

MY NAME IS SAM.

(DIARY OF A TRUTH-TELLER)

The way he flew through the air; it was beautiful. The turns and twists were those of a high board diver making his final dive for his mesmerised public. The screams added to the drama, so we must all thank him for those. I thank him and I thank my God.

The drama, the excitement, would not have been so great, had it not taken place from such a beautiful tower, the SLS tower, one of the highest on God's planet, here in Dubai.

But that is now.

Earlier in the week, five of us had arrived here in Dubai, including me, Sam. There is Chris, our goalkeeper, the quiet one. Then there is Alex, our strong-tackling defender, Frankie, who no one would argue with, and Jerry, our striker, together with me, of course. We are the five-a-side football team to make all other five-a-side teams quake in their boots.

The meal we shared had been beautiful, each of us making their own contribution, as we would on the pitch. The buzz between us was electric, as moods and laughter were shared with the food and the drink.

'That was a great performance you gave in goal today, Chris. You'll be playing for England next!' Chris smiled in appreciation at Alex's comment. Yes, we are only a humble team, but the compliment was appreciated. It was true that Chris' penalty saves at the end had kept us in the game. David, our manager, or the heavenly swallow, as I feel I should call him now, was so proud of us all, that he had allowed us to use the trophy to mix a strange combination of alcoholic drinks, so that we could all take sips from 'The Cup of Victory'.

David's dark beard changed shape as he smiled in gratitude, his laughter revealing a mouth full of chipped teeth, made all the more obvious by the gold that surrounded them, exaggerating their lack of beauty instead of concealing it.

'Thanks to you, David, our leader,' said Alex. 'We all know that no team is a team without a great leader and manager.'

'Hear! Hear!' said the team as we all joined in, raising our glasses in a toast.

'Let's not forget Jerry,' yelled a worse-for-wear Frankie. 'Those goals you scored today were absolutely amazing!'

And that is the way it should all have ended. But it did not.

Why did David make such stupid, ridiculous comments at the end? It ruined the party for all us, especially me. His protestations of innocence after the fact meant nothing.

Because then it was just too late; the die had been cast.

Then the party ended and we returned to our rooms in the tower, each of us choosing to spend our days differently. Alex, who was much the worse for wear, took to bed to 'sleep it off'. I went for a walk around the Marina. Of course, I could not resist taking my phone to live stream the pictures of the cafes and restaurants which glinted in the sun.

'This is the place to be,' I said to Frankie, who, for some reason, had decided to avoid the sun, preferring to enjoy my live streaming. 'It's too hot for me' was the comment.

But I can't understand how people in England complain all the time about the weather and then, when they have a chance to experience something better, well.....

Crash! It has just missed me! Some stupid individual had decided it was a good idea to flick a cigarette end from the balcony, and it had just missed my head. 'Typical idiot! Probably a man,' my mother would have said, but we have learnt a lot about stereotyping since those days, so I smiled to myself and continued to walk and live stream.

It's funny when you walk alone, when you give yourself time to reflect. As much as I was amused by the people smiling and laughing in the cafes, the solitariness of the walk took me back towards those sessions I had had with the counsellor, and the darkness they had uncovered, which had not been of my own making. You don't create darkness for yourself. Your parents do, but you are the one who has to live in it. They own the cave but you own the misery.

'It's all about identity,' my mother had said. 'You won't be happy until you find your true identity, your true self,' she had said, because she was a 'She' of course. She had made that quite clear from the beginning. Oh no, *she* did not suffer from any kind of identity crisis. Lucky her!

To help me through all of this, my counsellor spoke about 'autosuggestion', telling me that aspects and incidents which we absorb in one part of our lives can affect us in another. But what is the evidence for this?

Then it happened again!

The idiot had flicked another cigarette butt down towards me. But I couldn't see anyone on the balcony; maybe there was more than one person there. Perhaps they (plural, not singular) were having a game, a competition.

What next?

A splash of tea or coffee hit the ground. It was followed by stripes of red sticky stuff, jam it must have been, that landed on my shoulder. This was ridiculous!

'Stop it! Stop it now!' I yelled upwards, towards the heavens, but there was no reply, beyond the muffled laughter of voices.

But God had heard me. I knew that. That was why I looked up towards the sky when I shouted. I knew they (singular), the deity, would listen, and I knew they would respond. If it was not those people on the balcony that God would punish, then there would be another punishment, perhaps aimed at others. I knew that.

And that would be right and proper. It would be God's justice because the deity had witnessed everything.

But so had Frankie through my phone.

Like a fool, I had kept streaming. But what would Frankie think? Anyone with any sense would understand that I had been the victim, not the perpetrator, for that is the story of my life. I am always the innocent victim.

Recovering from the shock, my mind went back into my cave of reflection and recollection, but it was just too painful to stay there, so I returned to my apartment to clean up the mess around my head.

But it did not match the mess inside my head. Nothing can do that.

Then the phone rang. Why was someone ringing? Nowadays it is all about messaging. Was it my mother? If so, I would ignore it. But it was Frankie. There had been an accident.

David was dead. He had fallen from his balcony window and had landed at the foot of SLS Dubai, one of the tallest buildings in a city renowned for its tall buildings. The Dubai police were investigating, but they had assumed it was an accident. Who would want to do such a thing to someone like David and why? Frankie told me that the police would gather us all together, and ask each of us to recount our actions that day. What a complete waste of time! I was not a member of the police force, but even I knew that no one would have pushed such a lovely man as David; so it had to be an accident, or the hand of God. As a footballer, I knew all about that.

