing? I'm really sorry to hear about the verdict. I can't help but think that some of the outcome for yourself situation is bound up with you being a women. As a black person I have been subject to differential treatment in account of my skin completion. I done know if our society will ever understand we should be judged for breaking the law, but if the law tested us differently based on our difference, then I'm against it. In responding to your question about thoughts entering in to my head in times of difficulty, I would say yes, all the time. When darkness creeps into my conscious I normally focus on the worse case scenarios, which is never a good thing to do as sometimes it obscures the good things.

I'm not in a position to judge your guilt or the crime you were charged with. What I do know is that when we as human beings are under pressure we act on very different ways. My mother who was a gentle person could not fight back when she face abusive behaviour from my step father. I'm grateful that she didn't act against him as I would have lost my mum. However, I too felt powerless to help her out and was angry that he got away with it. I can't help but ask myself a question 'where were your friends when you were going through stuff?'

I've also lived life in a jealous state of mind and at times have thought vengeful thoughts. Fear has made me not act upon them.

I do like your writing. I know you didn't have much education but it hasn't diminished your capacity to express what you feel. Your descriptions of what's going on internally and externally has given me a great insight to you as a person, not the offender. Sometime we punish behaviour and still live in a society tested people differently for no other reason than being different. I'm going to close now as I feel I've spoken enough. I wish you a peaceful moment.

Martin



Letter Five: 5/3/36

My Dear Mother and Sisters

I received your welcome letter today. I was glad to hear from you all. I am glad to hear that the nun is praying for me. I did not think she would remember me tis so long ago. I am going to look up and tell the truth about it all mother for I am bound to tell the solicitor about the person. Do all you can for the little children if you cannot do it for me? I am sure the baby is Parsons for I was with him as well as my husband and my husband knew all about it. I knew I was doing wrong but I was ignorant and did not know anything better for I cannot read or write and I was easily led. I've kept back a lot of things from the solicitor but I am bound to tell it now for I cannot rest. The person told me she worked with a Dr and knew how to prepare everything. I am putting in a few words for Sister Lawrence. I do not know if I have ever done any one any harm at home – no one can ever say I done them any wrong turn. I wish now I took the Sisters advice to learn all I could and go to night school. I shall never forget when Sister Lawrence got me prepared for my first Holy Communion. I can remember Father O'Neil giving me my first sample of the Holy Communion and I went to Benediction the day before. Ask Sister Lawrence if she can remember Dora and Cassie Taggard they were with me – I remember them all. Ask Sister Lawrence if she would write me a letter.

I've got to listen to a lot in the court but I have got to put up with it that's nothing to go by. Do not worry mother everything will come all right. When I look up and tell the truth and I wish now I told all I knew in the beginning. I felt like telling the day I was arrested only she got me to promise that I would not say anything. Wrote the solicitor a long letter. I have no more to say now only to ask you all to pray for me and pray to God to forgive me.

I remain you affect daughter

Charlotte

P.S. Mrs Ostler gave my husband the medicine and I promised her I would not say anything.

