

# Bourne toWrite...

creative writing  
workshops

## Climbing the Slanging Tree

by Daniel Judd

Someone once said, 'sometimes people need to lie to themselves most of all'. Actors of a certain age and persuasion more so. They spent their lives pretending to be someone else, so losing themselves in their biggest part was no real challenge.

But after a while, like with any long run, you began playing yourself no matter what lengths you went to. Some used Polari, the lost slang language of LGBT. Not that it was really needed. If you'd got it wrong it was easy to pretend to be playing a part or just putting the love into luvvey.

Most actors weren't exactly butch and the straight ones were comfortable enough in their skin to laugh it off, or simply be flattered.

But then the thrill of the chase was tarnished. AIDS swept through the profession and many dear friends were lost. One by one their lights went out. Sirs and serfs, leading men, and backroom boys all cancelled

Bob was lucky; he had Chrissy and the twins - not to mention a weekday continuing drama and a quiz show. Too scared of losing them, he'd put that side of things to one side, taking up a new role. He made it look effortless. It was just an extension of the part he'd played in 70s sitcom 'Ted Can't Hear You', after all. Joe Public wouldn't clock a thing.

Chrissy was his rock. As well as raising two kids, three if you count him, she was his manager and accountant. Meanwhile he dashed around the country, shouting in the evenings. She even packed meals into lovingly labelled Tupperware in an effort to get him to eat something that wasn't wine or gin-based.

Maybe he was fooling no one, but it's what you did and as long as you kept your head down and didn't bump into the furniture the press left you alone.

Chrissy knew of course, but it was unspoken. She'd even found him Keith when booking digs using one of those new-fangled websites - electricravery he called it. He could just about manage texting, on a good day, if the wind was blowing southerly.

Keith was marvellous. A builder of high-end furniture. He put up with his moods, his bad heads. His ghastliness. Put him and Chrissy together and it was murder. But in a good way. So good that she moved Keith to the flat upstairs. They ganged-up on him and it worked. She had someone who got it. Someone she could let off steam with. And he was allowed to remain centre stage.

They had 5 years of loveliness. Dinner parties flowing into late night cabaret and early morning reviews. But then slowly she gave Keith little tasks, bits of herself. She knew something was coming. Luckily, it was swift. For her and for him.

Bob abhorred ill people. Couldn't cope with them ever since he ran from his dying father's hospital bed, aged 15. Chrissy knew this of course and so she just slipped away.

Later he found out she'd turned down treatment. Selfless and putting him first to the end.

There was only one thing to do: do what he was told one last time.

"Shout it to the cheap seats," she said. And boy he did.