Later that day, the five of us met together at the police station. We sat down before being interviewed by two officers, who presented themselves as females

‘We hear that the incident took place after a party. What was the purpose of that party?’

‘To celebrate our victory. We won the Emirates trophy,’ volunteered Frankie. ‘David was our manager. We all love him... loved him’

‘Yes, he was such an inspiration to us all,’ said Alex.

One officer looked at each of us, her eyes asking the questions which her mouth did not. Her colleague sat and took notes. I cannot know why there were so many questions, but they continued. Each of us was asked to tell the officers what we had contributed to the festivities. Alex and Frankie had prepared the food and Jerry and Chris had organised the drinks. It had been my job to make the speech on behalf of the team, thanking David for his inspiration.

It was beyond my comprehension that the interrogating officer wanted to hear the contents of my speech. I explained that the speech was on my phone, and then proceeded to read it, following which the interrogator indicated to her fellow-officer that they should leave; so they both stood up and left the room, their heads bowed.

As they went, they said nothing to us, beyond telling us to stay where we were, and that they would return to tell us what would happen next. We sat there, not knowing whether we should laugh or cry. The whole incident was beyond anything any of us had experienced before. As each moment passed, each of us kept telling the others that we were certain that David would walk through the door at any second, his huge grin appearing through his fulsome beard.

Then the door squeaked as it was pushed open. The two officers declined to sit down, instead preferring to stand and read, as if from a script, in a way that would have seemed very formal in England. The officer who had taken notes stood with her head bowed, while her colleague, the leading interrogator, read from their notes.

‘We have examined the evidence, and have reason to believe that the death of Mr. David Grimshaw may not have been an accident. We cannot know this for certain but, following our law, we have a duty to proceed in order to achieve justice in the eyes of God. We have decided that Sam, you are innocent, but that the rest of you, Alex, Frankie, Jerry and Chris, you were involved in the

preparation of food and drink. This leads us to the possibility, but, of course, not the certainty, that you were involved in Mr. Grimshaw's death.'

There was an audible gasp which echoed around the room.

'On what basis can you possibly say that?' yelled Alex.

'I hope this is some kind of sick joke,' emoted Frankie.

'This is utterly crazy,' shouted Jerry.

'I demand to see a lawyer,' muttered Chris.

I said nothing. I did not know what was happening, but I did know that the word of God had been invoked, and that, whatever your religion, God is God, whatever their manifestation.

I was learning about the ways of God, and I liked them. Many of my atheist friends had told me that God was not for the modern world, but I was learning something different. God was for the modern world, for my world.

But why had these suspects been chosen? It was clear to me. God is omniscient. God decides who should suffer as the guilty party, whatever the humans may think.

David had committed a sin and he had been punished for it. God, in their omniscience, had decided who the perpetrator was.

Of course, I know something, but God is the one who knows everything.

So I was left alone, free to return to my room, free to witness through a vision, once again, the beauty of the fall, of the heavenly swallow dive. David had fallen down to the ground, but his soul had risen to Heaven. God had decided that. It had been God's hand that had pushed him, manifested in me.

But how did I know this? I had seen the signs that others would have remained oblivious to. The falling of the cigarette ends which had told me that someone had to fall. The coating with the jam which had matched the red stripes of our football shirts and told me that the heavenly fall would be related to our team.

But surely that was a coincidence, you say? So let me explain to you non-believers.

We, the believers, are moving towards a greater understanding of the words of God. This means that we can now identify, not only with God in all their manifestations, but with who we really are, deep inside ourselves. The number three is significant because all true believers know that all habitual practices should be performed in threes.

So what was the first of the three acts?

David had referred to our team as a team of women. He had done this again and again in his speech. This is the team of myself, Sam, Chris, Jerry, Alex and Frankie. He would not stop emphasising this fact, as he saw it, saying that we represented our gender so well, as if this was a truth.

But you know, as you have read my story, that we are not only women. Society calls all the members of our team women but I, we, refuse your binary classification. David sinned because he kept repeating that we were women, when I, we, knew we should be recognised as non-binary.

Some of you may have even thought that we were men as you read my story, my truth, judging us by our names. I hope not, but I have to recognise this is possible.

No, I refuse to allow you to refer to me by either gender. I am 'they'. Accept it or prepare for a fate of eternal damnation.

The first act, David's act, which brought my wrath and justified my actions before God, was his narrow insistence that we were all but one gender, as a team of female footballers.

I knew this was wrong, because my mother had tried to lock me a cave of her making, but I have since escaped to be free.

So now I am ready. It is my time to leap.

I stand here on the balcony and I look down. Below I see the cars; I see people seeking meaning in their meaningless lives.

But above I know that God looks on. I shall fall before I ascend to join my maker.

The view is beautiful, the road below teeming with humans, many, maybe most, non-binary if they only knew the inner truth about themselves. I am wearing my football shirt, to show what our team really represents a non-binary reality, a truth understood only by those who have been chosen.

Wish me well. We (singular) shall cry out in our belief, in our conviction, not in pain or fear, because we have committed no crime. The only crime will be committed by those of you who do not believe in our God, in this soul speaking to you now, and in the truth of our ministries.

Goodbye.

It is time to leap. Now we shall fly.

Aaaaaaargh!