

Bourne toWrite...

creative writing
workshops

Phantom Light

by Shevlyn Byroo

There's no telling when the phantoms were birthed. It could have been that nursery school she never should have went to. Learning to read at a young age, listening to stories, mixing with paint colours brighter and bolder than herself. It was like being dipped in a luminous pond.

Fantasy and reality always lived side by side for Sadie, it was a peaceful union. The same way a heavy bulging moon tucks itself into an inky black sky, the same way a ladybird takes no notice of the large black dots in its back. Wide-eyed and curious, oblivious to her knowing, Sadie looked on at the world with reverence.

What would they say? She took the long way home, whenever the boys were gathered on the road. Across the overgrown fields, over the river, saving her breath so she could run pass the squatter's huts. It always felt as if she was about to explode.

She would not have to hear their taunts. Not again.

This perfect union made sense to her, it was her after all, she knew nothing else. But now the adult Sadie knows, 'it is far harder to kill a phantom than a reality.'

The truth was, in the council house, the electricity was often cut off and colgate egg and brandy shampoo was a luxury. The phantom grew stories of her own, speech and vocabulary and an imagination that surprised and puzzled those around her. The boys laughed at her plainness and knobby knees only because they did not understand her luminosity. She would smile to herself, she knew what 'Cider with Rosie' was really all about.

Real life persisted, the house was dark and airless, cockroaches raided the empty cupboards. But Shauna bubbled inside, unquenching, eager and wild. The phantom filling out to her edges.

A door had been flung open and she was restless knowing it was there. Years passed and at times she wondered if it was just a dream, a detached memory of a dull-yellow light.

Her present changed but that light, that light never went out.