



Welcome to our second edition of 'Sharing Stories'.

This week we have more stories from our incredibly talented Senior Phase students. We would very much like to share their hard work with you so that they can find a new audience for their work. This week's stories explore kidnapping, the suffragettes and how to get away with murder.

"That's the thing about books. They let you travel without moving your feet." Jhumpa Lahiri

Thank you and enjoy.

Story 1- Devon

Every day is the same. Icy. Damp. Miserable. As if stuck in time. Everything is as quiet as a stillborn heart. Big clouds always pass overhead, painfully dark. The sun stays hidden -far from view- as if hiding from danger down below. The thunder chuckles menacingly; a deep rumble heard for miles. The wind whispers through the trees.

No one likes to leave their house and venture out anymore. The streets are always empty apart from the few stray people, like lost sheep. No one talks to each other; everyone swiftly walks past, keeping

themselves to themselves. Everyone swallowed by fear.

Like everyone else, we rarely leave the house. However, every day Charlotte asks to go out, for me to take her to the park across from our house. I always say no. I tell her to play in the garden on her small pink bike and she does, cycling in circles repetitively around the garden. Until today. I decide to take her to the park, to get some fresh air, if you could even call it that. The foggy air is as thick as Arctic ice. The park isn't busy, not like it used to be; it used to be the busiest place in the area, constantly buzzing with people.

I sit on the bench and watch Charlotte while she plays. She giggles and has fun as all children should. Her long brunette hair tied in two plaits,

swishing from side to side as she runs. In her own little world, so innocent and oblivious to the one we live in. I call her over and we start to head home, back to our safe place. As we walk, I spot a ragged poster on a lamppost flapping in the wind. My eyes are drawn to the big bold word 'MISSING'. They are everywhere, on every lamppost on every corner of every street. Each one with a different face on it. Stories. Lives. Frozen in time.

As we walk, I hold Charlotte's hand as she skips along beside me. Charlotte gives out an excited squeal as we get closer, her smile so wide. I wish she could be this happy forever. The streets are quiet, nothing different from any other day. The air filled with a sinister silence like a ghostly presence. Further down the street two tall men appear suddenly out of a narrow alley way that's as black

as night. All I can make out is their silhouettes. As they get closer, I see they are dressed in black from head to toe. The footsteps behind us, stomping closer and closer. I come to an abrupt stop and feel a shiver run down my spine. My head darts around. There is another man behind us. My heart racing. I grip Charlotte, hold her close and look for the quickest escape. But it is too late. We are trapped.

I try to shout for help but I can't speak. Frozen. I begin to tremble. All I can think about is protecting my baby; I will never let her go. The men start shouting which makes me hold her tighter. She begins to whimper as if she were a petrified little dog. I scream for help. Silence. I scream and scream again but still no one appears. What am I supposed to do? I start to panic. My heart

thumping in my chest. Icy fingers grip my arm, squeezing, tighter and tighter. I try to wriggle free but I am trapped. Another man starts to drag Charlotte away from me, her whimpering turns into wails. I try to kick him as I holds onto her. I scream at them to stop. Begging. This isn't supposed to happen. Why me? Why me? I roar and shriek, full of rage and anguish, louder and louder until my throat begins to burn and my voice screeches.

A tall dark man is now holding her and he begins to walk away. I struggle after them. I am battered and bruised as I fight to protect her. But that isn't the pain I feel. Her cries for help are heart wrenching. As I stumble after them, I am snatched backwards. I hit the ground with a thump. Tears pouring down my face. My eyesight becomes blurry as they vanish into the distance. I can no

longer move. I imagine her struggling, small and helpless and can still hear her crying out for me. Her screams are chilling, 'Mummmmyy!' I cry back in pain, 'I love you' and then she's gone. *Never would I ever have imagined that I would see the face of my little girl on one of the lampposts. Why did I ever leave the house? Everywhere I go I am reminded of her. The park. Her small pink bike rusting where she left it, falling against the fence in the back garden. The wheels turning slowly in the wind.*

Story 2- Isla

I'm sitting there, strapped down to see the seat. My palms are clammy; I have butterflies in my stomach. There is a lump in my throat and I can

feel it getting bigger and bigger. I can feel a woman with her hands on my body, holding me down, it hurts so much that my wrists are throbbing. I can feel her warm breath on my face. There are screams in the distance but it takes me a while to realise that those loud, terrifying, screams are mine.

