

Bourne toWrite...

creative writing
workshops

Lockdown

by Richard Lewis

She was nervous about the future and now there was that letter from the school, glaring at her from the kitchen table. Oliver had been hiding under his desk again. It was something he did when feeling overwhelmed in class, which was most of the time.

“Come out from under that desk Oliver”, his teacher had said, but he wasn’t listening, so she’d come closer, touched him on the shoulder asking him again. At this, Oliver had screamed, jumped up and charged out of the classroom into the playground. Running, running as if for his very life. The teacher had followed but he was lost to himself, it would be half an hour before any sense of normality returned.

Oliver had been diagnosed with autism two years earlier, when he was five. His mother Ami worked tirelessly to find him a special school place but to no avail. As a single mum she knew it would be hard but decided to give up work and home school Oliver. She would connect with a local group and get what support she could from the school.

At first this worked well, Oliver happily staying home, keeping to his room playing computer games when not engaged by Ami. Then came the virus and lockdown. It had a paralysing effect on Ami who became too afraid to leave the house, terrified she would become ill and unable to look after Oliver. She had always been a careful individual, averse to change of any sort, always keeping to the rules.

One morning while standing at the kitchen window, watching rivulets of rain water trickling down the glass, her old life came flooding back. Somehow, she’d managed to hold back the tide but now the gates swung open, releasing memories of a dangerous childhood in Johannesburg, where her family lived behind razor wire with panic buttons at the ready. It was a place where good turned bad in the space of a sentence. Where riches and deprivation lived side by side.

The worry of scary reports about car-jacking, shootings and break-ins settled into Ami, creating a frightened and timid child. The family, unable to take the stress any longer finally moved back to the UK. Ami now realised she must have been the same age Oliver was now.

Disorientated, the past having finally caught up with her, there seemed no way out.