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## I Can't Sit Still

by Stuart Carruthers

She never thought this day would ever come.

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It hadn't just happened over night.

Several years ago when she brought John home for the first time, the atmosphere literally changed overnight. Her eldest son Alan, whom she was very close to became very distant. Simon and Maria were too young to really understand what was happening and anyway they had just discovered Casey's Amusement Arcade down on the seafront. They weren't interested in their older brother's dilemmas.

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Sixteen is an embarrassing age.

Alan didn't want to be seen with his mother in public or have to make excuses to his friends so that he was home in time for tea. He was desperate to create his own identity. Growing up in a single parent relationship, he was fully aware he was different from the others. Within the tight-knit community of the Cregan Estate he was mindful that his friend's parents didn't approve of his mother's situation.

Mistrust was a popular word for a certain generation.

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His words hurt.

She replied in desperation.

Doors crashed into buckled frames.

Upstairs a razor slowly sliced words across soft flesh.  
Alan felt he was losing her. Another man had entered his home.  
He couldn't look her in the eye.  
Downstairs emotions ran high.

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The final nail in the coffin came one late winter's evening.  
Drink had been taken.  
Outside snowdrifts formed against the low garden walls. The cries of unspeakable excitement echoed off the red brick terraces as Simon and Maria immersed themselves in this wonder from heaven.  
His car was outside.  
Alan carefully guided his door key along its blue body. He showed no emotion.  
Stopping briefly to play with his sister and brother, for a moment he was the brown-haired boy with the red trainers again. The boy who used to stand by the station gate waiting for the evening train to return. His father's favourite.  
Margaret from across the street briefly engaged him in a nothing conversation and after a few minutes Alan made his excuses and made his way into the yard.  
The sound of their laughter greeted him as soon as opened the back door.  
Rage suddenly flowed effortlessly within his veins.  
They were too occupied to notice Alan standing in the doorway.  
Desperately trying to untangle herself from her lover, she knew this wasn't going to have a happy ending.

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It was two weeks before they spoke a word. Alan knew she continued to meet him. He waited until his brother and sister had gone to bed before telling her he was leaving. Strong words were exchanged.  
Tears slowly flowed over reddened skin. The Lord's name was taken in vain on several occasions.

Alan refused to look her in the eye as harsh words flew across the room. Gathering the few belonging's he owned, he hurriedly packed them into the green holdall he had stolen from the school gym the previous day.  
She begged him to stay.

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Alone.  
The house is silent now and she feels like a stranger here.  
Her only visitor the postman, who occasionally stops to chat about the weather or other meaningless subjects.  
In the background the kettle whistles a familiar tune.  
She wonders if they will never return.  
She never thought this day would ever come.