As a child, I grew up in a male dominated society. It was men before women, forever and always. I never really thought about it; it was just the way I was brought up. However, when I was younger, every birthday I would make a wish. That wish was the same every year. I wanted to be a man. Thinking about it now seems silly, but it's true, I had always wondered what it would be like to have all that power, be able to get a job that has meaning, to have so many amazing privileges in

life. I often felt aggrieved at the fact I was a girl, it just didn't seem fair that I was treated so different to men, even boys. I was always thrown under the bus, treated as if I wasn't worthy of anything.

I remember being at school when I was younger, wanting the best education that I could possibly get, that was my dream. I wanted to make a difference, help people, and travel the world. However, school wasn't particularly my happy place. Although the girls and boys were kept separate during class time, those rules did not apply during break or lunch. My friends and I would usually hang out at the picnic benches and they weren't the most comfortable. They were a burgundy shade, with several bits of wood pointing out on the chairs, which did not work out

well with our uniform. The wood pricked at our legs which often left red, itchy rashes. Our uniform was horrible, we had navy blue, woolly jumpers that made us claw at our skin until it was red raw. Our skirts were off white and knee length, which my friends and I, nor the boys, enjoyed.

A lot of the time me and my friends felt sexualised at school, but if we ever made a complaint to a teacher, a parent, anyone, it would be ignored because they were boys and we were girls. It was accepted. That angered me more than anything.

I hear running footsteps, many people running all at once. Suddenly I hear and loud bang, there are

women shouting “Hold her down! Hold her down!”

I can't move anymore, I have no energy, I can no longer scream as I have lost my voice. I have given up. I can feel my warm tears rolling down my cheeks, and the sweat trickling down my forehead, but I am silent. Now, there is nothing I can do to stop this now. It is too late.

After my childhood, going through school, I went to university. I was compared to other women as it was extremely hard to get into university as a woman, especially if you were from a working class background. I decided that I wanted to be a teacher; it was a small step towards stopping boys from behaving as disgustingly as they did when I attended school. I was horrified and infuriated by

the thoughts that boys got away with the way they behaved, harassing girls constantly and there being no repercussions for it.

I thoroughly enjoyed my job as a teacher, helping young children learn was fulfilling and helped me feel good about myself. However, there was always a small part of me missing. I had such strong political views, but yet could not express them as I was a woman, how can that be justified? Just because my body is capable of carrying a child that means my opinion does not count and therefore I shouldn't have a say in who runs my country? It was a disgrace. I could no longer handle the inequality within society. I needed to make a change. I needed to take action. Deeds not words. I needed to join the Suffragettes.

It was November 1906 and I went to the local suffragette meeting, they used to be held in secret, in the dark of night, the rain was pouring, hitting against the concrete, you could hear the rain running down the street. The meeting was in a tunnel just round the corner from the main road, as you walked in you could hear your echoing footsteps bounce off the side of the walls as you could hear the rain go further and further into the distance.

There were around 15 of us there, the lady in charge of the meeting was called Elizabeth, and she welcomed me with open arms. We planned our next attack. We were absolutely determined to fight for what we believe in, what we deserve. Deeds not words.

I can feel the cold liquid running up my nose, it makes me gag. It then flows down the back of my throat and I can feel my whole body quivering. I start to feel lightheaded and everything starts to go quiet. How can nurses do this? To a woman, who was fighting for them? Who was standing up for their rights? The ordeal seems never ending, it lasts for so long. When it finally ends, they remove my blindfold, undo the rope that was holding me down, and leave. I am sitting there shaking like a leaf, terrified and alone. Now I look forward to finally going home.

I had been put in prison a number of times; the conditions were horrible, all cold and damp. You were treated as an object, like you were worth nothing. What hurt even more was that it wasn't just the men that hated me and disrespected me,

it was women too. The only thing that kept me going was knowing that I was in there for a reason; I was in there because I was making a difference. This was a fight for women, sometimes the other women just didn't know it yet.

I was getting older, I could feel myself tiring, and my limbs were weak. I was struggling to do things that seemed so simple, I was so frail. However, my beliefs were still there-in my heart; in my mind. I would do my best to fulfil my dreams and the dreams of many others. I had one more chance to make a difference. I needed to carry out a gesture, to show the world how much it meant to me, and how our government was treating us women like we didn't even exist.

It was the 8th of June 1913, the derby was taking place. I walked to the front row with my dress flowing in the wind, my hat upon my head. I had the tightest grasp onto the sash I was holding. The crowd was cheering; everyone was filled with excitement to see the King's horse. All I could think about is deeds not words. I could feel the butterflies inside my tummy, filled with nerves. I knew that my next stunt will reach the homes of thousands; I knew it would have a massive impact on women and their stance in politics.

