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**toWrite...**  
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workshops

## No Repentance

by Garf Collins

After I read about the death of my friend John, I remembered writing a story based on a difficult period in his life. His suicide made me look at it again;

*‘The crisis came just before his 40th birthday. John’s wife said to him, “I can’t stand the thought of being with you for the rest of my life. I’m leaving. You never have any ideas or initiative. You leave everything to me. I always have to tell you what to do.”*

*He had been on the point of one of his humble conciliatory replies when he suddenly realised what he had brought upon himself. He had always had low self-esteem, and his marriage to a domineering woman had somehow validated that image. This was his real crisis, not the breakdown of his marriage.*

*He thought of this as he sat down to face his analyst at the Institute. It was his sixth session, and he was finding it increasingly uncomfortable.*

*“Why are we going into my childhood in such detail,” he asked.*

*“You’ve told me why you think you married your wife. That lack of self-worth must have arisen before that. We are now back to when you were eight years old at pre-prep school. While there you heard that your parents were splitting up. How did you feel about that? “I felt abandoned - being away at school and all that. I didn’t know where I would go for the holidays even.”*

*“What did you do about that?”*

*John sat speechless as deeply suppressed events burst into his conscious memory.*

*Eventually, he spoke almost inaudibly, "There was this priest who used to visit the school. He seemed a very kind man, and he said to us all, 'You know you can call on me in a time of trouble.' So I went to him and told him about my parents. He was very sympathetic and invited me to his house on several occasions. He often cuddled me, and it felt good. But then on one visit, I felt his hand on my thigh and moving up into my trousers. And then....and then...*

*John collapsed on the desk and cried wretchedly. Eventually, he raised his head and said, "It was my fault. I was pathetic. I shouldn't have let him."*

*After this breakthrough and several more sessions, John realised that the low opinion of himself which had coloured so much of his life was unjustified. He was much happier. Unfortunately, although he stopped blaming himself for what had happened, he replaced that with a helpless rage against his abuser. He had visions of forcing him to his knees and demanding repentance before reporting him to the police, but after a desperate search, he discovered his abuser was dead.'*

I reread the newspaper report. John had been found weeks after a drugs overdose with a note denouncing the priest. How terrible that after recovering from the effects of his abuse, he was overcome by rage against his abuser.