

# Know when to fold them

Gambling addiction – a poetic journey



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## Author's note

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Since being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2011,  
I have retired from my property investment business,  
now I focus my time on writing poetry.

My first book of poems was called "*Shaken but not Stirred*"  
... Living life with Parkinson's disease.

The second book deals with suicide amongst teenage boys and young men  
It is called "*Touching the Silence*"

My third book is about gambling addiction  
aptly called "*Know when to fold them*"

I've taken comments and stories from various gambling  
blogs on the Internet, and turned them into poems.  
These are real stories shared by gamblers from around  
the world ... sharing their life experiences.

If you are addicted to gambling, or still in denial,  
I hope the words within my poems, give you encouragement and hope.  
Seek out gamblers anonymous meetings, or one-to-one counselling.  
You can always take back control of your life ... You just have to take  
the first step.

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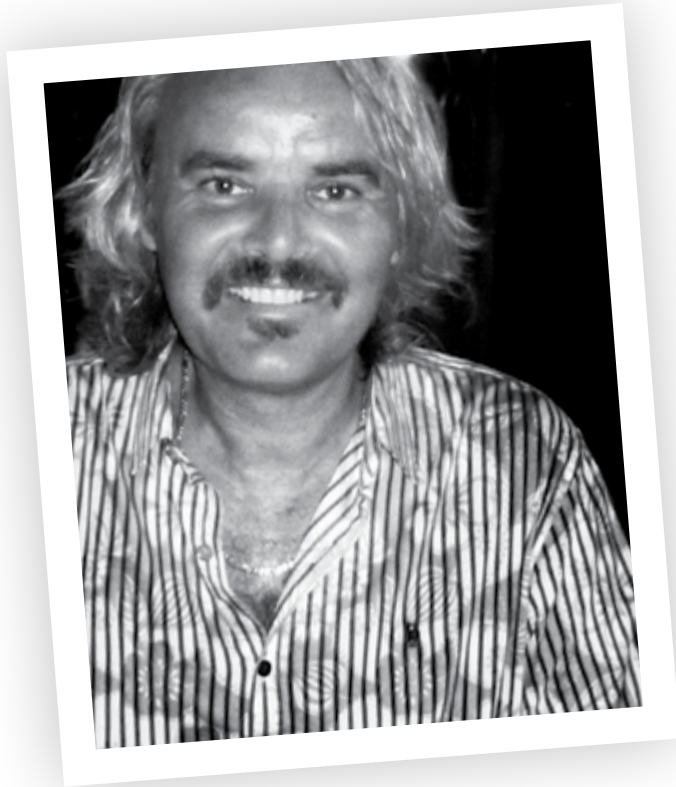
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## Contents

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Win back what I've lost . . . . .	6
Get me off this Merry - go - round . . . . .	8
Money don't fall from the sky . . . . .	10
I have an itch I need to scratch . . . . .	12
So you wanna be a gambler . . . . .	14
Stealing money from the boys and me . . . . .	16
Curled up in foetal position . . . . .	18
Big River in Egypt ... Denial. . . . .	20
Just hide my lying face. . . . .	22
A few seconds at a time . . . . .	24
Your story's sounding lame . . . . .	26
Nanna says that Mommy is sick . . . . .	28
My Band-Aid approach . . . . .	30
Build a bridge and get over it . . . . .	32
My body is my temple . . . . .	34
Self-exclusion . . . . .	36
He's done it to me again . . . . .	38
Run away as fast as you can. . . . .	40
Has gambling got a hold of you? . . . . .	42
A message from yourself . . . . .	44
What I'd give for a bedside story read to me by Mum or dad . . . . .	46

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## **Win back what I've lost**

I knew just when I had reached  
The lowest point in my life  
I started asking strangers for help  
To keep me out of strife

My gambling addiction has taken over  
Controls my mind throughout the day  
Luring me back for one more game  
Presto ... I've lost all my pay

