

**Bourne**  
**toWrite...**  
creative writing  
workshops

## The Lesson

by Stuart Finegan

As long as you've learned your lesson, that's the most important thing.

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Sharon could never quite pinpoint a time when her relationship with her mother started to go wrong. Growing up they were very close. It wasn't easy. A single mother. Three part-time jobs. The unwanted comments from the school bullies that more often than not resulted in a fight and detention. After school it was normal to have dinner in her neighbour's house, while Grainne finished up job number three and rushed to get the bus home.

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She had sinned in their eyes. Unmarried and with child. Yet despite that social ridicule Grainne Hogan was determined to give her daughter a better life than she'd had. As a teenager she too had dreams of leaving Birr and finding a better life across the water. One mistake and everything changed. Yet despite the hardship she never complained.

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One evening while waiting for the bus, Grainne picked up the Evening Post and slowly flicked through its crumpled pages. It had been a long day. The daily news or the advertisements for new bargain priced sofas didn't interest her. Opening the job section she scanned the right hand columns as usual. Plenty of jobs advertising for cleaners, but she was desperate for something better. As the bus arrived she elbowed her way to the front of the line. The heating on the top deck was always on and that's where she was headed.

Wiping the condensation from the window she gazed across the city as nightfall put her hometown to sleep. Her stop was the second to last. So she could afford to close her eyes, but she was mindful not to drift off into a deep sleep. After twenty minutes she was aware of two women behind her talking loudly. It was only when they started talking about an upcoming job interview that Grainne opened her eyes and began to take an interest. Removing a pencil from her bag, she carefully wrote down the details as her fellow passengers talked freely. When the bus pulled up outside the high street shops, despite it not being her stop, Grainne got off.

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Why don't you call her?

And what would I say? It's been over ten years since we last spoke.

But this is important Sharon, you've got to tell her.

What time is our train due?

If she finds out from one of the neighbours, it will break her heart.

Platform 4.

Are you listening to me Sharon?

Hurry up we don't want to be late again, I hear you Margaret, but I'm not listening.

You've never said what it was she'd done or said, I mean was it really that bad?

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The single storey terraced houses on New Forest Road sit neatly behind the train station. Grainne Hogan lives at No 6. Despite being one of the street's longest serving occupants, her elderly neighbours barely know her. Always polite, she acknowledges them on the odd occasion they meet. She's careful not to engage them too much, gossip can lead to trouble as she's only too aware. Her ex-partner left a number of years previously. The ending wasn't good and Sharon hadn't returned or spoken to her mother since.

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As the bus slowly pulled out into the busy rush hour traffic, Grainne opened the phone box door. Frantically searching her bags for spare coins, she removed two fifty pence pieces. While her skinny middle finger turned the rotary dial, her excitement began to grow. As soon as the coin dropped, she started talking and didn't stop until the beeps signalled more money. Walking home that night she couldn't wait to tell Sharon of her new job. No more having to work three different jobs. This was a proper job with evenings and weekends off, so they could spend more time together.

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What time are we due to arrive, this trains always late.

Sharon, please call her.

I fancy a takeaway when we arrive, Bob won't have cooked anything.

Why won't you tell me?

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?

Keep your voice down Sharon, sorry I didn't mean to annoy you. Look forget it, I'm sorry I asked. I've got money here, I'll go get some teas from the buffet car, sorry Sharon.