

Essay runner up**Name:** Phil Donnelly**Studying:** Creative Writing at Edge Hill University

About three years ago I was stood in Edge Hill University car park. This was my job. To stand in the car park and direct traffic. I was a T.M.A. A traffic management assistant. It was as exciting as it sounds. I would stand there directing traffic feeling the rain seep its way through my water resistant high vis jacket and watch the students arrive for their lectures. I couldn't help but feel envious when I overheard the student's conversations. They moaned about having too many assignments to hand in or being late for a lecture with Prof. whoever and I was jealous. The recession in the UK had just ended or was just beginning depending on who you talked to and it just never seemed to stop raining. I'd try to convince myself that I should be happy that I even have a job. Even if it is a zero hours contract with no advancement opportunities. I did go for job interview once but they said that I didn't have enough demonstrative experience leading a team. Well, how am I going to get the experience if I don't get a chance, I thought but I suppose it's a chicken and the egg kind of thing. I still think the egg came first.

So I'm standing in the car park stamping my feet to keep them warm thinking how did I get here. I'm twenty six and I have a paralyzing fear that this is my future, pacing back and forth counting the car exhausts until my knees are weak and my back is heavy. Thinking back ten years I used to be a creative person. I played in bands, wrote music and poetry, made videos and was even part of an ill-conceived rap outfit called 'Smuggler's Lunch' but now I was counting exhausts. The majority of my friends had been to university, travelled abroad, got jobs, got careers, got married, were having kids or were adopting a pug beagle cross. They all had interesting lives and stories to tell where as I was beginning to disappear within myself believing that isolation was better than saying the most interesting thing to happen to me that day was getting to use double sided sticky tape.

I needed a drastic change and the answer was right on my doorstep. I walked through the car park and out of the rain and into the English corridor to enquire about a creative writing course at Edge hill. Soon enough, I had a meeting with Dan Pantano and Kim Wiltshire and after a discussion about my application they decided to take a chance on me and allowed me onto the course. As soon as the course started my outlook on things changed and my self-esteem grew. Every lecture and seminar was an opportunity to express myself and use the creative arts to tackle both personal and social problems. I have just finished my second year and at this point I have written two poetry portfolios, a flash fiction, a short story, a theatre script and numerous critical reviews. I have also written and acted in a short film as well as undertaken an internship at the Ann Arbor Film Festival in Michigan. All these opportunities were made possible by me walking off the car park out of the rain and

into my degree at Edge hill. My CV and career prospects are improving with every project I undertake and I feel a more complete person as I feel my voice is being heard and not going to waste on a car park. This is England and it will always rain but now I don't mind so much.