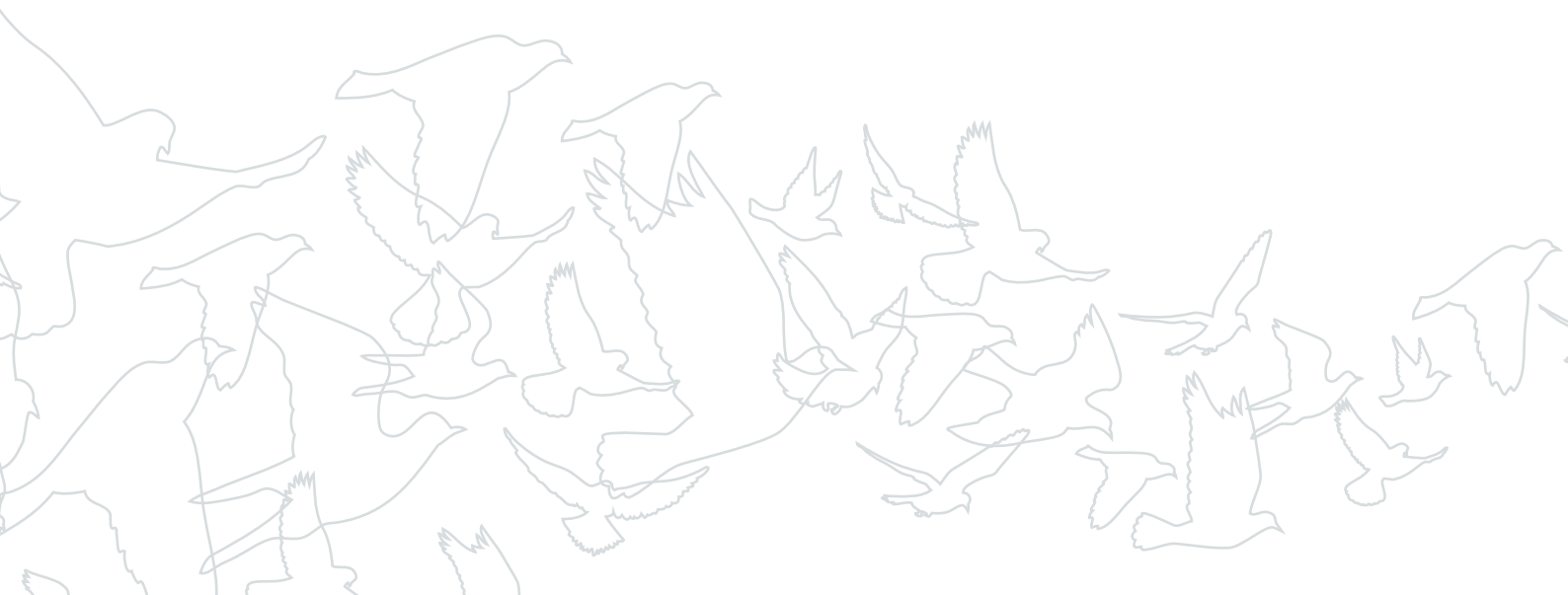


Letter to Martin

Dear Martin

Received your letter today and always happy to hear from you. I hope all things are well with you and your family. The weather today is not very good and even if it was, I can't really appreciate it sitting in my cell. As I sit here this morning seeing the day start I'm encouraged to reflect on my life and the meaning of my existence. I do feel fortunate that in spite of my young age I have had a decent, not perfect life. The light this morning glimmers and sneaks its way in through the brick and steel bars which binds and limits my freedom. So does my thoughts about the world I once knew, where loved one were but a touch away and desired things within reaching distance. The soft patter of tiny feet has been replaced with the deafening sounds of loneliness and isolation. My once cherished thoughts of elevating myself has now become a vague image in my mind. If only I could relive the moments when I was at my happiest. There are times in here when I find my thoughts are without limits and inhibitions where I wonder of the society was taken from would be worth going back to. Once again I'm compelled to acknowledge life in here is not the same as life out there. Not only am I held captive physically, I am trapped inside my mind. It is so strange sometimes. I was asked if I believed in miracles. I do. Today the sun rise. I have experienced love and freedom. All of which I took for granted.

