

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

## In the Park

by Sho Botham

The golden light of an early summer morning put a spring in Rosie's step. She loved walking to work on days like today. Usually she said hello to the park gardener around about that point but there was no sign of him. She glanced to her right and left but it was quiet and there didn't appear to be anyone else around.

Rosie and her two work colleagues sat on the grass eating their sandwich lunch and caught up with what each other had been doing since their last work lunch in the park. The three of them worked part-time and Wednesdays was the only day they were all at work on the same day.

Abbi showed them new photos on her phone of her twin boys. They'd just had their third birthday. Amy-Rose, looking sun-kissed and happy, shared stories of her long weekend in Paris with her newish boyfriend. Rosie and Abbi were sure he was in a romantic mood if he was taking her to Paris but her wedding finger was still naked.

The friends noticed a tall, skinny man lurking uncomfortably close to them. It was as if he was trying to eavesdrop on their conversation. They continued talking but they no longer felt comfortable and the natural flow of chatter had gone.

Abbi was the first of the women to leave work to go and pick up her twins. She'd only been gone about 15 minutes when Amy-Rose had a call from her. She sounded mildly hysterical as she blurted down the phone about the same tall skinny man lurking beside her car when she left work.

Rosie and Amy-Rose sat huddled together in the office, work forgotten, allowing their imaginations to run riot.

In the park, the following day, the three friends decided that they were being overly sensitive. It was just one tall skinny man who didn't actually look suspicious. Although they couldn't agree on what might make him look suspicious. All he had done was hover close to them the day before and then appear again beside Abbi's car later that afternoon. Abbi even managed to laugh about how she reacted yesterday seeing tall skinny man beside her car. Her friends accused her playfully of being easily frightened. She agreed with them wholeheartedly, her head nodding so vigorously they worried that she might do herself some damage. She gradually stopped nodding and became serious for a moment as she looked into the faces of her two friends and spoke slowly and deliberately.

"My good luck in life was to be a really frightened person." Continuing to gaze at her two friends, she burst into peals of laughter. "If you could see your faces."

The three were back to their usual chatter and laughter. They didn't notice tall skinny man leaning against a nearby tree taking photographs. He was very systematic in taking individual images of each of them and then group photographs of the three of them together. Positioned in such a way as to be half hidden from the women, he took several photographs of their shoes or maybe their feet, then he retired behind his tree and swiped through the images quickly. He seemed reasonably happy with them. Instead of leaving he tapped the voice memo app on his phone. After clicking the red button at the bottom of his screen, he held his hand out in the direction of the three friends who were oblivious to tall skinny man's interest in them from behind a tree. It was only when he appeared from his hidden spot behind the tree striding quickly towards the friends that they noticed him and froze.