

# **A MURDER OF CROWS**

## **SALVATION**

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**By Tony Crowe**

A MURDER OF CROWS  
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This is a true account to the best of my knowledge. The real names of the people in this story have been changed to protect the guilty. All living people have been given new names apart from those who have given their permission.

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# FOREWORD

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“You have to get rid of that anger, give it over to God and let him deal with it” Words I spoke to Tony on many occasions.

I knew only too well of that burning anger and the pain of being unjustly convicted. Many years before I had been sentenced to 20 years in a prison in Bangkok Thailand.

Lots of people think and often say 'Oh everyone in prison says they are innocent', but in fact that is very far from the truth and I feel with over 20 years of visiting prisons and 15 of those working in the chaplaincy I do have some experience. No, not all people say they are innocent but every once in a while you come across those individuals who truly are. Tony Crowe is one of those people. One of the difficulties of this is that most people who work in prison and I include many chaplains too, don't know how to deal with this. They may come to accept that an injustice has been done but what can they do about it? Sadly many find it easier not to talk about it with the individual. They just don't know how to handle it. They sometimes feel they have to take sides or do something. From my own personal experience I used to say, they don't want you to get them out they just want to have a voice and be listened to.

Tony Crowe is a larger than life character, very intelligent these were two obvious characteristics when I first met Tony at Garth prison in 2001. Over the months so much more was to be discovered about this remarkable man.

Its true he had a fearsome reputation and many staff members only go by the prisoners file. I in fact never looked at an inmates file unless I had to; to write reports etc. Even then I would much rather a person tell me about

who they are and their journey through life. Some would say that is naïve, but as a Christian who came to faith from a prison cell, I believe that God loves every sinner but he hates the sin! That's not to say I believed all I heard either!

Tony was greatly respected by other inmates and he never compromised his faith, he "walked the walk" whether he was in chapel, on the wing, or in the gym. He was always ready to encourage or sometimes challenge. As I got to know the man behind the number, I have to say I was impressed by his integrity and his great sense of humour. I also saw the pain in his eyes and the deep hurt which so often is stored up as anger. I had no doubt about the sincerity of his faith but I knew unless he got rid of the anger he would not truly be free even after his release from prison, that's why I challenged him on many occasions. He knew my story, that it was only after being set free from anger that God would release me from that prison cell.

After serving only 3 years of that 20 year sentence. That's why I could write a book with the title 'Freed for Life' and that was my deep desire for Tony. To be free.

So prepare your self for a great read! Tony's honesty humour and at times despair will keep you wanting more.

God used prison to reverse the course of Tony Crowe's life.

Be prepared as you read on. For the One who called this remarkable man may put a call on your life too.

Rita Nightingale.

# Chapter 1

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## Into despair

The smell of fresh paint from recent renovation fills the air. A middle-aged guy in uniform stands tapping a pen on the high counter. His belly hanging over his belt.

“Stand on the yellow line, give me your name.” Says the officer. His fingernails carry soil from last weekend’s exploits at the allotment.

“Tony.”

“Last name son?” Instantly.

“Crowe.” I answer.

“Right - Crowe, you will be given a number, CP3703, that’s you now. Son - What’s your number?”

“CP -3703.”

“Sir! Or Boss will do son.” His muddy brown eyes widen. “Do you know why you’re here son?” my thought is, the best way to get through this is say as little as possible.

I say “No.”

“You” he starts “have been remanded into the custody of HMP Durham by the courts till next week, that’s – let me see – the twentieth of November - All right?” A question needing no answer. I give it none. Next for the charms of the fat-faced controller at the desk are The Six men who came on the bus with me, not a real bus, a van. With a small box regulation size. 900mm high; just taller than me, with 810mm between plastic moulded seat and front wall. 650mm from the door to the side wall; and window of dark tinted plastic.

For journeys of more than two and a half hours the seat is suppose to have a full-seat-cushion. We’d been on there for over three hours by the time we reached HMP Durham; no cushion. Three hours, of what for me was an eternity. The six others on the bus are all friends of Swindles. The slag I’m in this situation for. Imagine the

abuse I've had to put up with.