Charlotte

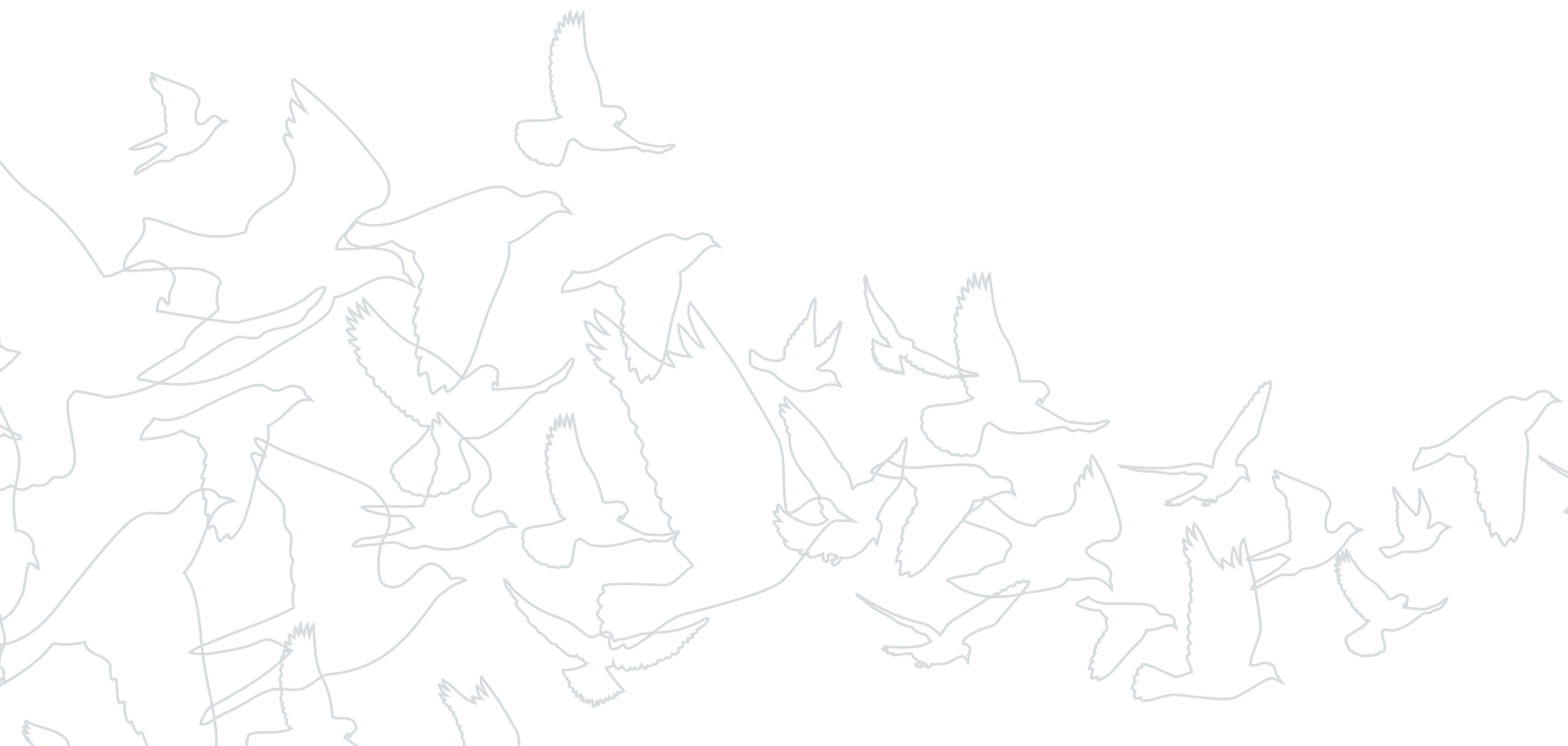


Letter to Charlotte

Dear Charlotte

It hard to know what to write at a time like this. As we are getting to know each and have journeyed through this moment, it's difficult to know how to respond. I'm grateful that I've got to know the person behind the headlines and public scrutiny. A lesson I get from all of this is that as human beings we are only remembered after we're gone. However, I wouldn't be so presumptuous for one minute to think I can relate to what you're going through. I don't think it's appropriate or relevant to focus on that right now. Throughout our conversations you've always been open and transparent, and not shied away from telling your truth. The strangest things for me is knowing that if you were incarcerated we wouldn't have got to know each other. I've learnt a lot about you, as well as learning things about myself. I don't feel I could be as composed as yourself highlighting that you're a strong woman. I've also learned how cruel this world is that feels ending someone life is just deserts for those of us who hurt others. I've never been a lover of punishment of this kind. I've had my fair share of violence put upon me, but as I've got older I've had to learn about forgiveness. I hope as you face this moment you can find it within yourself to forgive yourself.

