

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Caught in a Moment

by Dan Judd

Tom blinked in the dawn. It burnt. Forcing him back into a semi-slumber of denial. But truth is a persistent, cold caller. Harnessing the light, it kept knocking.

“Not again,” he silently screamed as he choked on the truth.

There had been several smaller moments before. A lost bag, numerous debit cards and wallets. Coats and scarfs. Many walks of shame. Staggering back to the flat above Dial A Curry, shutting the door on the world. Suddenly safe. Crying.

There were happy memories, of course. Some so joyous they shut out the moments.

That weekend with Jason, later laughing when Tom told him he remembered the Chinese takeaway more. Hearing the local ice cream van playing Lara's theme from Doctor Zhivago every 4pm, like clockwork. The 30th birthday; a 70s buffet of cheese and pineapple, Wagon Wheels and Jacobs' Clubs. Daniel's rugby-tackling dance moves scattering his boss to the floor. Being locked in with Jason, waiting for a very apologetic flatmate Martin to take the Northern line to bring freeness.

But then the moments gathered pace. The shooting in Tooting at the chippy. The break up with Lee; messy, resentful, dumb. His replacement breaking down "I can't bear you touching me" after a mistaken cinema outing. Boys Don't Cry. Moving to the box room then moving out.

Many he could block out; the beer, the wine, the vodkas boosting the serotonin too much, from happy to unconscious in under 5 hours. But then the phone stopped ringing; the invites became few and far between.

But he still he lied to himself. Not going out meant he could convince himself he was behaving. Handling it. But that misguided sense of confidence, a swagger only meant that the moments became more infrequent. They were still there, waiting for the tipping point. It would come.

He forced himself up onto his feet. He put his hand to his head as the reality bomb hit him. He blinked the longest blink and forced himself out into the road. Blinding daylight nearly forced him back down to the ground. Always one to choose flight over fight he tried to run. But all he could manage was a zombie shuffle. Commuters stepped out of his way, all looking elsewhere.

Shambolically he made it to a taxi rank. Safe. But not safe from the moment. The moment when he realised that it wasn't his bloodshot black eye that was filtering all things red. The moment had carefully chosen its time. He caught his breath and stood at the shop front. It was only then that he noticed. The realisation that he was covered head to toe in a wash of pink paint.