
restless voices

lazy storytelling by *nick warren*



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preamble

I hear voices. Not all the time, but often.

This is how it works. I'll see something in the street and a voice in my head whispers a *story*.

Look. She's trying to be normal... but there's a half-empty vodka bottle in her bag, and a knife. She's on her way to meet the devil.

Or perhaps...

See that man? He's sick with worry. His dog won't stop whining. He thinks it's in pain, but he's wrong... it smells his cancer.

Or perhaps...

She's late. She took the time to fix her face. She's meeting someone she hates, and she wants... no, she fucking needs, to feel beautiful.

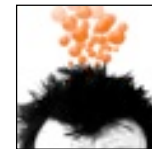
And on and on and on....

See what I mean. Voices. Rude, swearsy, sly, cynical, funny, violent and yes, restless.

In 2007, for reasons you'll understand if you get to my [confession](#), I began writing them down.

It wasn't great art, but [Twitter](#) seemed to get a kick out of it. Later, ego running wild, I started telling stories about the stories at [RestlessVoices.com](#).

These *stories* here are my favourites. If you enjoy them [pass them on](#)... or even better, have a crack at writing your own.



Nick Warren

April 2010

[RestlessVoices.com](#)

the stories

He was a small man,
except in height.

19th November 2007

Jake had no problem with God, just with those who claimed to have his mobile number.

28th January 2008

She stared at the painting, and was afraid. It was rendered exquisitely, lovingly even. But she had no idea who had painted her.

3rd December 2008

"Screw the economy" he said quietly. "When did we stop believing that we make our own fuckin' weather?"

4th December 2008

She struck out desperately. It was a good bottle, a Latour '62. It didn't break, and he stayed down until she had almost reached the door.

6th December 2008

He remained creative, resourceful
and inventive well into later life...
if only in his excuses.

8th December 2008

"If you aren't careful you'll waste your whole life having fun", she said.

9th December 2008

The girl watched him openly now,
careless of the consequences.
"Jesus", he thought, "I need to be
careful here".
But he didn't look away.

13th December 2008

They talked for months; laughing, sharing, loving. It was perfect until the day he ruined everything with just three words. "Can we meet?"

13th December 2008

As the years passed she sensed it less and less... the hooded, unwanted, attention of men. In time they looked away, and she mourned the loss.

30th December 2008

“I don’t smoke” he sobbed,
helpless & confused.
The killer smiled at the mistake.
“Nonsense”, she said, “I’m sure
you’ll smoke beautifully.”

30th December 2008

One professor charged \$50 for an
“off-the-books” course called
"Getting Laid for the Naive".
The course was two words long.
"Keep asking."

6th January 2009

Thomas Grey had hundreds of “friends” and “followers”, but on Saturday nights he drank alone.

10th January 2009

No one told me how afraid it would make me. They told me about the overwhelming love, the exhaustion, the nappies. But not about the fear.

16th January 2009

“Hell no, I’m a goddamn rebel. At weekends I can easily go two, three hours without checking email. I don’t give a shit. They don’t own me.”

18th January 2009

“Welcome Mr President, we’ve been looking forward to meeting you. Agent Owen and I are with Alien Liaison sir, perhaps you’d better sit down.”

19th January 2009

She was young and pretty, but
Jake preferred the company and
confidence of women past thirty.
Better sex. Better conversation.
He walked away.

20th January 2009

That winter the blood hunger drove them west into the city. The humans were numerous there, but isolated, reckless and easily taken.

21st January 2009

I am deaf, but not the deaf of cold and silence. I am the deaf of thunder, of heat, the deaf of roaring in the ears. I hear too much.

23rd January 2009

He made a living selling lies to strangers. He wasn't proud of it, but figured that everyone was in the same business... one way or another.

26th January 2009

The criticism was vicious,
bitter and brutally personal...
he took it as a sign he was
achieving something.

26th January 2009

He loved the children more than life itself... but even love has limits, and a third bedtime story was just never going to happen.

