

# Bourne toWrite...

creative writing  
workshops

## Time for a Change

by Nick Barrett

All week the heat was horrible, sticking clothes to skin and leaving hair hanging limp off sweating scalps. A break in the weather was overdue, and distant lightning in the night sky might mean the relief of rain tonight.

Jenny certainly hoped it did as she collapsed into the driver's seat of her SUV, aircon on full blast to dry off.

That was mercifully the last visit of a busy shift, to the farthest away client, and probably the neediest. Mrs Smith's Alzheimers was advancing again. She should be in a care home already, in Jenny's opinion, but austerity cuts meant a long queue for scarce spaces. The old lady was zoning out more and more often and for longer each time - according to a neighbour who kept an eye on her - sometimes standing in the garden just staring, motionless, until fetched.

Looking after the elderly was hard work for not much pay, a labour of love really, Jenny thought. Clients like Mrs Smith were often beyond returning anything like love, but Jenny didn't mind. The schedule said get in and out in 12 minutes but that was never possible. Tidying up, cleaning bathroom and kitchen, hoovering, some dusting, bed making, heating up food, getting her ready for bed and making her a cup of tea before she left, easily took half an hour at full pelt. Staying for a chat wasn't always possible, like tonight when there was something else pressing to think about.

Jenny was never very relaxed on this five mile drive along wretchedly narrow country roads, unfamiliar in the dark, where only passing spaces made two-way traffic possible.

Overhanging trees formed an enveloping tunnel, reflecting headlights back at her, an eerie effect yet somehow comforting, even womb like. But tonight she felt unusually uneasy, ever since she got into the car.

Ahead lay the dual carriageway that would get her home soon to a welcome shower and a long overdue showdown talk with Arthur. She suddenly felt her unease increase but she couldn't think why. As husbands go Arthur had been OK, she supposed, but it was time for a change, a whole new way of living, on her own.

She'd had enough of focusing on family, especially Arthur. He was getting messier and lazier as he got older, drank too much, was growing ever more needy and was completely unappreciative of all she did for him. Whatever love there had been between them was long gone.

About all he did for her was look after the money side of things, paid the bills on time, but she, famously scatty as she was, would just have to learn to remember all that. "Remember...remember..." something nagged at the back of her mind. "Remember something? What though?"

Suddenly with a loud clap of thunder the weather broke, rain fell in sheets. For a few moments the sight and sound of the wipers rhythmically swishing the deluge across the windscreen soothed Jenny as she looked forward to a good night's sleep in the cooler weather this shower would bring. "This is more than a shower though," she thought. There was that nagging feeling again: "Remember... shower..."

"Aghhhhh," she shrieked, slamming on the brakes and reversing fast back along the lane to find a passing place to do a three point turn. "I've left Mrs Smith in the shower!" Arthur would have to wait.