

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

## Saquin Point

by Juliet Robinson

We came late to Saquin Point. Not a bad thing, for if we had been early or indeed on time, I wouldn't be here to reflect upon what we found. The fire must have died before we passed over the range that separated the town from the Shifting Plains. So, we saw no tell-tale plume of smoke. It was midday, so we didn't note an absence of lights. From our vantage point, the town was just a smudge on the horizon.

We were passing an outer lying farm, it was mechanised so it wasn't unusual not to see a soul, but it was odd that the large machines that tended the crops stood idle. Solomon who was at taking point radioed the convoy.

'Eyes right guys,' there was a tightness to his usually relaxed drawl.

I glanced at the field and spotted what he was referring to, in large black letters someone had scribed on the side of a disabled piece of machinery.

### *The Gods Love Chaos*

We debated who the artist might have been as we continued down the road. I suspected it wasn't the handy work of bored teenagers, but as things were it didn't really give me cause for concern. Solomon and Nessa, however, were both spooked by the graffiti.

A mob of barking dogs greeted us at the edge of town. We stopped, puzzled by the pack and they distracted us, preventing us from properly taking in our surroundings. I didn't note the lack of vehicles, I didn't consider the absence of people or the silence. It was Maya who woke us up to the oddity of the situation, she tossed a half-eaten apple at the closest dog and pulled out the pistol she wore on her hip.

I thought she was going to shoot the dog and snapped at her to leave the thing alone. She threw me a withering look.

‘Catch up Bryan.’

I finally took in the ghost town, the silence, and the faint smell of smoke. We left Nessa and Burke to watch the convoy and proceeded on foot, slinking from building to building, guns in our hands. We can handle ourselves; you don’t travel the highways with valuable cargo if you can’t, but still sweat prickled my spine. I kept thinking back to the message in the field.

As we approached the town centre, signs of violence started to appear. Bullet holes splashed along a wall, burnt buildings, looted stores, an overturned electric wagon and dried blood on the pavement.

The remains of a huge bonfire stained the town square, where once a baobab tree brought all the way from earth had grown. More words had been painted here, encircling the ashes.

*The road I would choose, if only I could, is the other*

We searched what was left of the pyre. I did so with my heart in my mouth, expecting to find charred remains, but nobody had been burnt in the flames. Thoroughly unnerved we stood in a clump as I checked in with the convoy, but only static answered my hail. Ashen faced, Maya started to talk, but she was cut off by a blaring horn. It came from the other side of town, and we all knew that horn, it was Solomon’s rig’s airhorn.

We moved quickly, rushing through the streets, the horn screaming constantly. At the edge of town, we found more graffiti, this time on the side of the school.

*I leave you, to go the road we all must go*

The horn reduced to a faded ringing in my ears, as I studied the words, a tight frown upon my face. A loud retching sound drew me back. Maya emptying her guts and beyond her Solomon was running, pounding down the middle of the road. In the distance, I could see his rig, it sat blocking the highway. I was about to follow when my brain caught up and I properly took in my surrounds. The poles which I had dismissed as being related to some construction project, the things that hung upon them, not things, people. The people of Saquin Point, they lined the road that led out of town, their throats slit, their eyes gouged out, their hands and feet hacked off.

I caught up with Solomon moments after he shut the screaming horn off. He tumbled from the vehicle cab, his face a mask. ‘No Nessa, no Burke,’ he choked.

In blood on the side of his truck someone had carefully written,

*Which road will you choose?*