Martin



Letter Six 11.3.36

Dear Mother and All

I had your letter quite safe and I thank you very much for writing to me so quick. It has cheered me up. There was three doctors the court giving evidence but what people are saying do not worry me and you must not believe all you read in the papers mother. The solicitor who is working for me went to London on Tuesday to get a Barrister, that's the man who speaks up at the Assizes for the solicitor cannot speak up because all the statements are handed over to the Barrister and I think he is a very good one tho I've never heard him or seen him. The solicitor is doing all he can, he is on his feet all the time. It was a very funny thing I went to his office on the Monday as I buried my husband on the Friday, to look for a house. And he wrote back to me at Sturminster Newton to ask me what kind of house I wanted, and what rent I wanted to pay and the sister wrote back and told him the trouble I was in and asked him if he could anything for me and he got on the phone and the master he would be along to see me. So he came that same morning and I told him everything that had happened that I thought of. There's crowds and crowds of people at the court it's like a fair. Will you forward on the letter I wrote you where I mentioned I had promised the person I would not say anything. Will you send it on immediately to the solicitor.

I had a lovely letter from my boy Ernest and he went to a football match and they had a policemen's concert and he is looking after the little ones. And is working for the master and matron in between. Do not forget them at Easter mother. Will you send them on something for Easter for I will not be with them for I had to wait until May for my trial. I have learnt to write my own hand I will I've been him (sic) So that is one blessing thank the Lord. The only thing I worry about is little Georgie, he has only one eye and got to keep it closed all the time. Well mother I was left with a great trial but with God's help I will get over it. The little girl has to wear glasses as well try and do all you can for me and my sisters as well. I have no more to say now only pray for me and God bless you all from your loving daughter

Charlotte



Letter to Martin

Dear Martin

Received your letter today, always happy to hear from you and hope all things are well with you and your family. I have been sent to Exeter gaol where I am awaiting execution. I've reflected on my journey and wanted to share some final thoughts. Sadly our journey will come to an end soon, this letter is not intended to be sad, but a reflection of what I've been through. In the beginning I was paraded in front of an audience of observers whose eyes penetrated me with stares of hatred, while their thoughts formed within their minds of the next form of torture. I was then cheated of my rights as a human being and denied all forms of justice because I am a woman. Having endured this I have still managed to mentally and physically survive.

As I look at my present surroundings I try desperately to find something positive, something mentally encouraging that would sufficiently sustain a reason to be sane in this place, where no prisoner like me is considered a human being. Seeking an escape from the cruel reality of existence and rejection, I wish to dull this pain. Those who have never been wounded by the agonies of prison, can never fully understand the tortures that so many go through. My personality has changed, lost in the shadows of bars. How can I confront myself each morning in the mirror? How can I impress upon the minds of people, the urgency involved in this matter to set me free?

When I die, so does an understanding of how a civilized nation could take pleasure in the act of killing citizens like me. The slow, meticulous march toward death which I experience daily is far more uncivilized and criminal than the acts for which I was charged and will eventually be executed for. People cry out for revenge. They never consider the life of the person they have this revenge for. Never considered the circumstances which may have caused this person to react to situations in life differently than what is considered the norm. No one considers the wretched childhoods, poverty, neglect, lack of love, lack of education and employment, or the lack of self-esteem and hostility of a system which has rejected them for being poor.



A woman like me sits within this isolated cell for where a transformation is made. If you provide me with nothing but walls and bars, then you create a frustrated and troubled human being. Yet, what I write and do today can and will affect the world for centuries to come. I sit and wonder why is so much emphasis placed upon my existence, a person who has been locked away from all society and classified as a threat to civilization?

I absorb myself in a manifold of activities within the solitude of my cell as I listen to my dying declamations. I ponder my sense of history as it wrestles with the sane appraisal of known facts. I realize it is not I who is locked away from society, but society who has locked themselves away from reality. Which reality is that?