I got to the police station on Friday night. The Six pals of "Dangerous" Swindles's had been on their committal hearing all week. They missed the deadline for getting back to Durham jail. A lockout. Overnighing in Whitehaven cop-shop. I was put into the first cell, number one, so as not to pass the others. I asked the desk officer not to tell them the new inmate was me. I was respected enough by the police to be able to make some requests and get them granted. First thing I needed was a walk in the small yard. Second, a cigarette. I had been travelling for days without washing, smoking, eating although I got a good breakfast at the police station in Gatwick airport. After my walk I was back in the cell ready to get my head down on the wooden bed with its wooden pillow when it started. One of the six shouted.

"Who's in one?" I ignored the question. Again it came. From the other cells it came. I kept my anonymity. Then one said to the other.

"Its Tony Crowe." I couldn't believe it. When my hot sweet mug of tea came, courtesy of the desk officer, I asked him. "How do they know its me? I asked you not to tell them."

"I didn't Tony. They have a radio. Its been on all day about you coming back from Malta. your arrest by Interpol is big news." He said. All that night I had them in my ear. Then on the road trip in the van they told me how they would do me in when we got to the jail.

"Next." The desk officer shouts in his distinct Geordie twang. As I sit in the reception waiting room I can see them. I know two of them; not the one doing the mouthing-off. He's not that big with a Scouse accent. Perhaps Skelmersdale just outside Liverpool. As long as I can keep away from them until I can workout how to handle the gobby one, I might stand a chance.

"Crowe." Someone out of sight is shouting. Although I don't know why. The door is locked from the outside I can't go to the call even if I want to. I can tell you – I don't. Some one gets the message; I'm let out and led into the next room of this warren. There is an equally



stern red-faced man sitting behind his desk.

“Stand on that board.” He points at the floor. “Put your feet on the marks.” He gets impatient, I look down to my feet, there, painted in black are two foot-marks, I stand on the marks and wait for whatever is to come.

“Height, five foot seven – Strip.”

“What.” I say in an instant reaction to the order.

“Strip off.” His voice more forceful. I start with my top, looking around, there’s nowhere to hang my clothes. Another officer, the one who opened the door, grabs my top.

“Put all your stuff on the table.”

“I’ve just come from the police station; all my stuff – was taken off me there - I’ve got nothing.”

“You just take off your clothes, I’ll tell you if you have or haven’t got anything lad.” I’m standing completely naked, still with my feet on the black marks.

“Lift your arms, turn round, now squat. Open your mouth, now get a shower then you can get your clothes on and go in that room.” It’s as if I’m being deloused in case I take some infectious disease into their prison. I’d forgotten about The Six would-be assassins. In the room I’m given something to eat. Not up to the standard of Gatwick. But I suppose you can live on it, I wouldn’t recommend it. I’m doing okay up till now in avoiding a confrontation with The Six.

“Crowe.’ I’m still eating. ‘Come on, you have to see the Doctor.”

“I don’t need to see a Doctor now.” I had asked for one when I got off the aeroplane at Gatwick. I was ill with what I think was decompression sickness. The bends. Interpol put me on a plane before it was safe after I had been scuba diving for a full year.

“Everybody sees the Doc for a full check up, come on.” I’m led to another room and locked in. After a short time the door opens. I get up to go and see this Doctor. To my horror in comes The Six, now what? Time to face up to them. If I take out the gobby-one first, maybe the others – what am I thinking? No way will they watch as I take out their mate. This is neither the time nor place; I’ll have to

go for plan B. what is plan B?

“You’re in for cutting up me mate Lar – Dangerous.”

“Yeah that’s me, what’s that to do with you?” Attack said to be the best means of defence. My heart rises up into my throat so far if I reach into my mouth I could touch it.”Dangerous is me mate Lar.” A whole circus trapeze act is going on inside my stomach.

I give a long look around the small cell, I’m out numbered six-to-one. But I have one weapon left. Reputation. He doesn’t know me. He will know my reputation. It was said I was the one who took a shotgun and shot up a house that one of the six was sitting in at the time. I don’t wish to comment on that now. Here goes.

“Look – it’s got nothing to do with you, I don’t even know you mate, but if you want to have a go, well that’s up to you.”

“When you get in there you’re getting cut-up lar.”

The door opens. I pick up my bed pack and leave. Saved by the Doctor.

“How are you?”

“I’m okay.”

“Stand on the scales; eighty-six kilos. ‘Right that’s it; next.” Two minutes, one question, now back to the cell and The Six?

“This way Crowe you’re going to the wing.” It looks like I’ve survived today. I walk through the labyrinth. Locked door after locked door. The silence is a dark cloak hanging over the prison. We arrive on B wing. I can see one cell door secured with a large pad-lock; it has scene of crime tape over the handle.

