

The Restorative Gardens

Petro

I wake up cold and stiff after another uncomfortable night in this strange and unfamiliar place. My horrible nightmares still racing around my brain making me feel frightened and anxious. I miss my family, friends and my home. However I give myself a good talking to and put my sad thoughts to one side as I don't want to get weighed down in a toxic spiral of bleak negativity

Once I am outside my heart lifts. I am surrounded by beautiful trees, flowers, fruit trees and thriving veg produce. It is so peaceful here early in the morning, with only the birds, bees and the occasional squirrel for company.

Some of the plots here are well maintained, neat and tidy and lovingly looked after by their owners. Others are sad, neglected, messy and abandoned by those who once had a fresh veg utopia dream. And yet in the soft light of the early morning sun their abandoned look is actually kind of magnificent. Wild flowers and grasses have taken their perhaps rightful place in the ecosystem. The bees and butterflies are plentiful.

My adopted plot was once like this but now after a lot of hard work it thrives and my produce is in abundance. Onions, courgettes, potatoes, rhubarb, strawberries, carrots and leeks are bountiful. I am so proud of my work here and I hope its owner would be too

Peter

Yet another morning of waking up cold and stiff, frightened and nervous after the usual nightmare filled night. Although I have been here a few weeks now, or is it months, it still seems strange and unfamiliar and I am very confused. I miss my old life and particularly my friends and family. The odd visit can't compensate. I can't always remember their names and I don't like the look of pity in their eyes.

I push my sad thoughts away and delicately shuffle outside into the garden. My heart lifts at the beauty of the early morning scene before me. The majestic oak trees at are at their best at this time of year. The flower beds are equally as stunning with pink and purple fuchsias, salvias, and dahlias. Bright pink geraniums in terracotta pots adorn the patio giving the garden a hint of the Mediterranean.

I am delighted to see my veg in the raised beds doing really well. Courgettes, potatoes, rhubarb, onions and leeks. I think a nice lady helped me plant them. What's really strange is that I can remember the names of the flowers and veg but not of my own family.

I wonder what's happened to my allotment. I can see it all in my mind's eye. The fruit trees and shrubs, veg patch and flower garden and my beloved spacious shed. I felt so happy there, working away season after season. I do hope its not messy and neglected now after all that hard work that I put in.

Petro

The sun is higher in the sky now and soon people will be starting to arrive at the allotment so I pack every thing up. Its been a hard mornings work but worth it. Tonight I can enjoy my potatoes, leeks, onions and carrots in a veg stew, infused with my herbs of garlic, chives and dill. For desert it will be juicy raspberries and a

bit of rhubarb. I collect water from the allotment tap and wash myself, using dock leaves as a flannel, and fennel as toothpaste to clean my teeth. Luckily the weather is hot, so I am able to wash and dry my clothes

It is so peaceful here – an oasis in the centre of the city. The birdsong is loud and melodic and soothes my very soul. I am reluctant to leave but I have to visit the local loos and church honesty food box before it gets busy. Sometimes I get lucky and the honesty box is full, so I can have a rare old feast of biscuits, cake and crisps. There are some really kind people here. It restores my faith in humankind which has been shattered by war, Russian greed and violence. The shock and terror of the war haunts me in my dreams and day to day living. Sometimes I start to shake for no reason, and I have real trouble remembering things

Peter

The sun is hot now and I can hear people moving about inside. The clatter of the breakfast trolley and the chattering of those nice kind ladies and a few young men too. I think they said that they are going to use some of the veg in a stew for dinner one evening. Perhaps the carrots, onions and potatoes infused with herbs. Garlic chives and dill would be nice. The rhubarb and raspberries look good so we might have those for desert.

The garden is my restorative place. When I am indoors it makes me think of my time in the military. A strict routine, strangers, fear and being away from my family. Worst of all I think about the gruesome war. I can still remember the horrible violent fighting that has haunted me for years. I think I will stay out here in the garden a little longer. This garden makes me feel happy.

Petro

On my walk from the allotment to the church, I walk past a care home that has a beautiful garden. It is surrounded by magnificent oak trees and has a Mediterranean style garden with bright geraniums in terracotta pots. There is an old gentleman sitting there in his pyjamas. He smiles and waves at me. He looks happy with not a care in the world. When I grow old I would like a care home with a nice garden, where I can be at peace and forget my war demons. I wonder what that gentleman's story is....

Peter

As I sit here for a bit longer enjoying the early morning sunshine, I see a slightly dishevelled looking man walking past. Despite his tatty clothes he strides purposefully and is young and strong with a healthy glow. I envy him, his youth and vitality and purpose. I wonder where he is going and what his story is.....

I say hello and wave. The man looks at me with fear in his eyes. I recognise that look, I have seen it during the war, and I know that this man is trying to escape something. Although I can't remember much, I can sense feelings and emotions vividly. The man nods and starts to quickly walk past the garden out of sight.

Petro

The next day I see the old gentleman again on my early morning walk from the allotment. He smiles and waves at me. This time I smile and wave back. I think the carers are too busy at this time in the morning to be bothered by me. To be honest, its nice to have someone smiling at me

Peter

Here I am back in the garden again. I think it's the next day but I can't be sure. The dishevelled looking man walks past again and I smile and wave at him. This time he smiles and waves back. Its funny I don't see pity in his eyes, only envy.

Petro

Today has been a good day. My produce is doing really well and I had a great meal last night using my harvested fruit and veg. Also on my walk from the allotment today, I had a bit of a chat with the old gentleman in the care home garden. We just chatted about the weather and how it was good for the garden. It felt good to actually talk. I can't remember the last time I had a proper conversation with someone

Peter

I have had a good day. The nice lady said that the dinner tonight was all from the veg that I am helping to grow in the garden. It was delicious and I am feeling very pleased with myself. I also had a nice chat with the dishevelled man who walks past the garden early every morning. It's a while that I have had a chat with anyone apart from staff and visitors to the care home

Petro

I am actually starting to really enjoy my routine here at the allotment and my walks. The old gentleman and I are becoming quite good friends. Although he is frail and very confused he knows all about gardening, and growing fruit and veg. He can remember all their names and has lots of good tips and techniques which I am using

on the allotment plot. So far they have been very successful. His name is Peter and I am really curious to know what his life story is, but he can't seem to remember very much about it

Peter

I am actually starting to settle in here now, although I have felt a bit out of sorts the last few days so I am glad the nice ladies are looking after me. I enjoy my early morning garden routine, as I have made friends with the dishevelled looking man. Unfortunately I can't remember his name, but he is a good chap. We chat a lot about the garden and growing fruit and veg. I have given him a few tips and techniques which he appreciates and says have been very successful. I wouldn't have thought that he would be able to afford a garden and have the time to look after it. However he describes his fruit and veg growing in great detail so it must be a good size. Perhaps he is a rich eccentric type that doesn't bother with his appearance. He could do with a good haircut.

Petro

The days are getting shorter and there is a chill in the air. Autumn is fast approaching and my produce is not as bountiful now. I am worried about how I am going to survive in the winter in the allotment shed. I also feel very sad today. The last few days I have walked past the care home and Peter the old gentleman has not been in the garden. I really miss our chats.....

The End..