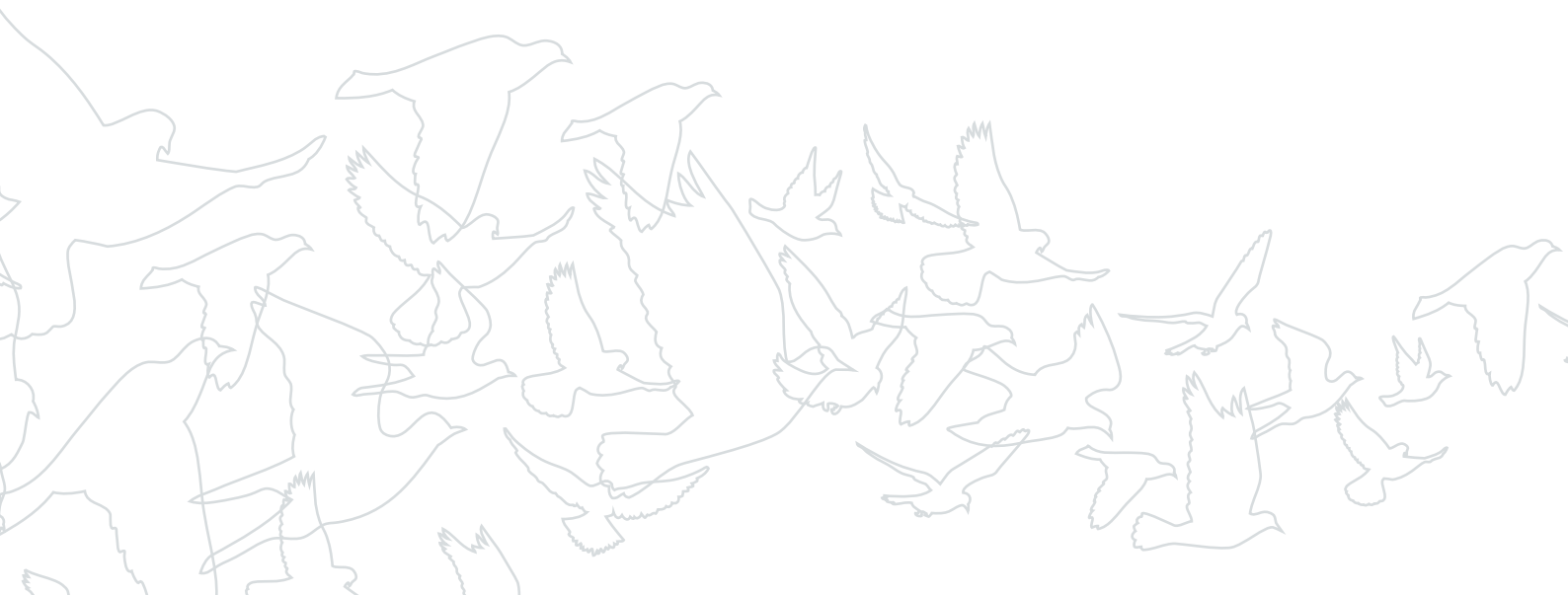
It's the reality to have the ability to love another human being, regardless of their past life, to give each person another chance to prove themselves worthy of respect and interaction with other human beings. I hope to hear from you soon and I promise to share my story with you. Until then, you take care.

And thanks for caring.

