

Pushing My Luck: an Interview with Alumni Jamie Andrews

Jamie Andrews studied Creative Writing at Falmouth from 2015-2019. After graduating, he went on to study for an MA in Comedy Writing via Falmouth online courses.

Rupert Loydell: Hi, Jamie. You seemed to have done everything a person could do (legally) before arriving at Falmouth. If I remember, you'd been a politician, a shipping magnate, a senior police officer, an architectural consultant and the Mayor of London. Is that correct? And why did you abandon your city life to slum it in Cornwall?

Jamie Andrews: So before I start, I'd just like to point out that this document full of questions you've sent me didn't have 1.5 or double line spacing, Mr. Loydell. Hmmm? All the shit you gave us about i, and the first document I get from you in years doesn't have it? Very Naughty.

But to answer, *'Why did you abandon your city life to slum it in Cornwall?'* I was homeless (sofa surfing at that point), and it seemed a better option than trying to start again in Croydon. When I applied via clearing, I honestly didn't think I'd get in. But the old Head of Department, called me up and asked me why Creative Writing and I told him honestly that I was going to be writing whether I was doing the degree or not, so I might as well get good at it, and he offered me a place on the phone there and then. I remember all the hairs on my arms going funny and I had to go sit down. It's mad how one single phone call can change your life so much in a space of seconds.

Rupert: What did you enjoy most during your degree?

Jamie: Hmmm... Irritating the staff? Pushing my luck? Pips pasties in Penryn? When I look back at the BA, it'd be hard to choose one single thing because, for me going back to Uni as a mature student was so significant.

I met the missus there, and we've been together for 7 years, and I now live in Norway as her life thrall (she's Norwegian, we know what those Vikings were like), so there's that.

I got an ADHD diagnosis through an assessment partly subsidised by the Uni. That was pretty life-changing in terms of understanding and accepting myself a bit.

I've made a few friends for life, too.

Falmouth is also where I really discovered my love for standing in front of crowds of people, reading words and acting like a tit.

Maybe the time I turned up in full drag for our first dissertation meeting, and you wouldn't let me sit on your lap? 😊

Actually! Watching you go red in a seminar when I put *Wizard of Oz* porn on the projector and made everyone get up and dance (to its award-winning soundtrack, might I add) as part of a first year presentation. I still laugh about that.

Rupert: I think I had managed to erase all memories of it... Anyway, what was the most useful part of your degree?

Jamie: It depends on how you look at it I guess. From a non-academic standpoint, I think it gave me time and space to work out who I was and what I wanted while learning something I actually cared about, instead of doing things for other people due to their weird expectations. From a professional or academic standpoint, it taught me the importance of a good story.

Rupert: I think you also did some night shift security on the Wood Lane campus whilst being a student?

Jamie: Haha! I did, and I got punched in the face by a drunken fresher while we were waiting for an ambulance for her.

Actually, saying that this is (or at least used to be) a thing.* If you are a student and get caught short and find yourself stranded at hospital in Truro, or there's an emergency on a different campus-run accommodation (Falmouth included). If you live on campus, you used to be able to call the security switchboard, and they'd arrange for an already-paid taxi for you or respond to the emergency to help. There's actually a budget set aside for it).

<https://fxplus.ac.uk/uncategorised/24-hour-contact/>

* It's 01:00 am at the moment and being the well-adjusted writer that I am, I just phoned them to check. They answered in under 5 rings and confirmed. It's still a thing.

** Still working at 01:00 am is probably a worrying insight into what it's like working as a freelancer.

Rupert: And were you one of the years who had to deal with online teaching during the pandemic?

Jamie: I was, but I was doing an online MA, so it was part and parcel of the course.

I was working 67 hours a week in a town called Rovik during the winter in -20°C for a construction company run by complete bastards (because I took the first job I could before Brexit restrictions kicked in so I could get into Norway). We lived in these mini barracks next to the building site, and it was absolutely miserable. I honestly think if it wasn't for the online MA giving me something to focus on and tutors like Simon and Andy being so amazing, I'd have been a lot worse off mentally for sure.

Rupert: You currently live in Norway and are doing stand-up comedy and a podcast. Some of that makes use of the fact you struggle to learn the language and understand the culture. Self-deprecation is a very British thing, isn't it? How do the Norwegians respond to you as a self-described 'creative, silly person'?

Jamie: Yes, my podcast,

my podcast called **Language Power**,
my podcast for, which you can find here:
<https://linktr.ee/languagepowerpodcast>.
Tenuous link
to the question...

Luckily the humans of Norway respond very well to creative, silly people so far. And as for comedy, I think you're either funny, or you're not, and that translates through most cultures. Although, that being said, it probably explains why I only have a few gigs lined up so far this year...

