

# The Terrors

TOM CHIVERS



Nine  
Arches  
Press

# **The Terrors**

**Tom Chivers**

**Illustrations by Emma Robertson.**

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**DEAR READER,**

What follows is a sequence of imagined emails sent from the author to inmates at London's Newgate Prison incarcerated between roughly 1700 and 1760. All mistakes, typos and anachronisms are deliberate.



Death is cloathed in terrors

- *The Newgate Calendar*

Biography lends to death a new terror

- Oscar Wilde

Celebrities. They're a funny old bunch, aren't they? All you have to do is lure them into an overlit bungalow with a promise of a few weeks back in the limelight, and before you can say 'me me me' they're baring their tortured souls and telling us all KINDS of things we never knew we wanted to know.

- Heidi Stephens, *The Guardian*, January 2009



## **A Guide to Email Etiquette**

Don't reply to an email when angry, as you may regret it later.

Don't type in capitals as this is considered SHOUTING.

Don't send large attachments without checking with the recipient first.

Don't send chain letters or 'make money fast' messages.

Don't criticize spelling (sic.). It is considered petty.

Read the rules.

Don't flame people.

Don't make personal remarks.

Don't send unsuitable email.

Don't mention Lilly's hieroglyph.

Don't overuse the exclamation mark.

Be concise and to the point.

Don't reply to spam.

Don't gape at Puppet-shews.

Don't talk about the Press.

Don't excavate the ragstone.

Do not request delivery receipts.

Decode the spiel from 12 bit cant.

Do not make libellous, sexist or racially discriminating comments.

The Editors gave their reasons.

Sending email is like sending a postcard. Don't send it.

Brand the convict on his thumb.

You are using valuable bandwidth.

Do not covet ANY THING.

Spend your bounty-money where you can.

Always read the disclaimer.



**Sent: 10 February 2009 13:03**

**To: William Dodd <wdodd@hammers.com>;**

**Subject: [SPAM]: You have been selected**

Beloved in Christ –

CONGRATULATIONS!!

*You have won Grand Prize in the state lottery!!*

I am Mr Pastor Powell

I got your contact on my personal search of the person I want to  
will my money to

please

I willed the sum of *1000l.* to you

between the rack, the wheel, the dungeon and the flame

if you really want to know

and you want this money

then write

I am sunk

I am the God of Dancing

I am New Creation's Author



Sent: 9 February 2009 08:17

To: William Dodd <wdodd@hammers.com>;

Subject: Urgent please read

Will, take out your field notebook. Make a tryst in blood. Employ your canines. Watch a shank of lamb slip off the bone as a woman stepping from her dress. This steaming viand, in its scrambled mess of lentils (*puu*), requires your total 100% concentration. I give you 'The Huntsman's Supper', or some other peasant chic moniker.

And while the bodies of your half-time buddies hang half-hanged in Smithfield, I'm lounging on a swivel chair in a law firm's wood-lined corner-office, stinking of leather, flicking through lists of big wigs (literally), artists' catalogues, the poetry of exile (yours).

*You're my man*, he said, but the squeal of the lift couldn't mask the mark of the market.

To help protect your privacy, the trauma of the gaping throng blocking the way at Giltspur Street, a hood of sack-cloth or a faceful of ash will suffice to hide your visage.

Turns out this fear of earth's endemic, Will.

The rocks of which you speak; the endless sea at night like a huge black pall thrown from a different gaoler's fist.

This prison is an island.

But who's the slave, Will?  
And who, the god?

**Sent: 6 January 2009 21:10**

**To: William Dodd <wdodd@hammers.com>;**

**Subject: speculate to accumulate**

Treat this as fan mail, or whatever. We both know it's more complex than we would like. I know not how to leave / break off, I tell thee; only add to your mixed bag of fan, hate mail, spam and worthy parish circulars.

I snared the gaping crowd, Will; told Akerman you once danc'd into the living grave wherein we're food for worms. I'd love to see your homely porter, clad in bespoke skin of wolsey grey; strange choirs, guttural outpourings.

I'm what you'd call a fellow traveller; terrestrial stranger with my twin-pack scriptures, ghostly doctrine tagged along the walls. Watch for the pattern and the source, you said.

The pattern: infamy!

The source: infamy!

There is no other word for this. All must be real, my friend; all must be real. I give thee Newgate: welcome to the end of speculation.