31st January 2009

She shone amongst friends, witty and desirable. But behind the mask, stripped of their reflected light, she was a shadow, silent and afraid.

31st January 2009

It wasn't just my drink, I tipped the whole tray over her. The girl practically drowned.
Worst first date ever.

5th February 2009

The web was alive with a billion
voices... saying nothing.

6th February 2009

He was a brilliant man, effortlessly creative, forever awash with new ideas. Achieved nothing.

9th February 2009

She was beautiful,
but hid it with makeup.

11th February 2009

She wept over the grave,
mourning the lost and wasted
years. “Why?”, she sobbed.
“Why didn’t I kill you sooner?”

12th February 2009

It wasn't the drink that was the problem, it was the sobriety. Sober he was mean as hell.

14th February 2009

The sex was wild, but it wasn't enough. They both knew it. The silence afterwards was killing them.

18th February 2009

She awoke to screams, to sirens
approaching. She awoke to blood
and pain, but not her own.
It was much worse than that.

17th February 2009

I am not my phone. I am not my
phone. I am not my phone. I am not
my phone. I am not my phone. I am
not my phone. I am not my phone.

25th February 2009

I told myself it was none of my business, but then he started actually hitting the kid.

8th March 2009

I thought I'd pulled. Every time I smiled at her she was smiling right back. Turned out I had food on my face. Lots of food.

9th March 2009

I lost my job at 9am. By 11am I'd deleted my Facebook account, my Twitter profile and my blog. Then I started sending out CVs.

10th March 2009

I fell for her because she seemed to understand exactly what I was thinking.

Three years later I left her for the same reason.

16th March 2009

"Her face said thirty-five,
her arse said fifty."

18th March 2009

In the end it wasn't an intervention, she was too far gone for that kind of help. It was more like a living wake. I left in tears.

24th March 2009

She knew the truth. It wasn't a chocolate bar, it was a moment of pleasure followed by hours of guilt and regret.

6th April 2009

The London streets seemed full of personalised number plates.
They all spelt "wanker".

13th April 2009

"I watched the asthma slowly bring
the old bastard to his knees."

17th April 2009

"Her front room was especially unsettling, it's walls filled with picture frames... each one empty."

18th April 2009

"And then, as we watched the clouds, birds began falling out of the sky. Ten. Twenty... too many to count."

18th April 2009

"I catch him in the mirror sometimes," he said. "The man I should have become. The one I still pretend to be."

26th April 2009

He laughed as we cuffed him:
"...wasn't beating her, was fookin'
educating her."

I walked away then. It was that or
become him.

26th April 2009

"Quit whining," Grace said. "You know what needs to be done. Laziness is not an affliction, it's a choice."

26th April 2009

Diet Day 3. Jane's 'Fat Voice' began its soft, reasonable, seduction.
"Darling, what willpower. You deserve a treat."

26th April 2009

"Screw cosmetics," she said.

"Design isn't about how it looks, it's about how it works. It's not the icing, it's the cake."

26th April 2009

"I'm tired of using the kids as a fucking excuse for having no life", Matt said. "They are not the problem."

27th April 2009

"Decision time," she said. "Are we are in the 'news' business or the 'paper' business? Choose fast."

27th April 2009

They found him in an alley; gagged & strapped to his executive chair, the words "Sorry to let you go" scratched into his forehead.

30th April 2009

"As a kid I played Hangman with my Gran. She always drew the best corpses."

30th April 2009

True story: $1 + 1 > 2$

2nd May 2009

She found the letter while snooping.
"For Emily. Only open in the event of
my death". He wasn't dead, but she
read it anyway. Began to plan.

2nd May 2009

"I'm 45," Jon said. "To be creative I need financial inducement, coffee, inspiration and a fucking deadline. My son is 7. He needs a stick."

2nd May 2009

And on the 8th day he began to wish he'd savoured the interesting stuff a bit.