Suddenly, the crowd roared, I could see the horses galloping in the distance, getting closer and closer. I got ready. The horses were coming; I crawled under the white, wooden fence and ran towards the King's horse with the sash outstretched.

Everything went black. I made it.

Story 3- Eilidh

Driving in Silence

This was not what I was meant to do. It was never my plan. Tears hazed my sight as I looked down at my trembling, blood splattered hands. The bathroom light flickered and rain battered against the window. Outside there was only darkness. Inside there was only darkness. Slowly, I moved my head down and it came into my eyesight. I immediately turned and threw myself towards the toilet. The taste of sick stung the back of my throat. Like a scared animal, my body turned into a ball. The darkness left my mind and suddenly all my thoughts came rushing

like a tsunami. What had I done? What should I do now? Would I get caught? No.

I would make sure I was never caught.

Never.

I stared into the dark night as the hot water provided some form of comfort over my numb hands. These were the hands of sin. The water washed the evil away. The old tap creaked as I turned it off and I tiptoed to the door with my car keys in hand.

I drove in silence. I just drove. I pulled into a service station where the lights were dim and music played faintly from inside the shop. There were no cars around, just a few lorries, whose drivers were long asleep in their cabs by this time of night.

Inside the shop, the only sound was that of the almost silent music. It was eerie, but on this night, everything was. Bin bags. Rope. A bottle of bleach. Pliers. Matches. Shears. I kept my hood up and I avoided all eye contact with the cashier as he took what felt like the entire night to total my items. I was lucky, the night was dark and the shop's lights were awfully dim. My body shuddered with every faint scratch and squeak that I heard. £23.79. That was the cost of what I had done.

That was the cost of murder.

Bag in hand, I returned to my car, then yet again I drove in silence. I drove back to the scene of my nightmare. As I unlocked the door, the same quivering fear set in again. I could not process what I had done. One at a time, I began to climb

the stairs up towards the room of terror. I flicked on the switch and looked at my project. My breathing became slow and heavy as I placed the bag down, ready to begin. I pulled out the pliers and took my mind to another world as I began to pull out the teeth, one by one. I knew enough to know that no dental records, meant less chance of identification. Then I set a match to the hair to burn it away, watching the flames as they spread down the body, and sizzled and spluttered. As the fire began to gutter, I turned on the shower. The water poured over it, just as her blood had poured over me earlier.

For such dreadfulness, there was a strange tranquillity in the room. A tranquillity I could not understand at this time. Although I had never planned this, I was adjusting to the idea of

my actions being the right thing to do. The right way to end this.

No, surely not. How could I think this way?

On the other hand...

There was no DNA, no hair or teeth, or fingerprints as they had been burned away. I pulled out three bin bags. One for the body. One for the teeth. One for the rubbish. I dragged them downstairs and placed them carefully into my car. For the third time that night I began to drive in silence. Her screams echoed in my mind, but this time they did not frighten me.

I turned off my headlights and sat in the dark silence for a few moments. Bags in arms, I climbed the hill. When I reached the top the sun had appeared over the horizon. It was beautiful. I was nearly out of time. First, the body. I

placed it into a small hole covered in rocks and moss, then set a match to it. I watched as my problem burned in front of me. It was nearly over. My mind was quiet and calm in the early morning sunrise as I disposed of the different parts, all far apart enough to not be found together and set alight. My quilt was burned to ash.

The sun had almost fully risen by the time I was back on the silent, empty roads. I pulled up at my house and breathed a sigh of relief after holding my breath all night. Back inside I turned on the kitchen tap, filled it with washing up liquid and scrubbed at my knife. The last time I stared out the window, there had only been darkness and panic, now there was light and it was harmonious. I was at ease.

After scrubbing the bathroom with bleach, I broke the tranquil silence by turning on the TV. The police made their usual statement saying they were looking everywhere for her, and wouldn't stop until she was found. Well, they'd be looking for a long time. I would always be at least one step ahead of them.

Once again evening began and night approached, so I took a walk to replace the silence in my house with the silence of the forest. Thick rain clouds set in turning the world black. A flash of blue lights broke through the darkness. Sirens cut the eerie silence. The cars quickly approached on the road behind me, I stepped further into the forest and the darkness that came with it. My black hood kept me hidden in the black. They whizzed past me until the world

became dark again, and with it so did my mind.
The only thing that crossed it -who was next?

*Thank you very much to the staff and students who
have made this possible.*