I remain forever your friend

Charlotte

P.S. Please tell my story



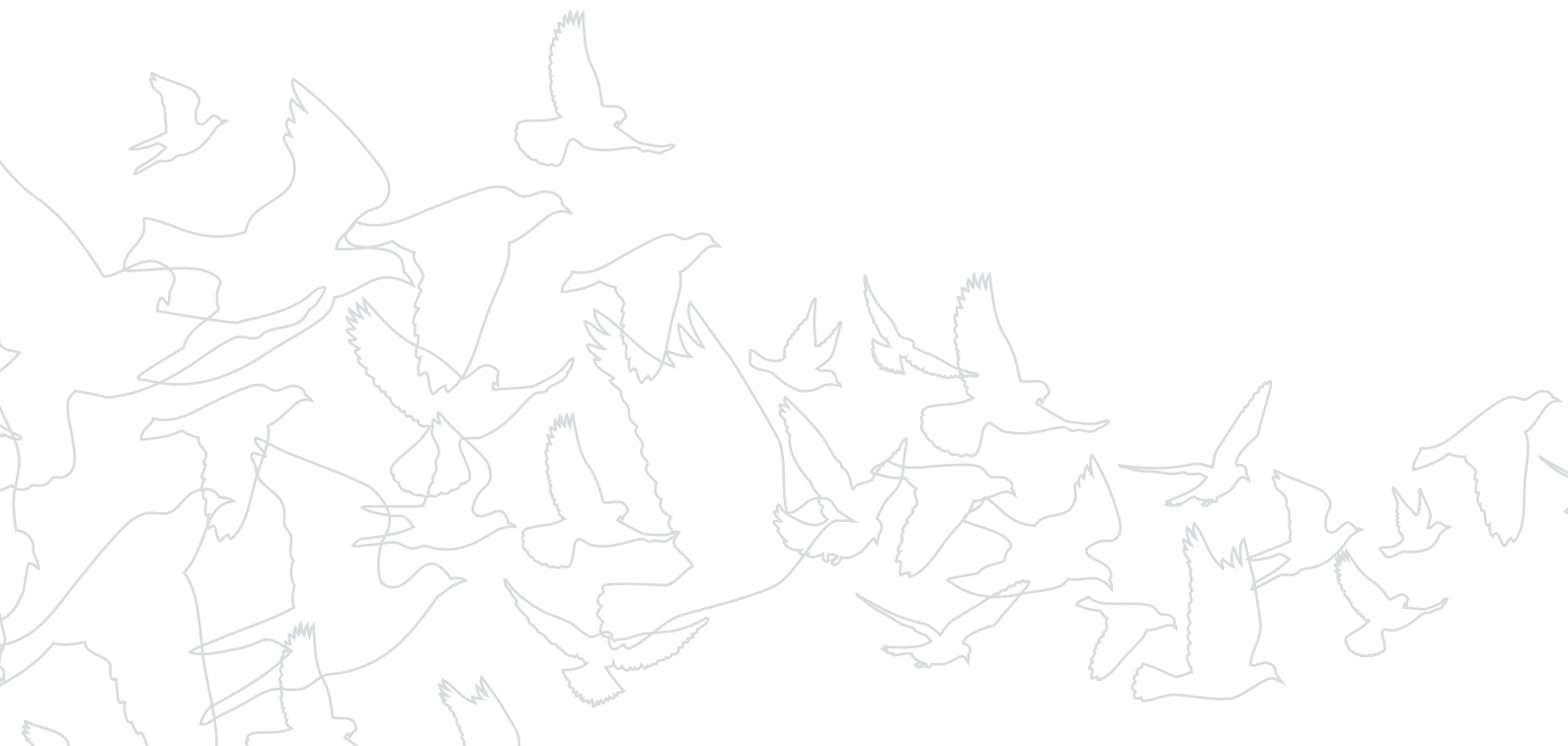
Letter to Charlotte

Dear Charlotte

There's a certain sadness as I write to you today as I know that we are about to be separated by death. Today I decided not to write you a letter but to compose a poem instead. I have enjoyed our connected and hope that you will find the peace you so deserve and in doing so discover the meaning of your existence

Your loyal friend

Martin Glynn



FRIENDSHIP

Take away my right to care
Cast aside the things I give
All I want to do is share

Try and help you want to live
Piece together broken past
Grains of truth drop through the sieve

Pain you think, will always last
Thinking you will never cope
Emotions starved, feelings fast

Need to feel a sense of hope
A life like yours needs to grow
Not dangle like a tightened rope

See your future ebb and flow
Blind you are to see the rise
Hope for you I cannot show

Must see clear, to realise
Be prepared, your heart must view
Clear the debris from your eyes

Friend am I, to you I'm true
Alas! the blindness in your ears
Please tell friend, what do I do ?



