

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Betrayal

by Stuart Carruthers

I remember the day everything changed forever. The evening routine started as usual with the sun slowly disappearing behind the black clouds. Kettles whistled and my father and brother screamed as they submerged their soot-covered bodies into the steaming tin baths. Mother looked on, blissfully unaware of the words my father was afraid to tell her.

The gossip of today's stories lightened the mood despite hearing them numerous times over and relief was etched on their faces that they had returned safely. For her father and his father had died in the many disasters that were so common in their day.

And then the kitchen fell silent but for the sounds of splashing water. Children were ushered upstairs to listen from behind unclosed doors. Father naked as the day he was born reassured her it would be ok. His shoulders as broad as the bridge he crossed in search of the black gold. Too proud to cry mother hurriedly resumed her routine, for the last time.

Rationed plates screamed as knives scarred their surfaces. But one plate remained untouched. Her mind awash with worry and anger at the woman she had once admired. A leader who broke ground for her gender had in one afternoon shattered her life and the prospects for a generation. She'd tried her hand at most things, but drew the line at honesty.

After tea as father whispered softly so we couldn't hear, tears emerged. Her heart broken. Not since that tragic July afternoon had she felt this low. My brother long since descended the silent streets and into the snug of Waxy Reilly's to drown his sorrows, a future to plan.

Another town shut down, its occupants cast adrift, survival of the fittest the old man sang as the drink took hold.

False hope sold as the future by someone my mother admired. Interested only in the few at the expense of the many. A lesson learned from a mistake she swore never repeated.