7th May 2009

My Dad found me in the garden.
Angry, he told me to study to get a
good job... to one day be happy.

"But Dad" I said, "I'm happy now."

7th May 2009

"Jesus" she said, "How is it that you can be a 35 year old man AND a petulant bloody child?"

9th May 2009

We told the kids that the dog had died. They cried loudly and without shame, as small children can, and went outside to play.

13th May 2009

At first I thought they were together, but then I saw the look in her eyes, and the marks his fingers left on her arm.

15th May 2009

"I'm 39", she said, "but my heart is still seventeen. Be gentle."

20th May 2009

The divorce was amicable, mostly.
We split everything equally, and
tossed a coin to see who would
keep the cat.

I lost... and kept the cat.

23rd May 2009

Jo worked 4 months on "our dream home project", finally declaring "every detail perfect" - except me - a mistake she quickly rectified.

25th May 2009

"I met her new husband several times. There was nothing to hate about him, so I hated that."

29th May 2009

"That's when I got scared. Not because they were tailing me... but because they didn't seem to give a fuck if I knew."

31st May 2009

Vicious bar fight.
Teenager out to impress.
Picks the wrong guy.
Cockiness turns to fear. Shitshitshit.
Too late he understands mortality.

2nd June 2009

"I know she's hot," he said, "but it's over. She keeps her eyes open when we kiss. It really freaks me out."

3rd June 2009

“You stole my heart”, he told her,
“followed by by car, my savings
and my self-respect... so *no*, I will
not post your bail.”

11th June 2009

The taste of the blood surprised him.

12th June 2009

"I watched her sleep, amazed by my love for her, and the volume of her snoring."

19th June 2009

She was careful, and as a consequence it was 14 years before her husband discovered the tattoo.

21st June 2009

"The more you talk the less you achieve," Grace told him. "And you are talking way more now than you were 10 years ago."

21st June 2009

“Why go to the funeral if you don’t believe in God?” her son asked.
“Because my friend did believe,” she replied, “And I believed in him.”

24th June 2009

"I don't wanna be cool," his daughter said.

"Cool people are too busy being cool to have any fun."

25th June 2009

Spend. Spend. Spend. Spend.
Spend. Spend. Spend. Spend.
Spend. Spend. Spend. *Enjoy.*
Spend. Spend. Spend. Spend.
Spend. Spend.

25th June 2009

He won \$17 million on the lottery,
but it didn't change him. He stayed
the same selfish arrogant bastard
he'd always been.

25th June 2009

"You have until the kettle boils to start talking," she said, "Or we use the water on one of your kids. You can choose which one."

26th June 2009

"I'll never buy you flowers", he told her, "I hate the idea that they are dead... but don't know it. Makes me sad."

1st July 2009

"I stopped seeing the shrink," she said. "After India I realised that if I could afford to see him, I didn't have problems."

5th July 2009

"It's a strange relationship", she said. "He calls when he says he'll call. It's taking me a while to get used to it."

9th July 2009

"I'm okay about the divorce," she said, "But seeing my toothbrush alone in the pot... that does make me sad."

12th July 2009

Each morning, in front of the mirror,
she died again.

15th July 2009

"You made a goddess of Youth," he told her. "But look what she's done to you. She's made you old."

26th July 2009

“I hate him,” she said. “How does he manage to keep his head in the sand AND up his arse?”

4th August 2009

She read the email. It was hateful,
vicious, filled with rage.
She stared at it for an hour, then
pressed send.

7th August 2009

"Sorry", he said. "You're a great girl... you just have none of the flaws I find attractive."

24th August 2009

"You loved me when I was a failure", she said. "Why don't you love me now?"

27th August 2009

I chased the purse-snatcher heroically for 3 blocks. Then disaster. He stopped running and turned around.

Shit. He was HUGE.

2nd September 2009

"I'm going over there," she said.
"What's the point of ignoring him if
he can't see me doing it?"

5th September 2009

The topless beach did not live up to their imaginations. It was their first real sex lesson. Context is everything.