The man I'm with he doesn't care  
He puts me down all the time  
Yelling at me for things I do wrong  
I guess this burden is really mine

I went online to blogging sites  
Find an ear a helping hand  
Listen to other problem gamblers  
I'm sure they'll understand

Tragedy recently took away  
Both my sister and my dad  
Depression seems to have a hold  
Sometimes it drives me mad

I wish for just one winning streak  
Win back what I've lost thus far  
Then I will stop gambling forever  
Made my wish on a shooting star

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## **Get me off this Merry - go - round**

All I really want from life  
Something to live for ... to be happy  
I chase those fleeting moments  
Through gambling they turn out crappy

I find that sometimes I live for  
Just the promise of a win  
I come home without my pay packet  
The depression cycles they begin

First comes the guilt of losing  
Guilt with anger I replace  
I find a way to punish myself  
As I fall further from grace

Last week I did it right  
In advance I paid my bills  
Gave my children pocket money  
A treat for their basic thrills

Later that same evening  
I rummaged for some cash  
I had to buy a lottery ticket  
Or something I could scratch

I got angry with my children  
They had spent their money too  
They are used to seeing their mum  
Flushing money down the loo



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## **Money don't fall from the sky**

I'm sitting in my room  
My eyes are red from crying  
My mommy has a problem  
To us all she has been lying

When we go out shopping  
Cheap brands are all we buy  
Never any treats for us kids  
Mum says money don't fall from the sky

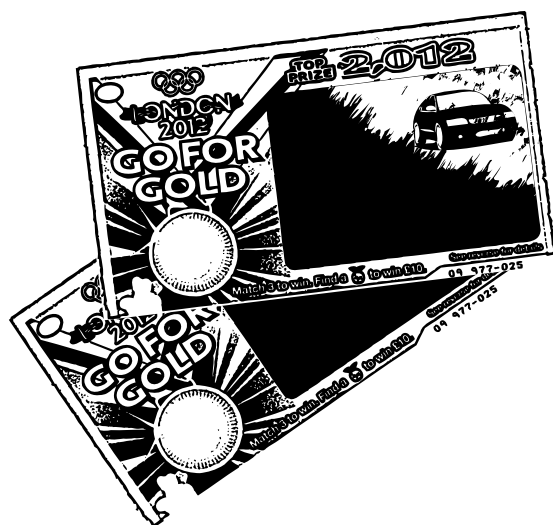
She gave us pocket money  
Which we knew we had to stash  
Sure enough later that night  
Mum came in search of cash

I know Mum you're a gambler  
As much as you try to hide  
It breaks my heart that you can't  
In your children the truth confide

We used to have such a great life  
Go out and have some fun  
Lately though you just seem cold  
Dear Lord bring back my old mum

Money may not fall from the sky  
It feeds your habit, your affliction  
If you truly love your children mum  
Get help for your gambling addiction

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## **I have an itch I need to scratch**

I think I have a problem  
Started out as just an itch  
To fix it I need to scratch it  
In my mind it's caused a glitch

Now I can't stop scratching  
Every night and every day  
Started out with my loose change  
Now it's consuming my whole pay

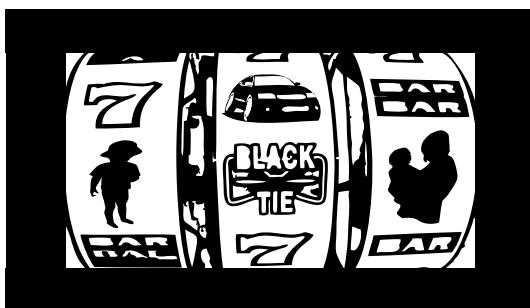
When I walk up to the counter  
Adrenaline starts to pump  
I buy my tickets and walk away  
Smiling like a chump

I find the men's room ... lock the door  
Fully clothed sit on toilet seat  
Pull out a coin from my pocket  
Savouring my upcoming treat

A scratch each number very slowly  
As the silver cover scratches away  
My mind keeps repeating over and over  
This could be your lucky day

