

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

## Lying to Yourself

by Mia Sundby

The cold from the windowsill seeped into his bones, but Reece didn't move. Instead, he stared ahead at the wall, his bespectacled brown eyes boring into the stone. Again and again, glanced towards the closed wooden door on his right, where the flag-stoned corridor ended. And he waited.

He wasn't sure how much later the footsteps echoed down the stone-paved corridor, but then Atolemew was perching beside him. The old man's robes were a dizzying spill of colour in the night-painted hallway, and Reece immediately thought of Sabrina and her brightly-coloured everything. His chest tightened painfully as he looked at the door again.

"So..." Atolemew began, his voice with its husky drawl resonating against the stone, "Have you eaten?"

Reece's voice was rough from disuse. "Did I miss dinner?"

"Yes." Atolemew beamed, his wizened face crinkling beneath his pristine, billowing white beard. "Again."

"Sorry."

"Oh, don't be! When you missed first dinner, Chalia put some aside for ya, then when you missed second, she put some aside again, only to find the first lot gone." The old wizard sighed, looking wistfully off to the middle distance. "By third dinner, she'd caught on and forcibly removed me from the kitchen."

Despite himself, Reece's chapped lips turned up at the corners.

Atolemew's chuckle filled the silence. When he spoke again, his lolling voice was more gentle:

"I know you don't want to hear it, young man," he glanced towards the door at the end of the hallway, "but you need to take care of yourself. As well as her."

Reece was quiet for a moment.

"She says she doesn't remember what they did to her." The words were rigid and small when they left his mouth, like a mouse stiffening at a shadow overhead, fearing the worst.

Atolemew nodded. "Sometimes people need to lie to themselves most of all."

To that, Reece had nothing to say.

A long moment passed. Then a wrinkled hand appeared in Reece's line of sight, clutching a handful of biscuits.

Bewildered, he looked up at the old wizard, who smiled kindly. "Do me a favour and eat them all before Chalia notices. She'll kill me."