12th September 2009

"Don't be fooled," she said. "He only holds the door for you so he can stare at your ass."

15th September 2009

"Did you see that girl's breasts?"
his wife asked.

Fearing for his life, he said
nothing.

16th September 2009

He slept like a baby... fitfully, and
with no small amount of screaming.

29th September 2009

I hated her greasy little boyfriend on sight, a 16-year old graffiti artist into 'ANTI-social media'.
Christ. Give me strength.

2nd October 2009

Fred went to his "happy place" just as the shrink had instructed him, but it had been condemned.

5th October 2010

"I'm not tidying because the house is a mess," she said.
"I'm tidying because my head is a mess. It helps."

18th October 2010

"God was on another call,"
she said, "but I left a
message on his machine."

23rd October 2010

The car was running, but empty. It took them 20 seconds to steal it, 20 minutes to get away, and 20 hours to discover the body in the trunk.

27th October 2010

John Drake was haunted by the faces of his children. They weren't dead, they just never shut up.

8th November 2010

"I never truly understood grief until we lost the dog," he said. "That was his last lesson, having already taught me joy, love and loyalty."

23rd November 2010

"I told him I wanted children 10 minutes into the date," she said. "It seemed the easiest way to get rid of him."

6th December 2010

"I won't panic", she thought. "So the man of my dreams is married. Not the end of the world. I'll think of it as a project."

6th December 2010

"Men don't cheat for sex", she said, "they cheat to feel young. That's the irony. All they really get is another night older."

25th January 2010

Kim's fiancé demanded time to buy her Valentine's card in secret. Loving him, she followed, and watched as he bought two.

17th February 2010

He watched as she starved herself, dreaming of his inheritance. It was a simple plan. Each week he tweaked her scales gently upwards.

28th February 2010

At 18 he knew everything.
At 40, nothing.

28th February 2010

He loved her desperately...
right up to the moment she
began to love him back.

28th February 2010

They'd been married 6 months when her husband, in a moment of distraction, signed a name she had never seen before.

1st March 2010

Jake's cravings hit earlier now.
He understood that he wasn't
really drinking the whiskey
anymore... it was drinking him.

9th March 2010

As it turned out the girl of his dreams worked in a jewellers... he met her while shopping for an engagement ring.

6th April 2010

"Our experiment to create telepathy in mice has failed," he said. "Once the females are given the gene they refuse to breed."

23rd April 2010

"I have the attention span
of a butterf..." she said.

24th April 2010

Modern Day Prayer:

Mighty Google, thy will be done.
Deliver me from obscurity, and to
page 1 of thy bountiful listings.

Amen.

24th April 2010

“Creativity is bollocks”,
she said. “A few people
work at their art, most
don’t. That’s it.”

24th April 2010

confession

I lied before. I figure if you've got all the way to the end you deserve the truth.

I'm not a particularly creative guy. I started this because I was bored.

Yes. I was bored the day I joined Twitter. I had nothing to say, and no one to say it to... but it was more fun than doing actual work. I have the attention span of a twig, so Twitter was perfect.

No one I knew or cared about was online, so I figured I'd make something up. 5 minutes of pointless creativity... and then work. Really.

But it's harder than it sounds. Hemingway was the problem. He'd written the best short ever.

For Sale: Baby shoes, never worn.

In comparison my early efforts were awful... pompous and earnest. Don't believe me? Get this:

And when the traveller, after long years, reached his destination, he turned back to his path and wept, that he had no more steps to take.

Oh. My. God. And you thought the one's in this book were crummy. Hemingway? I had nothing.

Except... that wasn't quite true. I had the Voices, the nasty little stories in my head. It took 7 months to finally give in and write one down.

After four hours the hole was deep enough, they tipped it in and began the long task of covering it up.

Still not great, but better. At least it was within shouting distance of something. Rubbish, but interesting rubbish.

The problem was I was still holding back on the real idea, here's how I'd write it now...