All 20 tickets I have scratched  
Another \$100 flushed down the drain  
From all my efforts one \$10 win  
Barely enough to catch my train

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## **So you wanna be a gambler**

Here I am at the blackjack table  
I'm winning ... my life is perfect  
Really want to buy that new car  
Stay a little longer it'll be worth it

The table seems to turn on me  
I start losing every hand  
I draw more money from the ATM  
I'm now down five grand

I'm paid well at my 9-to-5  
And I have a trusting boss  
I borrowed money from the business  
I just keep adding to my loss

It would take two months' pay  
To repay him what I owe  
I'm feeling Lucky I'll just borrow  
A little more no one will know

I'm now afraid cause I've been lying  
To my wife, my boss, my friends  
The hole I'm digging is so deep  
If I fall in my story ends

Wind the clock forward just six months  
My wife's left me again  
My boss is laying criminal charges  
Gambling's just not worth pain

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## **Stealing money from the boys and me**

Every day I'd go to work  
My husband stayed with our boys at home  
He hurt his back and couldn't work  
I provided all the money on my own

Holding two jobs I had no time  
To really take stock and see  
My husband spent his days gambling  
Stealing money from the boys and me

We were busy renovating an old cottage  
I was as young as I was naïve  
When he told me paint cost \$100 per tin  
In love I wanted to believe

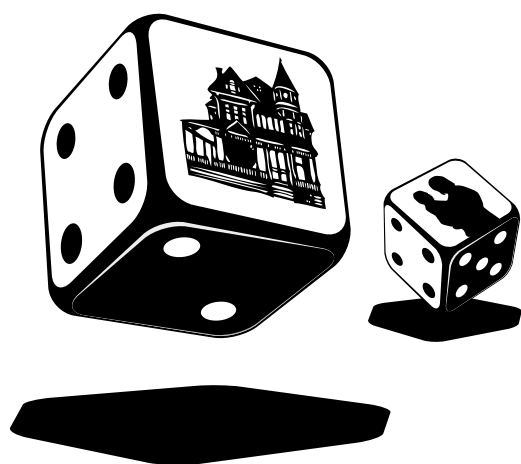
Nothing more embarrassing  
That could darken my happy mood  
At the checkout with my boys in tow  
Not enough money to pay for food

The second time that it happened  
I sat him down and had a talk  
I told him how I'd lost all respect  
From our life's I'd like him to walk

He booked a flight to England  
I then realised how low he'd sank  
When I took the boys out shopping  
He'd taken all the money from our bank



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## **Curled up in foetal position**

Dear dad I have to write  
To tell you how I feel  
I have to get things off my chest  
If ever my heart's to heal

I've watched your life disintegrate  
Over the past few years  
The fights between you and mum  
They always end in tears

Been there when we lost the house  
When the bailiffs took your car  
I saw you curled up in foetal position  
That image caused a scar

I saw you fight with Nan and Grandad  
About money that you loaned  
Over time I watched you lose  
Almost everything you owned

Now you are going to GA meetings  
I finally live in hope  
Your gambling days are behind you  
You will lose the noose and rope

Regardless of all you've done  
How you nearly drove us mad  
I want to tell you I still love you  
That you'll always be my dad

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## **Big River in Egypt ... Denial**

I can't believe the luck I'm having  
Or should I say the lack  
My wife's just walked out my door  
Said she won't be coming back

On top of that I lost my job  
Three warnings and I was gone  
I was caught online gambling  
And again asked to move on

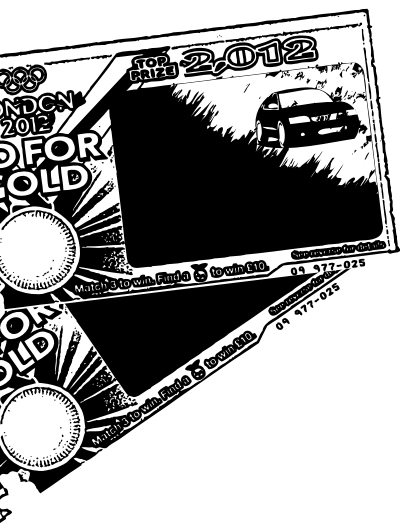
I've been behind on mortgage payments  
Past four months in a row  
Never seems to be enough money  
To pay back what I owe

