

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

## The scar

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Sam is trying very hard to concentrate. I, laying prone on a plastic-wrapped tattoo bed, am trying very, very hard to talk to him.

“Maybe it’s weird,” I say, pretending that he’s listening, “But I don’t want to cover it, you know?”

“Uh-huh.” Sam says, also pretending that he’s listening.

Behind my clenched teeth, the lollipop in my mouth oozes violently-sweet lemon juice as I stare up at the white ceiling of the tattoo parlour, and consider whether or not I should really be distracting the poor man as he’s permanently inking an image into my flesh.

My forearm stings aggressively and I wince. Swallowing the lollipop juice, I flick the sweet over to the left side of my mouth and say,

“There’s not even really a very interesting story behind it.”

The needle buzzes. I scrunch my nose up. I wait for some sort of noncommittal noise from Sam.

“No?” He says, not looking up.

“Nope,” I say, trying not to sound too relieved at the vague permission to continue talking. (Scrolling through Instagram has proven to be not nearly distracting enough —also, my hands are too small to operate my phone one at a time.)

“I was putting the bins out with my sister,” I begin, “And we were messing around,” I cringe as the needle creeps deeper into my wrist. The sickly-sweet lemon juice swills in my mouth as I continue, “—closing the door on each other, and I ran at the door to push it open —my house, back in the UK, has two glass panels in the front door, and they were, like, thin, crappy, single-glaze at the time— and my hand went,” Lifting my right hand towards the ceiling, I mime what looks like a poorly-rehearsed horizontal high-five, “*straight* through the glass.”

Sam, to his credit, does seem to genuinely react to this image with a sharp inhale through his teeth. I drop my hand with a wry smile, laying for a moment in the memory of that incident.

“It’s funny,” I say slowly, prompted again by the sting of the needle. “My mum made me sit on the dining room chair with my arm up so I didn’t bleed all over the place.” My mouth flickers up as I remember the kitchen roll Sellotaped to my bloody wrist as I sat, dazed, arm suspended. “...And I remember that one drop of blood fell on the chair cushion... It was there for years.”

I frown, shifting the lollipop in my mouth. “Funny what you remember.”

The tattoo gun whirs. Sam agrees that it is funny. To my delight, he goes on to tell me that his mum had a similar accident to me. He continues to chat in scraps and pieces, leaving me with a sense of smugness at having goaded him into small talk.

When I glance over to my left, watching the progress of black ink swallowing up purple stencil, fascinated and adrenaline-fuelled, my eye can't help but catch on the pale, shiny shape of those seven stitches in my wrist, standing out under the lamp light now as that drop of blood did all those years ago.

It's funny what you remember.