“What’s that all about then?” I ask the officer.

“Suicide, young lad hung himself last night.” He doesn’t bat an eye as he tells me all the gory details of how this lad made a hang-man’s noose out of a sheet. A thought comes to me – a thought that makes me shiver from top to toe.

“Don’t put me in with anyone from Whitehaven or Cumbria.” I say, he looks puzzled. “I don’t have a very good reputation in my old town. I’m charged with

chopping the hands and feet off one of the drug dealers in the area. Prison's full of drug users, I'm sure you get my point." Now he thinks I'm off my head, I can tell by the look in his old grey eyes.

"Just put me with someone who won't give me any grief; a Geordie; you Newcastle boys are just fine." Off he goes to the wing office to sort out my cell. I look round at the row upon row of blue steel doors with their white handles. From the first floor all the way up through the Victorian ornate wrought iron work to the third floor, blue doors. I can't help but wonder who; what is lurking behind all these doors.

"Two-twenty-seven; come on." Time to find out. I pick up me bundle of old torn and bedraggled bedding, two sheets, two blankets, one pillowcase. I climb the iron stairway, leading to the cell opposite the suicide cell. The door is opened; I wonder. Who will greet me on the other side?

"All right mate?" A voice comes out of the gloom. The cell is eight-foot by twelve; there's a tin toilet a tin sink, and two iron beds. Although the sink and toilet are stainless steel they show years of use; red rust erupting from the surface at the water level. The smell is nothing I can compare it to. A hole in the wall is where a window once was. Now a rusty sheet of metal drilled with rows of small holes takes its place. Bang: the door slams behind me.

"Darrel's me name mate, what's yours?"

"Crowe." I say.

"No ya first name?"

"Or, Tony; Tony's my name." I throw my things onto the empty bed and sit down on the edge with a heavy sigh.

"Just come in mate?"

"Yeah, I've been travelling for the last five days, I'm worn-out."

"What ya in for?"

"I've got about twenty-nine charges where do you want to start?" He looks worried his face blank.

"I'm in for an eighteen me-self." I sense him trying

to impress me with his charge of wounding with intent.

"I've got that one." I tell him with no great fuss, "And attempted murder." Then comes all the legal advice. "Listen mate I'm a bit knackered I just need to get my head down. What's the score with the window?" I ask.

"I never bother, the fresh air's good for ya."

"Not for me it's not, I've just come back from the Med, I'm freezing."

"Med mate? You mean the Mediterranean? What were you doing there?"

"Hiding from the Law. Later if you don't mind."

"No problemo mate we'll have plenty of time later." It's the middle of November and cold. I make a blackout curtain from my oldest blanket, to cover the hole in the wall, keeping the best one for my bed. The mattress has more stains on it than there are dots of white on the blue walls. The dots are toothpaste, a primitive form of glue. I don't want to think of what the stains are. My mattress is two inch thick on the edge, half inch in the middle, and the rusty pattern of the bed frame imprinted on the under-side; it's a mess. I'll ask for a new one in the morning. Darrel's bed's no better and he doesn't have a pillow.

"What about a pillow?"

"Ya must be joking mate." He chuckles. "Ya don't get a pillow unless ya're a long-term." He laughs.

"So what's the pillowcase for?" I hold it up to show him.

"That's just to wind ya up, I'll bet they give ya a toothbrush but no toothpaste and a towel but no soap?" He's right.

I didn't sleep all night, the police station was red-hot, just right. But this place! I am sure I'll die of cold. Bang – I jump up with a start, the door swings open.

"What time is it?" my first question.

"Breakfast time." It's eight in the morning and not a lot warmer, time to face the world of prison and The Six. I step out onto the landing; the stench of body-odour hits me like the exhaust of a jet engine. A foul sweet sickly smell of rotting flesh makes my nostrils flare. The noise is

that of one hundred and fifty men moving up and down iron stairs in a military procession. No sign of The Six. Maybe they went to another wing! As I stand in line waiting for my breakfast I see one, the one I know, Baggy. He is the one from the house destroyed by the shooting. He's on his way back to his cell on the third landing. I pick up a food tray and move with the flow of half-asleep men. I'm far from half-asleep. I'm ready for whatever they try; the tray is a heavy stainless steel thing with a good sharp corner.

