Bourne toWrite...
creative writing workshops

# Strawberry Fields Forever
## a timed exercise

by Douglas Fresh

Charles would come to regret taking the train that day. He'd sipped his coffee thousands of times on that route. There was a kink in the track—like his Scalextric, where the cars went a bit funny, but it worked. He'd ignored the kink for decades. Charles' earphones purred and soothed his ears.

'Let me take you down, cause I'm going to Strawberry Fields...'

And he took off inside his head like an astronaut. His feet left the worn, carpeted ground for a moment. He remembered playing on the swings, his dad lending him headphones the size of his head, and this song playing while he flew... He was in bliss as the tune transported him.

'Nothing is real, and nothing to get hung about...'

He left the seat, jumping off the swing, his stomach dipping with joy and a child-friendly dose of fear.

'Strawberry Fields forever...'

He remembered his squeals as his feet landed on the concrete, slipping slightly on scattered pieces of gravel. He fell over as he heard screams.

'Living is easy with eyes closed, misunderstanding all you see...'

People's smiles and lackadaisical whimsy clouded together with the song, like a musical—until they didn't. Until they stopped smiling and turned ghost-faced as people stumbled in with blood on their faces.

'Cranberry sauce...'

The song skipped around.

Charles knew it wasn't strawberry juice, but the song had put ideas in his head. As he felt his temple, the surrealist in him took charge, trying to understand what was happening. Everything slowed down.

‘It’s getting hard to be someone, but it all works out. It doesn’t matter much to me…’

Then the reality of the derailment came crashing in—a wave of mayhem shoving the atmosphere of shock aside to make life, to make things, urgently happen. Charles forgot to switch the song off. His mind was overloaded with realisation.

‘But you know I know when it’s a dream. I think I know—I mean, a “yes”— But it’s all wrong…’

Charles’ eyes gorged on the broadness of the daylight in this nightmare, the train behind him like a toy, careering off the rails.

‘Let me take you down, cause I’m going to Strawberry Fields. Nothing is real…’

Someone was saying something to him. Two people in high-visibility jackets. They carried him, and it felt like a baptism in reverse.

‘And nothing to get hung about.
Strawberry Fields forever.
Strawberry Fields forever.
Strawberry Fields forever…’