

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

A Story Best Left Untold

by Stuart Finegan

I started early. Took the dog back up over Sheehan's deserted bogland. On the horizon dawn slowly emerged. Underfoot soft dry ground released brown dust, kicked up as we strode purposefully in no real direction. Jackson darted widely up ahead, chasing shadows and scents of invisible beings.

Patrick Finegan always had a dog in tow. In the few pictures that he features in, the Gon-bean, as he liked to call him, was always present. This morning as I walk to his final resting place, I can hear him calling the Gon-bean in the prevailing wind. This morning I felt it was right to wear his working coat. Its weight alone suppressed my emotions.

*

Grandad I'd like to find them one day, would that be ok?

Wait until I'm gone Son.

Is that because...?

Cian

I'm interested to know why

It's a pity the view is spoiled this morning son, drink your tea, I made it specially for you.

If that's what you want Grandad

*

Following the drainage ditch beyond the old railway carriages, I walked down onto the recently cut embankment and suddenly found ourselves amongst the statue like figurers of drying dark brown turf. Stacked two on two to catch the wind, their sharp crusty edges jagged at your bare skin as you walked past. He was at home here. It was fitting that it was from here he never returned that Thursday afternoon. As children we watched as he sculptured this land of mystery. I know this was what he would have wanted.

*

Can we return across the top field grandad?

Only if you don't run the river Cian

If the cows are there we can divert through the woods

Son I'm not explaining to your Grandmother again why your feet are wet

Look Grandad, the sun's emerging from behind the clouds,

Cian, son...remember when we get home, it goes back in the box

*

It was the longest afternoon I'd ever experienced. We ate in silence. At every opportunity Robert turned whatever conversation I started down a dark alleyway. Their refusal to return to a time I was desperate to discover was infuriating. As they cleared the table I excused myself and visited the bathroom. In the hallway a small picture caught my eye. Returning to the dining room, I made my excuses, thanked them for lunch and left. I sensed they were as pleased as me when I said my goodbyes.

*

The picture told some poignant words. Weeks later and after numerous phone calls I took the bus across town. As it slowed to stop, I emerged into blinding mid-afternoon sunlight. The records building was magnificent. A grey stone structure, hidden behind a series of oak trees. Inside a musty smell and shards of light stream in from the windows on high. She was waiting for me. Looking back now I'm sorry I went.

*

Cian

Yes Grandad

Be carefully what you wish for

What do you mean?

Some stories are best left untold son

But Grandad

Cian, they have remained hidden for a reason

*

A man and his dog alone as dawn breaks. Weeks previously we had visited the same location. His ashes taken away with the wind. Today I'd come to tell him of my findings.

Sitting down on a stack of upturned pallets, I removed his hip flask from his coat pocket. In the distance Jackson barked frantically as he pursued the scent of his latest chase.

Raising a glass in the air, I asked for his forgiveness.

Grandad, I found what I was looking for.

I'm sorry I doubted you back in the day.

I stole a picture from Roberts, that's what led me to Catherine and the house on the East Wall.

I hope you're not disappointed with me?

*

10:46am Saturday June 3th

Look at the state of you two, Pat the boy's soaked wet through

We had a great time Grandma

I,ll give you a great time, get up the stairs now and get them wet rags off

Cian,

Yes Grandad

Don't forget what I told you

I won't Grandad, it's our secret.

A story best left untold Cian