"Cornflakes or porridge?"

"What? O', Cornflakes." I push my would-be weapon out in front of me. The Cornflakes barely cover the bottom of my tray; but there's more than enough to soak up all the milk the next guy puts on. It's a production line with a conveyor belt of people moving past white clad cons tattooed with home made designs from a pin and Indian ink. I make my way back to cell twenty-seven on the twos, looking for signs of normality; there is none.

The cell door bangs behind me. Darrel's already sitting on his bed eating the sticky grey goo slopped into a kidney shaped indent in his tray.

"Porridge." He says sensing my interest in it. I finish in no time and go to the tin sink to wash, and to clean my teeth. Remembering I've got nothing to wash with. Apart from of course; my toothbrush!

"Do ya want some soap and toothpaste?"

"If you've got some."

"In the bag on the table." He points to a brown paper bag sitting on a small table over in the corner. I start to wash, Darrel climbs into bed.

"What happens now?"

"What do ya mean?" The question puzzles him.

"What I mean is what goes on now?"

"Nothing goes on, nothing ever goes on."

I can't believe I'm going to be locked up for a week in this hole in the ground. The door opens. This is my chance.

"I need a new mattress and a pillow...."

"Trays – get that off the window or I'll nick you

son.” Putting the trays on the floor outside the door I try to speak again. Before I can say anything more the door slams shut. From outside I can hear the slag laughing.

“He wants a pillow.” Having finished washing and making my bed. It’s looking like I’m not going to get a new bed or pillow. I sit on the bed wondering what to do. There’s a magazine under the bed. I pick it out of the dust and green fluff that covers the floor, cars, great that’s all I need right now. The price guide in the back doesn’t look right. A closer look at the small print on the inside cover tells me why. It’s only out of date by four years. May 1993 the date on the cover. A thought! If a magazine can’t get out I’ve got no chance.

In two days I’ve read every word, after a week I could tell you what page to look at for what car you wanted. I’m at the end of the magazine for the first time when the door opens. I know it’s not the norm. Darrel lifts his head.

“What’s happening mate?” He asks.

“Induction Crowe.” The officer calls out.

“Good luck.” Darrel says, “You’ll need it.” The Officer or screw as they are known by the cons, takes me to an office just off the wing. A guy in a suit of drab dark grey with worn collar and tired cuffs sits behind a desk. He greets me.

“CP3703 Crowe?” There’s a seat about two yards from the desk, “Sit down. Now - I’m the Governor do you know why you’re here?” Again I think say nothing, no was as good an answer as any so that’s what I give him. It turns out he knows even less than I do. Believe me that isn’t easy I know nothing.

“Do you have any dogs or other animals that need looking after or feeding?” I resisted the obvious answer to his somewhat unconvincing concern for another creature’s well being. I just stick to the same answer.

“No.”

“Do you want anyone told of your whereabouts?” My arrest was all over the radio and on TV. This must be the only person in the UK who didn’t see it. Again the answer is

“No.” The next question is by far the best.

“Have you left a fire on in your house or flat?” The questions are too ridiculous to answer.

“Is there anything you would like to ask me?” now is my chance.

“Well as you’re asking, there is. I need a mattress, a pillow and a window would be nice....” On and on I go with my questions. I’m not wasting this chance, when I finish the Governor says.

“No, as far as the pillow’s concerned every cell has two pillows.” His pre-rehearsed way is obvious. This man doesn’t know or care what day it is let alone whether or not CP3703 has a pillow. Next on the list of must-sees is the probation.

“What are you here for?” Great, she must be trying out their system to see if the rest of the mindless morons are doing their jobs right. It’s worked up to now so I answer.

“I have no idea.” Like a drone she goes into the spiel, now I understand why Darrel said “good luck” he knew it was a waste of time and of no use to anyone. I take the opportunity to ask anyone I speak to for soap and anything else I can think of. It works. On my way to cell, twenty-seven on the twos, I’m given a small brown paper bag of toiletries; there’s even a razor in there. This induction is nothing like the time I was inducted into a Hells Angel chapter at the age of seventeen. It sure isn’t induction into any hall of fame either. When I get back Darrel’s out of bed.

“Cup of tea mate?”

“Yes go on.”

“Have ya got a cup mate?”

“They never gave me a cup.”