Plus, I think that most Norwegians I've spoken to are just happy I'm trying to learn. For example, they have a word in Norway called koselig which means cosy. But if you mispronounce the 'koose' bit, you are saying something entirely different and a wee bit rude. Which I did for two years, and no one thought to correct me because people thought I was saying it wrong on purpose, trying to be funny. I really wasn't.

Do you know what else Norwegians like?

My podcast,
which is called **Language Power**,
and you can find here: <https://linktr.ee/languagepowerpodcast>.

And if you can't find it there, I'll probably beat you at hide and seek.

Rupert: I remember you being excellent at winding up anyone who asked you where you were originally from. You'd deflect the racism by following your family's geography back from London to Scotland to Wales and the West Country. Isn't telling jokes about your struggle with Norway and the Norwegian language just a way of diluting 'difference' and national identity, which could be construed as problematic?

Jamie: Ah yes, the joys of having one black parent and one white parent but a beard that makes you look Arabic. It's even more fun when they have a great-grand-parent that wasn't born in the UK, and you call them foreign. Because essentially, the question isn't where are you from, but why aren't you white? Lydia, one of my old cohort, is doing a PHD at Falmouth on this very subject as we speak. I hear she is available for teaching seminars, lectures and workshops too. (Slides a fiver and a few bottles of beer under the table.)

But to answer the question, no, I think jokes about things like the differences in language and the struggles they cause or jokes about national identity are useful tools. Especially if done in an entertaining way as it allows me to connect with the audience and potentially open up a conversation with them (albeit one-sided) to explore common ground.

I've never had anyone in Norway come up to me after a gig and say it was problematic. And I think that the only people that do care too much about their national identity or notions of masculinity or sexuality etc are 100% the people I'd wind up and take the piss out of anyway.

One thing I started doing at uni (and still do now, actually) is whenever I start a shiny new notebook, I write the quote 'If everyone likes you, you're probably boring' on the inside cover.

We're writers.

We create things.

We can't afford to be boring.

That was nearly an anaphora. David would be proud!

Rupert: Do you have any advice for students as one of our successful graduates?

Jamie: OH, YES! And I'll happily sound like a wankstain for saying it too.

I'll do a quick TLDR.

- Seriously... Do the reading. If you can't be arsed, what the hell are you doing there in the first place? Buy the audiobook, use a speed reading app, whatever helps you get through it. There is a caveat to this, though. If it's a book that you might find traumatic or worse, a book Luke hasn't read but put on the reading list because he needed a female sci-fi writer from the 70s, like *Shakista* (I will never forgive you, Luke), then have a conversation with your tutor, so they know beforehand as they might be able to suggest something else (or if its *Shakista*, set it on fire).
- Saying that, the books on the reading list can be expensive sometimes, but I saved millions with this one easy trick! (cough) Buy the second-hand version of the book on Amazon for 1p, then click on the seller selling the book and search the other books in their database to see if there is anything else on your reading list. They normally stitch you up by asking £3 per book postage, but if you order 8 from one company, it'll only cost about £15. Or take them out in the library 😊
- Zinc and magnesium before a sesh, 5-HTP the next morning, and make sure you look after each other.
- Don't trust people that don't swear.
- If you learn how to brew your own booze, you'll save a lot of money on pre-drinks.
- Don't live in Longdowns unless you drive or want to stare at llamas.
- Collaborate every chance you get. 90% of the work I'm doing at the moment has come from collaborating in one way or another.
- If you can monetise a piece of creative work from an assignment after it's been graded etc, then do it. I managed to turn one of those assignments into a book (more of a shitpost in paper form) via Kickstarter, and made some money out of it. It was literally illustrated in MS Paint. But it meant the work was out there instead of being on a cloud drive somewhere never used.

That wasn't a quick TLDR, sorry.

One of my biggest regrets about uni was that I didn't use it enough when I was there. Most of my cohort realised this at some point during our 3rd year, and we all pretty much agreed we were stupid.

If you can realise this a bit sooner and rinse the uni for all its worth in terms of learning stuff, meeting people, doing fun projects or joining societies etc, when you do get to the third year, it'll be less shit like that.

Oh, and never – and I really, really mean this – never annoy Ruth. It's not worth it. I'm 40, and I still think that if Ruth gave the angry mum look and counted to three, I'd run and hide somewhere before she got to two.

Rupert: And finally, what's your favourite joke at the moment?

Jamie: You want a joke from a comedian for free, you cheeky sod!? If you weren't giving me free exposure, I'd be outraged. This isn't mine, and I can't remember who told it to credit them. But it's been a favourite of mine for years now:

'When my mother was giving birth, the doctor had to pull me out with both hands. That's how excited I was to see my little brother.'

Rupert: Thanks, Jamie. Good luck with world domination.

Jamie: No, worries.

Love you!

xxx