After an hour the hole was deep enough. They lowered him in, careless of his screams, and began covering him up.

You can see why I wasn't writing the Voices down in those early days... it wasn't exactly Listen with Mother. These little love-letters from my sub-conscious were hardly things to be proud of. At least no one was reading.

Then, in December 2008, I cocked-up. Big time.

She stared at the painting, and was afraid. It was rendered exquisitely, lovingly even. She had no idea who had painted her.

A stalker story... and I liked it in a B-Movie kind of way. BUT, I didn't like it enough to send to Hugh McLeod, a hero of mine, and one of about 3 people I was following on Twitter at the time. (Note: Have you read *Ignore Everybody?* No. Then quit wasting time reading this.)

It was an accident, a stupid stupid accident. I'm so dumb, I didn't even know I'd done it, until...

New follower New follower New follower New follower New follower New follower New follower New follower New follower New follower New follower New follower...

And on and on and on. 180 followers in 6 minutes. Hugh (who's a genuine Internet Rock Star) had mentioned me in a tweet. BOLLOCKS. Now I had an audience.

Okay. Perhaps you think that I protest too much here. Perhaps you think my "so-called-mistake" was just a cynical pimping of my feed; a con, a trick, a fraud.

My answer? You underestimate my fear, my self-doubt, my general and abiding cowardice.

You underestimate the power of my other inner voice... the Weasel.

You know the Weasel. It's the voice that tells you your too fat, too stupid, too busy, too lazy, too ugly, too old, too young, too British, too short, too middle class, too tired, too - bloody - normal to do, well, ANYTHING.

I told you so, screamed the Weasel that day. Now everyone will know what a derivative and talentless hack you are. They'll look at your Twitter feed and realise that Hugh was wrong to link to you. WRONG! You'll be making Hugh McLeod look like a dick. ARE YOU MAD?.

You see the Weasel hates change. I mean really hates it. (Right now he's HATES that I'm writing this book. He knows it's going to be awful, and he often talks in CAPITAL LETTERS).

You'd be a ONE-TRICK-PONY, if you had a trick.

Well... Bollocks to him.

Something rare happened that day. I was brave. I wrote another story... and the world didn't end.

So I wrote more, often leaning on the voices for inspiration. I wasn't pretty, but it felt good, and occasionally someone liked it enough to retweet, and slowly more people followed the feed.

Restless Voices became something other. Not work, not home and soooo not commercial. A chance to make stuff up for fun, and share it. I'd forgotten how cool that is.

The thing is, there's always a 1,000 reasons to do nothing. I think the trick is doing something anyway... even a small, lazy thing, like this book.

How bored would you have to be to give something similar a try? Let me know if you do.

Nick Warren

RestlessVoices.com

about nick

I was born in 1969, so I'm expecting the mid-life crisis to be along any day now. In the meantime, here's some stuff I'm proud of:

- directing a TV ad for Air Seychelles (1990)
- crossing the Atlantic on a 30' yacht (1992)
- being shipwrecked in the Caribbean (1993)
- surviving a hurricane aboard (1995)
- writing speech for Head IBM PC EMEA (1996)
- writing for PC Gamer & .net magazines (1997)
- going solo in business (1997)
- choosing freedom over £1,000,000 (1998)
- marrying the lovely Wendy (1999)
- becoming a dad (2000 & 2003)
- losing 3 stone, then (err) finding it again (2004)
- mentoring other businesses (2007)
- Being a teen again (if only in business) (2010)

Working with Nick

Semantic provides friendly & bespoke web development for companies who are serious about results. We expand our client list rarely, but who knows, perhaps you are our perfect client. Talking and advice by phone is always free.

I also offer *1 Day Consultancy Engagements* for companies looking to review their web strategy. These are fun, informal days which aim to get as much value out of my head, and into yours.

Getting more creative

I'm a sucker for anything to do with writing, storytelling, or the web. If you have an interesting project in mind, let me know.

Nick Warren
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