

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Eduardo Trueno

by Richard Wilding

Eva Malo served us each a steak so large it overhung the edges of our tin platters, quite delicious and utterly unlike the bow wow mutton I'd eaten on many a previous evening. He insisted we drink his homemade wine, redolent of vinegar and tasting considerably worse. At the end of the meal he said that he and I should repair to the veranda, alone, to smoke a cigar while Yolanda cleared away. Yolanda, being Yolanda, would have none of it, and joined us.

The warm night sky, alive with the sounds of insects and frogs and who knows what else, was black and full of stars, as though a flurry of snowflakes were somehow frozen up there above our heads. The candlelight flickering on Eva's face gave me a wholly different picture of this most unusual, oddly endearing man. His eyes, which in daylight had a humorous twinkle in them, were now sunk into shadows, like two foxes peering out from their den, uncertain about the wisdom of leaving it. He turned his head away and muttered something.

"I beg your pardon?" I said.

"I say, I miss him. Still, I miss him."

"Who?" I wanted to ask, but it is not in my nature to pry into the hearts of others.

Eva breathed in deeply, like he wanted to suck into his lungs all the night air and the stars and all their secrets with it. Then he let out a sigh, equally long. A frog chirruped high up on the roof.

And then into the darkness with that low far-away thunder voice of his, Eva threaded together patches of the story of he and his friend Eduardo Trueno who had grown up side by side in two white stone walled houses on a cobbled street on the shores of the Rio de la Plata in Colonia del Sacramento, where boats would dock each morning and fishermen as gnarled as rope would unload the day's catch and their wives would sell it in the market: fish of every

colour, shape and size. The two boys, quicksilver themselves, would steal a fish whenever they could and return it, triumphant, to their families.

Long afternoons would pass with their feet dangling in the brown water, looking out across the river. The boys would dream one day of reaching distant Buenos Aires on the far side of that ever-flowing ribbon; Buenos Aires, an unimaginably wealth town a river's width and a world away from Colonia.

It was Eduardo Trueno who convinced Eva to go, arguing with one hand on Eva's shoulder and the other clenched into a tight, tiny, insistent fist that he would sooner swap the uncertainty of a future in Argentina for the certain knowledge that here every day of his life would be identical to its predecessor, a dull march through a life lived with nothing to look back on in old age. And Eva, who was too young yet to realise he loved his friend, agreed.