“They never give ya anything; he’ ya are mate; I’ll use this.” He picks a marvel tin out of the plastic bucket under the small table. The bin. Its plastic so you can’t light a fire in it and make toast after evening lock-up. I think of saying I’ll use that, then I think again— I say nothing other than thanks when he gives me a nice hot cup of tea in a blue plastic mug.

“How come you’re up?”

“Exercise, I’ve been out on exercise man, ya missed it. How did ya get on with the Governor mate? Did he offer to feed your dog and all that shit?”

“Yeah, how long have you been here Darrel?”

“Six month now – six month.” He repeats it, as if it’s been all his life. “I’m up at court next week; I’ll get two to three.” He says without a hint of emotion.

“Two to three what?” I ask.

“Years.”

“What for?”

“I hit some lads with a bottle, outside a chippy in Newcastle.” He then goes on to tell me the whole story. How a gang of lads set about him and his wife when they were eating chips in the car with their kids, sounds like self-preservation to me but there you go. Taking this opportunity I tell him about The Six. Just in case they come in the cell and try anything. He should know if he’s in with me.

Next time the door opens is dinner time, Darrel sits up on his bed, and waits with plastic cup in hand, white plastic knife and fork in his cup. just before the door opens. It’s as if he has been programmed like some computer, or lab rat, to the door opening. Right out of the blue he says.

“I’ll watch ya back mate in the queue down stairs if ya like.”

“Sounds good to me.” so off we go for something they say is food. Day turns to night, peace and quiet to noise and shouting. I’ve been in for over a full day now; and the only other inmate I’ve talked to is Darrel. Apart from meal times I’ve been locked up for twenty-four hours, this is going to send me mad.

That night I sleep well, not because the bed has a new mattress or a pillow. I am just worn out with all the travelling back from Malta. Monday I phone Dawn, the mother of my son. I ask her to get in touch with Kevin Commons, solicitors. My faith in Rolly the duty solicitor is nil. Roland Earl (Rolly) came to the police station. With twenty-nine charges Rolly told me.



“Don’t worry you’ll walk on all these.” He didn’t know what the evidence was or what half the charges were. That made me worry and worry a lot. He had to go. I ask Kevin to be in court on Friday for my next hearing. I make it clear, I want him not some, & Co Muppet, day after day I stay in the cell with nothing but an old car magazine and Darrel. He is true to his word; he watches my back any time we are out of the cell, which isn’t that often. If a cloud’s in the sky exercise is cancelled. Lets face it, the north-west of England isn’t known for its sunny days in November. Kevin’s there on the dot.

“Right, I’m Kevin Commons.” A portly guy wearing a dark pin-strip suit. His upper lip supporting a large moustache. Is sitting behind the single table in the small room under the court steps. “All I know about your case is what I’ve seen on the TV, you’ll have to give me some background.”

He opens an A4 pad, unscrews the top off a fat fountain pen, rubbing a finger on his greying temple.

“Background? I’m charged with trying to kill someone and loads of drugs shit, and don’t be telling me not to worry like Rolly, because that’s why you’re here not him.”

“Rolland’s outside, he wants to see you, should I send him in?”

“Yeah but you can tell him you’re my solicitor now, and tell him I am worried.” Kevin gives my message to Rolly; he sees no point in coming to see me. He knows he has just lost a legal aid cheque of three quarters of a million pounds. I’m in court for a total of two minutes. Just enough time for the prosecuting solicitor to ask for me to be remanded back into custody, this time for twenty-one days. Kevin never asks for bail there’s as much chance of them giving me bail as the pope becoming a Jew. You only have two applications for bail so it has to be a good one.

“You will be remanded to Durham for twenty-one days, to prevent you from intimidating any witnesses, do you understand?” other than I was being locked up for something I might do. To stop me committing further

offences, what is there not to understand? What about innocent until proven guilty?

The court is full of police, at the back stands Detective Sergeant Hatwood a tall solemn man in his forties. He has the look of an undertaker. It will be his job to make the charges stick. Mine to make sure they don't. Not a very worthy adversary, but he has all his brother officers to help him weave his tangled web of deceit. I once had the pleasure of throwing him and four of his brothers out of a house they were searching. The warrant had the wrong date on it. We'll see just how far he'll go for The Job. He came to Malta as my escort. I don't think he likes me. Back in the court cell waiting for the end of the court day my time is spent reading the local newspaper and drinking tea. Lunch time I set about the microwave meal served up in its plastic tray. Added to my one room restaurant, with on call service, is a young fellow who is too drunk to stand, let alone stand in court. He's put in the cells until he is sober. He takes no notice of me and I likewise pay him no heed. The cell officer starts feeding him with hot coffee by the mug full. After the first mug he sits down on the wooden bench next to me.