I had my car repossessed  
Lost all my white goods too  
Pretty soon I'll be out on the street  
It's making me feel blue

If only I could win some money  
Then I would be back  
To claim my wife, get a job  
Get my life on the right track

Looking back over the words I've written  
It has caused me to smile  
Sitting here I've finally realised  
I've been living in denial

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## **Just hide my lying face**

In my life I seem to be  
Angry all the time  
Through gambling I've screwed up  
And I know the fault is mine

Some mornings when it's time to go  
Get out of bed ... my day embrace  
I pull the sheets over my head  
Just hide my lying face

This world would be a better place  
If I were not around no more  
At least my friends and family  
Could their own sanity restore

I yell and scream at those I love  
I get in fits of rage  
Like some lonely rabid dog  
Let out from his cage

At least when I was in denial  
No responsibility I took  
Now I know that I did wrong  
In my mirror I must look

My anger seems to come on more  
The more gambling that I do  
Regardless of the win or loss  
I always and up blue

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## **A few seconds at a time**

I'm just 25 years old  
My son has just turned five  
I have been a problem gambler  
Since he came into my life

Each day I say I'll drop this habit  
But as I walk past the arcade  
A giant arm just sweeps me in  
To where my misery is made

Last night I blew every cent  
I have no money left  
Can't pay my electricity bill  
I'm feeling quite bereft

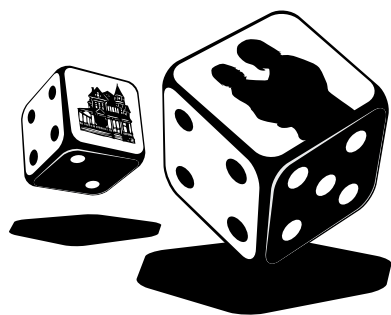
I had to stay at my mother's house  
Lied to her again ... I did  
Told her that I hadn't been paid  
As my shame from her I hid

This is three weeks in a row  
I've told her the same lies  
The hole I've dug is getting deeper  
She'll see through my disguise

I must stop for my son's sake  
Avoid gambling a few seconds at a time  
Maybe then I can slowly build  
The life that's truly mine



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## **Your story's sounding lame**

Oh my dear I can't bear to see  
Your suffering any more  
Watching you these past few weeks  
My eyes are red and sore

Is a mother and grandmother  
Of any real use to Society  
If her daughter and grandson  
Feel they can't rely on me

You've told me about some mix-up  
At your work regarding your pay  
You were sure you will sort it out  
So I offered you to stay

It's been three weeks in a row  
Your story's sounding lame  
I'm guessing that it's something else  
Your hiding from me shame

For your son's sake you have to quit  
I'm prepared to be there whilst you do  
Together we can beat this gambling beast  
Which has its grip on you

A problem shared is a problem halved  
So I've been told before  
You must trust your loving mum  
I may help your life restore

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## **Nanna says that Mommy is sick**

I like to visit with my Nan  
She always has a treat  
I dig my hand into her pocket  
It comes out with a sweet

Nan always has so much food  
My belly feels so full  
It's not the same at mommy's house  
When I come home from school

There are no cookies in the jar  
Our fridges is often bare  
I go to bed with no dinner some nights  
And just hug my teddy bear

Nanna says that Mommy's sick  
She has some kind of bug  
But Nan is helping her get better  
I help by giving mum a hug

I love you Mommy and I hope  
That you get better soon  
When I grow up I'll look after you  
And promise to clean my room

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## **My Band-Aid approach**

My husband he got sick last week  
What if he becomes disabled?  
I can't deal with the stress of it  
It's back to the gaming table