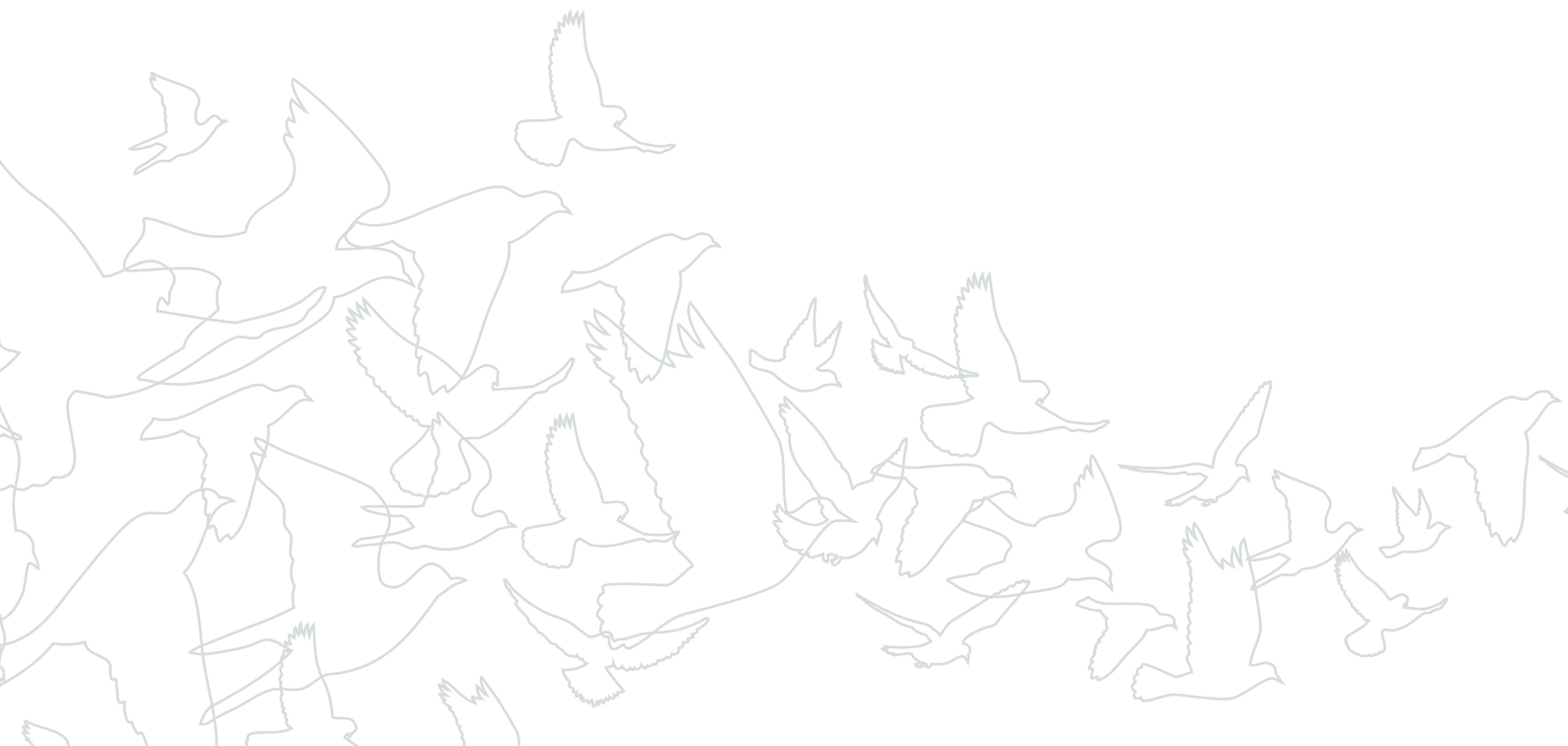
Can I comfort all your fears?
Watch you fall and drop from grace
Erase the times, the many years

Speed around at such a pace
Silent voice that will not see
Pained expressions line your face

Hear the cry, but you won't plea
ride's the victor, hear the tone
Trapped inside yourself, not free

Cast aside, the crumbs you've thrown
Hear the howl, the cold truth blows
Our friendship means, we stand-alone