"All right mate. What you up for then?"

"I've been up young'en. I'm waiting for the van back to Jail."

"Are ya on remand mate?"

"I sure am. What you doing here then?"

"Before I come like I downed a bottle of cider so now they won't let me in."

"Get that coffee down ya and get yourself away home son."

"What ya on remand for mate?"

"Attempted murder." The blood drains out of his face all the way down to his feet.

"You're not Tony Crowe are you?"

"I am indeed son. Pleased to meet you."

"Wait till I tell me mates tonight. I can't believe they put me in with you. You're in for cutting up Swindles. O man I can't believe it. You made a right mess of him mate. He's just a dick-head he slapped me mate around

the other week. Ya should have finished him off mate. Wait till I tell me mates about this.”

“You look a lot better now son call the jailer and get yourself back up stairs. I don’t want to burst your bubble but I didn’t cut Swindles up.”

“Whatever you say big fellow.” He calls the jailer who can’t understand the boy’s sobriety. Off he goes with the story of how he was in with the mad axe man of Distington.

Seven o’clock the van pulls into the prison grounds. The big sliding door slips open slowly. Screeching, revealing an old dark wooded inner door. We go into the air lock’s deep void where a screw examines the van inside and out. Mirrors show him the underneath. I can never understand why they think anyone would want to sneak into a prison. When they’re happy with the van and its contents. The inner-door opens with the sound a schoolboy makes dragging his fingernails down a blackboard. It reaches its full extent as if it’s for the last time in its long life. Inside the prison walls the small cell door is opened. From the van door to the caged walkway leading into the reception building is one step.

“Stand on the line.” here we go again. “Crowe CP3703.”

“Yeah that’s me.” I answer with a, can’t be bothered voice.

“Did you leave here this morning?”

“You know I did you were the one that put me on the van.” You moron, I add under my breath. I don’t get a chance to say any more.

“Wait in the next room.” I can see him pass a file through the hole in the wall to another mindless moron, so he can ask me the same questions all over again. It takes him half an hour to finish his coffee and come for me.

“Empty your pockets onto the desk.”

“I’ve got nothing in my pockets, just like I had nothing in them when you searched them this morning on my way out.”

“Strip off, stand on the marks painted on the floor.”

He says it without even looking up to see if I've complied. After the obligatory degrading strip search I go to the room where I get fed. All day I've had a microwave massacre, two frozen sandwiches, cheese, a packet of crisps and two biscuits, this food's not for enjoyment but necessity. Three hours I'm sat in the waiting room before I'm taken to two twenty-seven on B wing. Darrel's keen to know what went on, not because of any interest he may have in my case but because he's bored out of his head.

"Twenty-one days remand.' keeping it as brief as I can.

"They always do that, seven days then it's twenty-ones after that." He tells me as a matter-of-fact.

"Has anything happened here?" Not expecting anything exciting or of great importance to have up set the day-to-day drudgery of prison life. Thinking hard to make sure he hasn't missed anything.

"No – someone was stabbed on the yard but he was just a sex-case, I think. Other than that - no – nothing's gone on." It's not unusual for sex-offenders to be stabbed or even cut up with a razor blade melted onto a toothbrush. So that's why they gave me a toothbrush when I came in? Sex-cases are usually kept on a wing with other scum bags in for crimes not found to be acceptable to decent cons. The term for this in prison is "on the numbers" because the prison rule that's used to protect sex-cases is rule 45, some of the slags try to mix in with us but are soon found out and stabbed or cut. Vulnerable Prisoners or VP's the prison call them. Not as vulnerable as the children they abused. It's not the overwhelming desire for justice that drives this violence but sheer boredom. As in all walks of life there are the strong and the weak, prisoners on the numbers are the weak. The problem is, on remand no one is guilty of anything. One guy was hit in the face with a house brick. It smashed his face into five pieces. His left eye was on his cheek. He went to trial and was found not guilty of child assault.