I'm trying for a promotion at work  
What if I don't get it this time?  
I'm feeling anxious ... Scared even  
The pokies will help me unwind

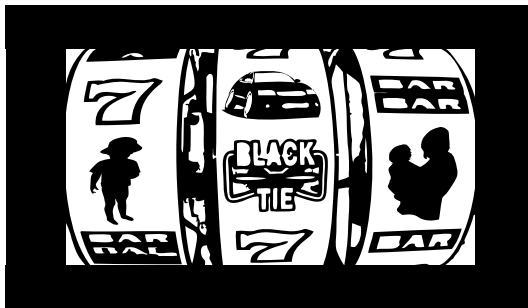
My teenage daughters being  
Unreasonable ... don't get her at all  
I don't seem to be coping well  
I'll find comfort at the arcade mall

I watched the news and it's all bad  
Everywhere I look there's sin  
My dark depression's setting in  
Better buy a scratch and win

I've lost so much if only I  
Could find a way again to win  
I'd give up gambling once and for all  
For my happy life to begin

I realise now I'm using gambling  
As a Band-Aid for all my strife  
It's smarter for me to face my problems  
And just get on with my life

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## Build a bridge and get over it

There comes a time in your life  
When you say "I've had enough"  
In the midst of all your fear and insanity  
You decide that you are tough

Like a child after a tantrum  
Your sobs begin to subside  
Blink back tears through wet lashes  
In the truth you must confide

You open your eyes and take a look  
At the world through different eyes  
This is your new awakening  
A time to end your lies

The process begins with the realisation  
There are no fairy-tale happy endings  
You were not born Cinderella and  
Prince Charming no one's sending

To accept means you understand  
You may not be appreciated one bit  
You will not always find true love  
Build a bridge ... and get over it!

You stop bitching and blaming others  
For what they did to you, or for you  
You realise self-worth comes from within  
Transforms you from feeling blue

You learn that people don't always say  
What do actually mean or feel  
When you start relying on yourself  
Will your soul begin to heal

You stop judging and pointing fingers  
Find forgiveness for faults in others  
Realise that faults and frailties are natural  
Treat people like sisters and brothers

You start to realise all the conditioning  
Who you're meant to be, to do, to feel  
You start to drop unwonted values  
Through Lord's prayer you may heal

"Lord give me the strength  
To change the changeable, accept the unchangeable  
Remove myself from the unacceptable  
And the wisdom to know the difference"

It's not your job to save the world  
You can't teach a pig to sing  
Learn the difference between guilt and responsibility  
Happiness around you ... you will bring

With a stick draw a line across the sand  
Shout out for all to hear and see  
"I am in control of my mind, feelings, and emotions  
And from today I'm gambling free!"



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## **My body is my temple**

My body is my temple  
I'll take control of what I can  
My gambling's become a problem  
But I am still ... the man

I find when I focus my mind  
On regular exercise and diet  
I start to feel good about myself  
My gambling demons I can quiet

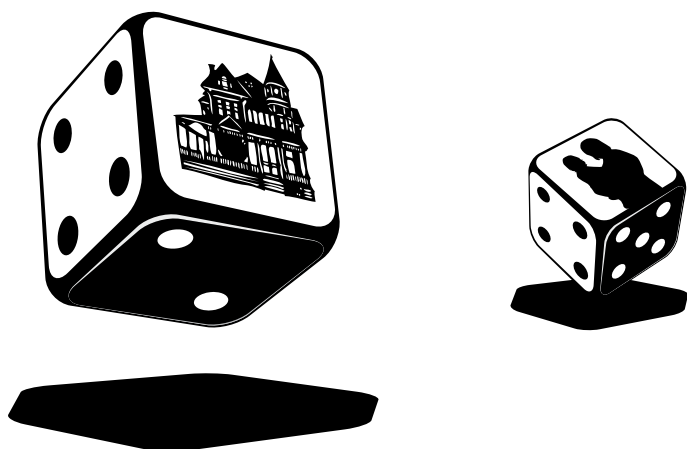
When I'm standing on the treadmill  
I imagine behind me stands  
A 6 foot five ... burly gambler  
Trying to grab me in both his hands

