

**Bourne**  
**toWrite...**  
creative writing  
workshops

## Flint

by Mari Syrad Grieves

Beating the flint down onto the rock's pitted surface, spraying amber sparks into the dark, her face illuminated for a brief second before they whispered into nothing. She pounded the sharp edge against the faceless rock until, having endured so much, it split in two. She expected an almighty crack of thunder as it surrendered, but it was silent, her eardrums numb after all this time.

It hadn't always been like this; there was a time before the meaningless erosion of the rock. But then, life becomes a habit. It's easy to forget the time before the darkness, before the sparks were the only source of light, before the only music anyone could hear was the clink of flint against stone. Side by side in perfect rows but unable to see one another, we complete our life's work, chipping away at the grey, unrelenting surface, until eventually it breaks, hopefully before we do.

Once it has split in two, you're free. But you're tired. Your back is bent. Your eyes struggle to adjust to the bright light as you step out of the void and wonder where your life has gone; what it was all for. You said you'd never let yourself get trapped like the rest, a sea of dispassionate fools. But here you are with your grey skin and grey hair and a grey set of memories; you've lived the same day on repeat for fifty years.

If only you hadn't been so afraid. What then?

You'd have been squeezing oil paints between your fingers; sweeping a horse hair bow across velvet cello strings; blinking in the spotlight as you part your lips to sing; leaving your head on his warm chest and listening to the ocean's rush of breath as it pours in; collecting words that you found in the stars because you always remembered to look up.

Those are the habits I need to live.