For the next twenty-one days I'm opened up for breakfast at eight o'clock then again at eleven-thirty for lunch, then at four in the afternoon for dinner. Every

week's the same as the last one. Monday is shopping day. Food and sweets. Tobacco and twenty unit phone cards. The currency of jail. Whatever you want for your ten pound allowance. Every two-week I can have a visit from family and friends; these are for two hours and in the afternoon. My first visit is from Dawn. It left me with some hope of a good outcome.

On the day of my visit I manage to get a shower and a shave. I take off my own clothes that are not permitted on visits. Put on prison clothing, and I'm ready. The door opens.

"Crowe visit." Comes the call. I go out onto the landing and wait with everybody else who has a visit. We're all taken to the visits waiting room together. As I go past the row of DST officers (Designated Search Team) I can see the clean, well-kept room that is the visits. A bit different from the squalor we have to live in.

"Number twenty." The woman says. None of the small low tables have numbers on them. She has a floor plan on her desk.

"Where's number twenty?" With the wave of her hand.

"Down there." She answers me. I wander off in the general direction of her waved hand hoping to see Dawn. As I get closer to the tuck-shop I see her sitting at the corner table. She's a welcome sight. The time goes faster than a full week behind the cell door. With our good-bye said the visit is over, now a thing of the past a memory. On the way out I find out why the DST are so called. They search like no one else. Even they can't look inside the body, most drugs are brought in by screws. Or in the anal cavity of a paid addict.

Back on the wing in my cell, it's as if the visit never happened.

The next big thing is association, this is when they let me outside the cell to shower and watch, an old film on an old T.V. it's also the time you can stab a sex-case, if that's your thing in life. The most popular thing to do is use the phone. It's not as easy as you may imagine. At the dinner time unlock you've to put your name on a list. You

get five-minute slots, if you're fast. There's a saying in prison, if you're not fast you're last. In this case you aren't last, you do without. Imagine the fight to get your name on the phone list.

When the door's unlocked at a quarter to six it's like opening cages of lab rats. All trained to come out on demand, that stench hits me. People come and go. No one seems to stay long, thank God. When the screw calls my name I go to the phone. There are only six phones; they're on the end of the wing. The noise is deafening, everybody's talking to people they're not locked up with. The screws are shouting out orders at the top of their voices. Five minutes and it's all over for another four long days, then I'll go through it all again; just for five minutes on a noisy phone. The best five minutes of the four days.

After the phone I sit on the floor, keeping me back to the wall. There's still the small matter of The Six. One is working as a wing cleaner, Tommo the gobby one. That means he's open all day and every association time. I know he won't do anything on his own so I'm safe. Safe for now.

I use my time making alliances with the top of the tree in the criminal underworld. I very soon become someone people keep on the right side of. On association I talk to the right people. On the yard I stand with the same right people. I soon don't have to get into the *mélee* at the phone queue. I just pay a *queuer* to do it for me. I don't queue for anything. I pay some one to do it for me.

The yard is surrounded by four high walls festooned with strands of green string torn from the bedding, used as fishing lines to pass items one cell to another. A ticker-tape parade in some other place or time. Over the yard, from one wall to the one opposite there are wires with orange balls on them the size of grapefruit, helicopter wire. Stretched out like tight ropes in a high-wire act. The once red sandstone walls are now black with vertical white lines of pigeon *faeces* cascading from the window openings, feculent mist drifts from the holes in the walls that mark out a cell.

*CP3703, that's me!  
I once had a name,  
It was given by my Mother.  
When I came to jail,  
It was taken away by another.*

*CP3703, that's me!  
Sometimes even that's reduced,  
To. "Last three?"  
No-one knows my given name.  
When asked I tell them. (Tony I Say)*

*They don't listen,  
They always repeat with.  
"Antony? Or is that Anthony?"  
I don't know.  
Do they honestly think,  
I don't know my name?*

*They only ask it so as,  
To take it away.  
They lock it in a file.  
Only to be taken out,  
At the end of my,  
"Rehabilitation"*

*My long mile.  
Until then it's, Crowe!  
Or, CP3703.  
Whenever they call me.*

*I feel like a man with no name.  
There's nobody to,  
Call me by my name.*

*I feel like a man with no name.  
Because without using my name,  
It's forgotten;  
Not just by me, but by we.*

Join our group on facebook: A Murder of Crows. Where you can get the latest information and take part in the competition to win a holiday in the Black sea city of Varna. You can get the full book from our website [www.ritanightingale.org](http://www.ritanightingale.org) or from facebook.

God bless you Tony & Rita.