As my body it gets fitter  
My imagination's having fun  
Seeing the gambler struggling to keep up  
Now that I've begun to run

I've been clean for the last three weeks  
I'm feeling great inside  
I still get the daily urge to gamble  
I find strength to push it aside

I have lost 5 kilos  
My clothes are loose and free  
I'm walking with my head held high  
For everyone to see the real me

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## **Self-exclusion**

Six years I have been gambling  
I've been there ... in denial  
Anxiety, anger and depression  
Lying to my family was just vile

If I can be honest with you  
I used gambling as my crutch  
The buzz I got from winning  
I enjoyed it way too much

The casino were I gamble  
Is not so close to home  
I could avoid it if I want to  
But I'd go there like a drone

I started online gambling  
At any hour I could lose  
I installed blocking software  
Once locked I couldn't choose

I started blogging about my problem  
A suggestion was put forth for free  
Self-exclusion from the casino  
Would remove the choice from me

I made contact with the casino  
Put myself onto their exclusion list  
If I go there I could be arrested  
Making it easier to resist

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## He's done it to me again

As I get that sinking feeling  
It's driving me insane  
I slowly come to realise  
He's done it to me again

Then follows pain and anger  
Bitterness hurt and fear  
He promises to take the pain away  
As he promised me last year

I love him and want to believe  
Be supportive in his need  
Knowing that he'll lie again  
His gambling lust he'll feed

He makes up more excuses  
Why he can't buy food and smokes  
Or take me out to dinner  
My anger this evokes

To help him pay off debt  
One day out of kindness  
I lent him \$10,000 dollars  
I'll call it domestic blindness

Two days later I had  
In my gut a sinking feeling  
Wouldn't tell me where the money went  
Now from me he's stealing

To me he finally admitted  
He'd blown the whole 10 grand  
In two days at the casino  
Chasing that winning hand

I've wasted on this man  
Two years of my life  
I'm angry ... lost my self-esteem  
I could never be his wife

He's broken me completely  
To an unrecognisable state  
I left him just two weeks ago  
But I'm missing him of late

I know for my own sanity  
I cannot take him back  
My energy I'll focus on me  
Get my life back on track

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## **Run away as fast as you can**

My story to you may sound familiar  
But it is one I have to tell  
It's about my wife's gambling addiction  
For three years I've lived in hell

The love Joy and respect  
I used to treat her like a queen  
Like sand through an hourglass it's gone  
Replaced by the sound of the poker machine

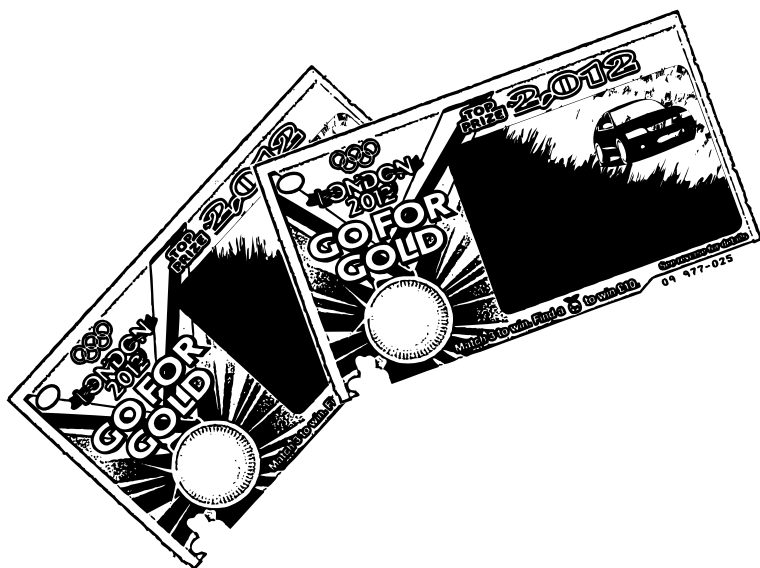
I offered empathy, encouragement  
Understanding and support to my wife  
Ignoring mine and our daughter's needs  
And destroying my own life

