

Bourne
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workshops

The Hidden Truth

by Stuart Carruthers

I can't quite remember what day it was. I'd found myself in The Sheds sitting alone in the snug. More than likely I popped in after work. It was bitterly cold outside. The sweet smell of smouldering turf as soon as you walked in brought a warmth to my soul. I remember once he said it reminded him of unconditional love. At the time I didn't know what that meant, but I do now. Brendon Kelly was there; he always recalls stories about Patrick Finegan. I didn't have the heart to tell him, it wasn't a good day.

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Cian you're trying to tell me something. I can tell by the expression on your face.

Grandad can you keep a secret?

Your mother used to tell me hers.

But you won't tell anyone...promise? Cross your heart. Michael Donovan says if you do and then tell someone the devil will come for you.

Well son between the Devil and Michael Donovan they know best. So what is it you want to tell me?

I wasn't supposed to find it, I mean I was only up there looking for the mouse that I hear at night running across the boards. This is what I found...look Grandad.

I don't need to Cian, I know what it is and who's in it.

Will she be annoyed?

Put it back where you found it son and I won't say a word?

Are you annoyed with me Grandad?

Pick up your feet Cian and your bottom lip, I can see the ridge of Toir Hill up ahead.

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It was last orders by the time I left. The razor-sharp wind blowing in off the sea soon sobered me up. Twenty-one. The year of freedom I remember him saying. It's a ten minute walk to the house and as you turn onto Seaview road its impossible not to see the house that it once was. It's not changed much. Red brick, two-up, two-down. The tiny front gardens a mixture of love and hate. Fond memories coming here after school for tea or early morning walks over the hills with Grandad. When the postman arrived this morning I thought of him. After months of waiting the letter from Mrs Fogarty arrived. It was short and to the point. The photograph inside quickly changed the mood. I hadn't seen it since I'd returned it to the box in the attic. I disappointed him that day. I could tell by his reaction.

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Sadly enough, I am. And it sounds in my ears like an apology. I hope it's not?

It is Grandad, I let you down.

You let yourself down son.

I'm sorry.

Mind the gate latch Cian, I cut my finger on it last week. That's all I need is you returning home with blood and bruises.

Race you to the top Grandad before the rain clouds roll in.

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Sunday Morning. The bells of St Luke's welcomed the few remaining believers within the community inside. I was tempted as I walked past but guilt prevented me. I hadn't visited their house in a number of years. Not since his funeral. Turning into Oak Drive I stopped by the bridge over the river. You have a clear view of Toir Hill. He never raced me to the top that day. As the drizzle fell and the clouds rolled in, I ran as fast as I could to the summit. When I reached the top I watched as he carried his large broken frame up the hill. I could see the pain on his face. I wished I hadn't shown him the photograph.

I was reluctant to knock on their door.

No 67 was an old Victorian house with a large garden. At first the conversation was polite but awkward. While they busied themselves in the kitchen, I sat quietly in the sitting room. It was a cold unloving house, despite the roaring fire and numerous pictures on the walls and coffee table. Robert placed a cup of tea in front of me and fell back into his favourite chair. His wife remained in the kitchen. We sat in silence for a few minutes before I carefully removed the picture from my inside jacket pocket and placed it on the table in front of him. He stared straight at me. I sensed his awkwardness. Before I had a chance to ask him about the picture he rose to his feet and announced, "I'm going to set out lunch, you stay there."

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