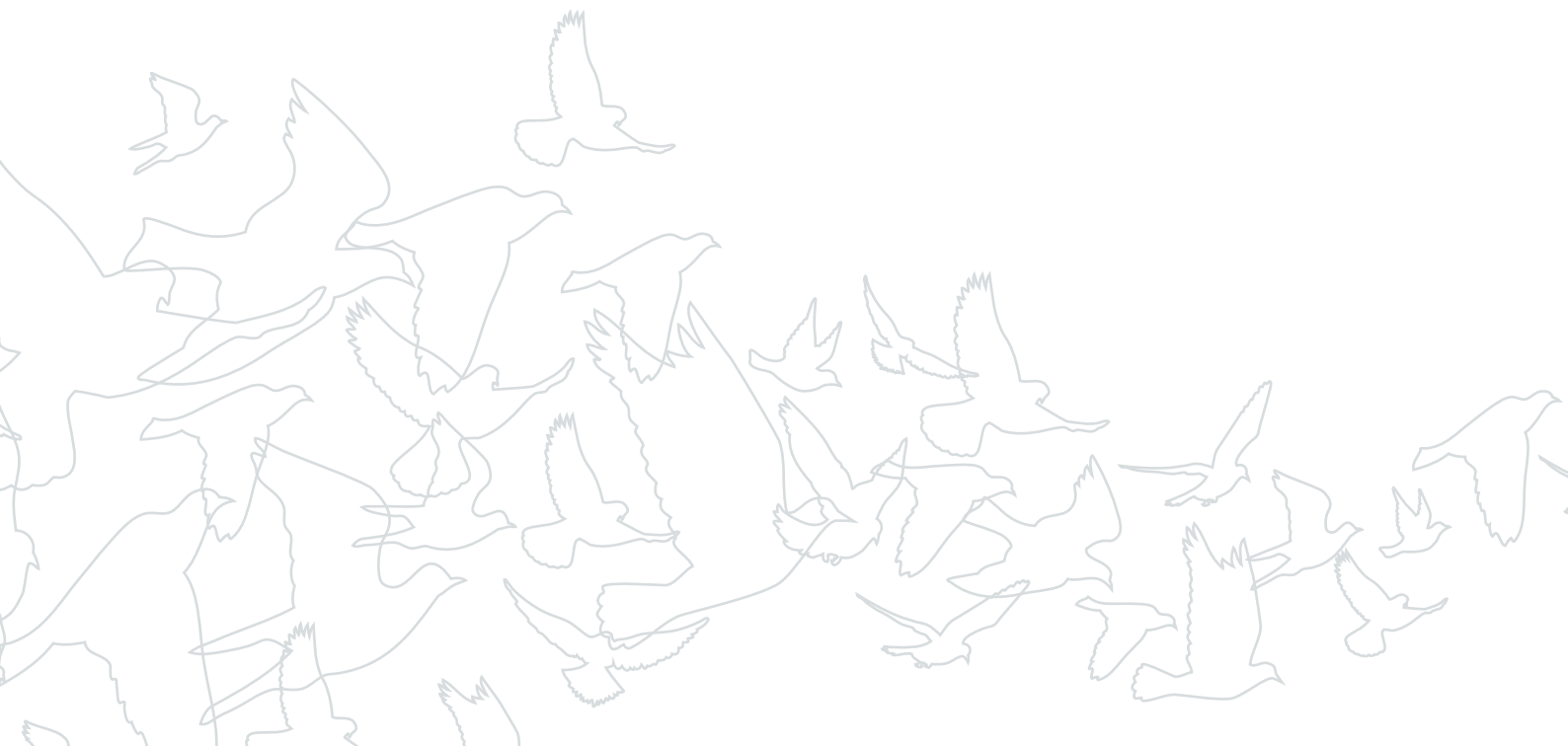
Dried up river, never flows
Things we had, the bond we shared
A chapter in our minds must close.



Epilogue

Charlotte was led to the gallows at 8.00 a.m. on Wednesday, July the 15th, 1936 by Tom Pierrepoint assisted by Thomas Phillips. Cause of death was stated as 'Definite dislocation of the cervical spine. As was the norm, by 1936 Charlotte's execution was an entirely secret affair and there were no reporters present. However, she was attended by a Catholic priest, Father Barney. Charlotte never confessed to the murder and protested her innocence time and again as expressed in her letters. The consequences of Charlottes execution as a mother of five young children was not lost on the general public who began to express concern at the execution through letters to newspapers. Many considered the hardship In Charlotte's life as a mitigating factor. However none of this was considered by the State, despite the fact that she was loved and missed by her children. Sadly, a deeper existential question remains to this day. Who is the death penalty fit for? Is it a justifiable punishment in cases such as Charlotte's, and more importantly, should a life for a life still be the prevailing judgment in many so called civilised societies?

Dr Martin Glynn (July, 2020)



Thank you.

People outside the museum shape and inform what happens inside the museum and we work closely and kindly together, to develop a representative, dynamic and relevant creative programme.

A heart felt thank you to everyone who played a part in this project.

A special thank you to Dr Martin Glynn for his focus, integrity, and generosity.

'Freed Soul' will be profiled in a new reflective space within the Capital Punishment area of the National Justice Museum from 2022.