Even after I asked her to leave  
The financial carnage stays with me  
Working hard to pay off the bills  
So that one day I'll be free

If this story sounds like you  
Try to be a stronger man  
Cut your losses before it's too late  
Run away as fast as you can



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## **Has gambling got a hold of you?**

If you can stop living in denial  
And to your heart be true  
Here are signs to look out for  
Does gambling have a hold of you?

Are you spending time at venues?  
More than you usually would do  
Are you gambling on your own?  
Don't lie you must be true

Are you spending more than you can afford  
Would you find an extra day?  
Where the days seem to extend beyond  
The money from your weekly pay

Professional help is available  
To seek it you must choose  
Do you want to take back control?  
Your gambling habit you can lose

You may resist the call for help  
It's judgement that you fear  
That you'll be told you're a bad person  
That your reputation it may smear

Councillors will simply have a chat  
Give you strategies and tools to cope  
So you can take control of your life  
You just need is a little hope

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## **A message from yourself**

Hello stranger it's been a while  
I need you to lend your ears  
You have been absorbed in your mind  
It's driven you to tears

Your mind is linked with your ego  
As such it can't be wrong  
To start to take back your control  
You'll have to be quite strong

This gambling habit is a crutch  
Which you have used to replace  
Dealing with truth in your life  
You can still win this race

Start by listening to yourself  
Not the voices that you hear  
The self does not judge or scold  
It helps you eliminate your fear

Remember that child within  
The one with hopes and dreams  
You can still ignite that flame  
It's not too late it seems

Be strong and know what it is you want  
Focus all your power from within  
Manifest the life you deserve  
Take past mistakes on the chin

## Know when to fold them



*This is a poem for my little friends  
at the Chiang Mai Orphanage.*

*These children are so happy ... They are well  
fed well clothed, but what they miss most of all is the  
hugs and kisses that our children were brought up with.  
If you enjoyed "Know when to fold them" all I ask in return  
is that you visit my foundation called  
"Happy Hands Foundation" and make  
a donation to help my little friends.*

**[www.happyhandsfoundation.com](http://www.happyhandsfoundation.com)**

## **What I'd give for a bedside story read to me by Mum or dad**

When I wake up in the morning  
I look around and something just not there  
No mommy ... No daddy to wake me up  
It really isn't fair

I have 60 friends to share my time  
And there are my carers too  
Sometimes we get volunteers  
For excursions at the zoo

My clothes are all packed away  
In my slide-out draw  
My shoes are stacked in a row  
With 59 others ... at the door

I have food in my belly  
Bath twice a day ... it's really not so bad  
But what I'd give for a bedside story  
Read to me by Mum or dad

At least I am healthy  
Unlike some children ... Who have HIV  
Sometimes they cry out late at night  
I'm glad it's them not me

What did I do that is so wrong?  
What have I done so bad?  
That I should have to live my life  
Without both mum and dad

I have lived here since I was one  
That was five years ago  
Sometimes life just flashes by  
But some days it goes real slow

I wake up often in my sleep  
I'm afraid of to lose my toys  
When I turn seven ... Is time to move  
To live with 175 older boys

No more girls to play with  
I won't be the big boy any more  
I've heard from other boys who've moved  
And I'm afraid of what's in store

For 10 more years I need to wait  
Until the day that I'm set free  
When I can finally leave this orphanage  
And rely just on me

I promise that when I have children  
I will be there ... To take care  
To tuck them in to bed at night  
And let them know I'm there

If you can share some of your wealth  
For a better future is my goal  
Knowing your money is helping orphans  
Will be like feeding your own soul

