

Bourne
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creative writing
workshops

The Helping Hand

by Stuart Carruthers

I knew all the people on the bus that day
And despite this we acted like strangers.
Everyone was consumed with their own unfolding nightmare.

When the knock at the door came just before sunrise, I knew something was wrong.
Father never panicked in situations like that, despite the look of fear that was etched
across his face that morning.
My brother's coat that he'd left on the chair was all I could see in the dimly lit room
and as father slipped on his boots and dressing gown, not a word was spoken between
use.

Father had taken to the bed some six weeks earlier following the harsh winter season
working in the mountains. On previous occasions he'd returned home unwell, but this
time it was serious. With no money coming into the house my brothers had left school
and took to the seas on the only fishing boat that was prepared to sail at that time of
year.

I visibly remember the day Daniel told me of his future plans. The endless rain that
rolled in off the mountains for days drew a glossy sheen from the slate grey terrace
roofs and an eerie feeling developed inside me. I was too shy to say how I felt, but he
had reassured me that everything would be ok.

It was by chance that I saw the painting. A friend who still lives in the town phoned
out of the blue and mentioned that a local artist was displaying his work and this piece
was hanging on the main wall.

I was reluctant at first as it had been a long time since I last went home. Father never made the return journey on the bus that morning and not long after I moved away to my uncle's place further along the coast.

A new generation had taken up where yesterday's fishermen had tied up and the cobbled streets down by the harbour still echoed to the sounds of daily life.

I often wondered what happened to the old lady in the green hat. They lived four doors down from us. She was on her own that day. I wonder where she is.