

Book Outline

THE ORDINARY WORLD: My story begins with me at home, in my apartment in Goderich, Ontario, Canada's prettiest town. I am unaware that I would soon face homelessness and a diagnosis of schizophrenia. While I am a likeable character, the reader recognizes that I need to grow emotionally and psychologically, and obtain a safe and suitable home as well as an effective treatment for my schizophrenia.

THE CALL TO ADVENTURE: My story continues with my being evicted from my apartment. My landlord informed me that his father needs the unit. I had 2 months to find housing. I had no luck finding a rental in Goderich, so for a change, I decided to move to London, Ontario.

REFUSAL OF THE CALL: My story proceeds with my being torn between staying in Goderich, which was inhospitable or going to London, Ontario. I could go to Fanshawe College and complete their Early Childhood Education program, which I had abandoned in 2017.

MEETING WITH THE MENTOR: I am blessed to have encountered Meaghan Brideau, a Housing Support Worker with The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), who became a mentor for me. She is highly knowledgeable about homelessness and mental health, and shared her insight in the form of words and actions that resonated with me and that complimented my own wisdom and capabilities.

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD: At this stage of my journey, I recognized that there was no future for me in Goderich. I made the decision to move to London. I lived there, in a hostel for 4 months, but soon ran out of savings to pay the rent. The manager of the hostel asked me to vacate and to pay the arrears when I was able. She was very abrupt in her handling of the situation. Going back to college was no longer in the cards. I was gravely mentally ill and I was now homeless. I decided to move back to Goderich, a small community where my daughter and granddaughter live, and where there were services and support for me to utilize. I was now living within a community of people who are homeless, seriously mentally ill, and who observe different norms, values and expectations.

TESTS, ALLIES & ENEMIES: At this stage of my journey, I relied heavily on my relationships with individuals from inside the realms of homelessness and mental health; both professional and personal.

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Leslie McNeil is a truly gifted Intensive Case Manager for the counties of Huron and Perth, in Ontario. She is very reliable and I could count on her to meet my needs, when I was unable; be it food, medication management or liaising on my behalf with partner agencies. It was a pleasure to know and work with her.

I am grateful to have had Lindsay Chandler from CMHA in my corner when I was charged with criminal harassment. She brings humour and deep caring to her role as a Court Support Worker.

Daniel Johnston is a Social Worker for the Alexandra and Marine General Hospital. She is kind and diligent in expediting connections for financial assistance, housing and support services.

I was ever so grateful for Gail Wood-Clarke, my Employment Counsellor at The Centre For Employment and Learning (Goderich). She opened her home to me when she learned I was homeless. I stayed for 2 months, though she would not have minded if I stayed longer. I enjoyed Christmas with her family and then secured housing in an affordable rent building in Goderich. I moved into the apartment in January 2022, the new year. It is a beautiful, newly renovated and painted space. It made me feel that I was in my ordinary life again, though this was not to be. I found a job with a company called TNT Security Inc., who placed me in a nursing home called Huronview, in Clinton, Ontario. The role was to mind a gentleman with Parkinson's because he was inclined to wander and have falls.

My mental health was at its all time worse.

During the spring and summer months, my daughter Ruth Pritchard would bring my granddaughter Charlotte to the YMCA, to play in the playground.

The Psychic and The Tattoo Artist: It was 2016, and I experienced two characters who were tricksters for me. They are not allies, but they are not enemies either. Their presence in my journey complicated an already tricky scenario. I was having delusions; fixed false beliefs about him being a Satanist and my twin flame; with an acute soul connection, often described as one soul split into two bodies, and meant to accelerate immense personal growth and spirituality.

I was thinking the psychic had initiated me into New Age practices. She held psychic development workshops and I attended one. Soon after, I began to experience hallucinations and delusions. I would see, hear and feel what others could not. I believed this was a coincidence. It didn't occur to me that they were symptoms of schizophrenia, a Serious Mental Illness (SMI).

The Tattoo artist encouraged customers to put money down on a tattoo, which I had done, several months prior. The voices told me to get it back. I was mentally unstable and yelled forcefully at his assistant, who was quite shaken, to give my money back. This was one of many altercations I would have with him.

Vicki Pritchard: is my mother. We were estranged. But on my 3rd trip to the hospital, I called her and we talked. The relationship then became friendly and caring.

Tracey Pritchard: is my sister. We were estranged. But when I moved to St. Marys, our relationship became friendly and warm.

ORDEAL: At this stage, the midpoint in my journey, I feel lost, and the future looks bleak. I hit rock bottom and experienced a dire setback; I was having trouble paying my rent for my apartment on Strang Court. I met with my support team and we decided that giving notice would

be the best course of action, even though it might mean being homeless again, and this time, without a vehicle to inhabit. I was in the midst of selling the vehicle.

My mental health was suffering. The hallucinations and delusions were present constantly.

I braced myself to confront my greatest fear, being homeless again and never having a firm grip on my mental health. I had two months to find alternate housing. I spent entire days online, searching for housing with no luck. So, I continue on. Complications continue to grow over the course of this section, until I am brought to my next choice point. I gave notice for the apartment on Strang Court, in Goderich.

THE REWARD: It was late summer, 2022. I was assigned a new Housing Support Worker, whose name is Shelby Blanchard. She entered my life at a time when I needed to find new accommodation and I was waiting for word about receiving payments from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). I was frantic and unsettled, but in no time, Shelby found housing for me in Exeter, Ontario, and on the same day I was approved for ODSP. Any celebration was tempered with the very real dangers that still lie ahead.

I moved into this semi-supervised home for 4 months, with a male resident, David Mc., and then moved into my own apartment above the IDA pharmacy, a move that turned my life upside down. Living on my own did not suit me. I was not taking my medication. I was lonely and I was bombarded with hallucinations and delusional thinking.

THE ROAD BACK: At this point in my story, I am eager to conclude the journey. The prize is to obtain adequate housing for someone with an SMI. There is an urgency to my mission. Obstacles arise, but the goal for me is to return home. I am hospitalized, this time for 2 months.

RESURRECTION: At this stage in my story, I undertake one more monstrously difficult trial. I was arrested by the OPP and taken into custody for criminal harassment. I am held in a cell for most of the day, and then released at 7:30 pm. At my request, the police drove me to the ER in Clinton Public Hospital. I got there just before 8:00 pm, before the ER closed. I was examined by

a hospital nurse and then transferred by Voyago to the psychiatric floor of Alexandra Marine and General Hospital, in Goderich. I stayed for 2 weeks and then I was discharged.

A great deal took place during this period of time. I was then hospitalized for a month.

Once again, I am hospitalized voluntarily. I am hospitalized for a 2 month period and requested that the Social Worker, Daniel Johnston, assist me in finding suitable housing. I was aware of a house called Walker Place in Exeter, and only a couple of blocks away from my apartment. She called them and they did have a room available. I needed to be in a home that has 24 hour supervision and staff to oversee my medication.

I am in Walker Place for a month and then discovered a wonderful home in St. Marys, Ontario, that better suits my needs. It is close to my mother and my sister. My journey is coming to an end. Through my sacrifice, I recognized that I had made the right decision and that the greater forces that were at odds in the world are reconciled, and the journey is complete.

THE RETURN WITH THE ELIXIR: At this stage of my story, I am delighted to have transcended fear and death. This has changed me internally, and externally. Evidence of this transformation is seen when I re-enter the normal world. I behave differently, I am kinder and more compassionate. I have won the prize I sought, a home that suits me as a recovering schizophrenic, my new normal.

Jenn XOX