

## Why I Wrote 'Travesty?'

Time for some honest words. Words I feel are necessary. Words which are true and serious. I wrote Travesty because my head needed to laugh. Man oh man, did it need to laugh. Hence, Travesty is not a serious story. Nor is it a self-help book. It's just a funny story, which is designed to make you laugh, to give you some 'happy time'.

You see, the *strangest* thing happened to me. The wiring and circuits carrying the pinkie coloured chemicals of happiness inside my head stopped flowing, as the neurons in my brain ceased communicating with my neurotransmitters. This caused parts of my brain to become overactive or under responsive. It occurred rather suddenly and dramatically. As I said, the strangest thing.

The year which sometimes sneaks into my dreams and haunts me is 2009. It was some year, especially for me. I'd had the blues before; who hasn't? They were no biggie. They would come and go, but this time they didn't go. This time they stayed and bubbled in my blood, scorching parts of my brain, turning a part of it to ash, and messing with it in ways I can't explain.

Later I would learn there was a name for what was happening to me. I had a full-blown disease called *depression*, major depression I was told. She's a nasty piece of work. Whoever she touches ends up in a 'world of hurt'. I have a name for my depression. I call her the *screw-up fairy*. When she visits, I'm all screwed up for a while. On such visits, the normality of the ebb and flow of my life ceases.

But the good news is, I was told, there are medicines to repair my burnt-out brain. Medicines to make my wiring and circuits all good again, and give me back the life I once had. These medicines would stop the depression's black march forward; stop it dead in its tracks, give it the 'old heave-ho, out you go.' Then, my brain would be happy and healthy and party like there was no tomorrow.

I did my bit too. I shuffled through the ashes in my brain and tried to find old memories, happy memories; ones which would teach me to smile again. But when I looked, I just saw a mess. A whole pile of smouldering brain cells and burnt out wiring and circuits. A hopeless, hopeless mess. Depression does that to you, I was told, and it comes in many forms. The type I have been diagnosed with is, *severe, chronic, recurrent depressive disorder*. It isolates me, it comes with a loneliness, a darkness, a frightening pain, and unless you suffer from it, you can't understand it. And it hurts, God it hurts.

It hurts even more when you lose your job because of it - like I did. I still remember being sacked within 24 hours of informing the company I was working for at the time, that I had been advised by my Psychiatrist and Psychologist to take some time off work, in a bid to recover, to try and get normal again. Getting the flick for being sick did wonders for my head.

My medical team insisted back in 2009, and still insist today, that I exercise my brain as much as possible. *Write* they told me, write, and do things to tax your brain cells. It's good therapy for depression. Take the medicines, work the brain, they said, and we'll kick this depression thing right off the planet. I dealt with specialist after specialist, all credible and highly regarded in their chosen field of medical expertise in the science of the brain. We changed medication, changed dosages, and still my brain remained confused, and messed up. My brain has been CAT scanned, MRI scanned, poked, prodded, and there are so many drugs running through it - I should be declared illegal.

Today, it is the month of May of 2014, some five years later. I have penned the last words to my book, titled 'Travesty'. I sit in the pleasant gardens of a private hospital in Melbourne, Australia. Melbourne is heading into its winter period, as I'm going into a course of Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT). This is a medical procedure done under general anaesthetic. Electrodes are attached to your head, and the brain is then stimulated by a series of electrical shocks and pulses which cause it to have seizures, hopefully, to reactivate the bits that don't work anymore.

You see, the medications that were meant to repair my brain *haven't* worked properly. The *screw - up fairy* still comes and visits me, and my *depression* still bubbles in my blood. I've baffled the medical experts in the workings of the brain. Unfortunately, I'm now classed as *treatment resistant*.

As I sit, enjoying the sun, a cat wanders over and jumps on my lap. It's a hospital cat. Some hospitals have them hanging around in the garden areas to give their patients something to hold, to pat, to love. The cat doesn't know me from a bar of soap, yet it trusts me. It doesn't judge me. All the cat wants is some of my time, a scratch, a lap to sit on for a while, a friend. Such a pity the human race is not like this cat.

Sadly, my illness, my depression, has cost me friends, family too. People who I once thought were good and wholesome, people who I once entertained in our house, have decided that associating with people like me, people who have *depression* is not the *done* thing. In their eyes I'm not whole anymore; I have a mental illness. These people have judged me on the *stigma* my mental illness unfairly attracts. Another reason my head needed to laugh.

So there you have it: the reasons I wrote *Travesty*. My head needed to laugh loud and laugh long, and to that, I needed to write a funny story. Not a doom and gloom about me fessing up to some mental health issues. *Travesty* has nothing to with depression what so ever. The story was written to make me and you laugh and be happy for a while.

*Importantly*, I did *not* write this story to belittle, insult, or to cast doubt on any religion or any person's religious beliefs or opinions. I fully support a person's right to practise religion, providing such practice does not negatively affect or harm other people.

As for me, for many reasons – I choose *not* to believe. I've seen Heaven, and there is *no* God. I've seen Hell, I visit the place, and there is *no* Devil.

Finally, I hope you get a laugh or two from my book. I hope you find it a fun story. I wrote for the fun of writing and the therapeutic value to be gained from messing with words. My head needs it.

If you have one, may your God go with you!

Hayden Bradford  
May 2014