

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

“Is it about a Bicycle?”

by Ali Gale

“Is it about a bicycle, you look like you’ve lost something, love?”

The shop was so crowded with bikes for sale, bike frames, bikes for repair, bike bits and bobs and paraphernalia that if I turned quickly and left like I wanted to I was likely to set off a horrendous domino-effect catastrophe. It was as if he could read my mind at first. Why was I there? It was a bike shop, not my thing. Maybe it was the absurdly high heels, business suit and lack of Lycra. I didn’t have a reason to be there except for the letter I was holding.

“I have – lost something, well someone to tell the truth. My dad. Lost as in passed, passed away, passed on, passed over, passed, passed, passed.”

Oh god! I couldn’t shut up. This kept happening to me.

“Sorry, it was some time ago but I’ve only just discovered. Didn’t really know him you see. Dad in name only. Not me real dad if you like. Absent dad. I grew up with another one.”

Here I go again. Can't keep quiet, can't keep a secret, no surprises here! He was looking at me – hard. Not speaking, letting my odd, one-sided conversation dwindle down to nothing.

“Thing is. He left this for me and it mentions you. Said I should talk to you but I haven't a clue why. Go see Tom in the bike shop. He wrote it in this letter.”

He was still looking at me. Then abruptly as if he'd made a decision, he said, “Antonio's girl.”

He tossed his head towards the back of the shop, to the small room behind the workshop. What the hell was going on? I thought. Actually I didn't know what to think. Was Tom an old friend maybe, or a colleague. Someone to shed light on the mystery that was my father. This was just weird.

“He was the best,” Tom said tome over his shoulder.

“Sorry, at what, when, how did you know him?”

“We served together.”

“What, like in the army? He was a soldier?”

“He couldn't tell you. All those years knowing about you he was terrified someone would find out and use it against him – and you. That's why he kept away. That's why he sent you to me. So I could tell you. He wasn't a soldier. Your dad was a spy.”