

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Secret

a timed exercise

by Sho Botham

This is the only story I will ever be able to tell. So many stories in my head but they are meaningless. There is only one story that matters. For 70 years I have kept a big secret.

At first the strain was difficult to cope with. I awoke every night with sweat running down my back. I was constantly waiting to be found out.

As the years passed, I found my secret was no longer my first thought in the morning and my last thought at night.

Then one day, I picked up a newspaper and the forgotten but still familiar, thudding of my heart in my chest began again. It seemed so loud I was sure my wife could hear it over the television. Three letters. D N A.

They claimed they would be able to trace criminals from years ago. I read the article more closely. I began to panic. Vomit rose in my throat. After 70 years, I was to be found out.

I don't know how I managed to get through the next three weeks. My head pulsed. My heart rate was so high it felt as if one heart beat merged with the next one. My palms were constantly sweaty. I tore up my story time and time again. I needed to get it right. I needed to explain. I'd had a lifetime to figure how what to say but now the time was here I couldn't find the words to write the only story I will ever be able to tell.