

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Little Red Book

by Sue Hitchcock

The garden was deserted except for a red book, which lay sunning itself on the gravel path.

Who is it who has left this little book abandoned on the path?

Whose footprints lead away up the mountainside?

Who struggled between the bamboo stalks?

Who walked along the bank of the stream, which feeds the paddy fields, where our villagers plant rice for our nourishment?

Who found the spring, the source of the stream and planted a garden for flowers not food?

Who couldn't keep in the pocket next to his heart the words of our honoured Chairman Mao?

It is my grandfather! I will denounce him!

I am the grandfather, who loves this place.

I am the grandfather – you know my face!

Why do you only hear Mao's words?

Listen! Do you not hear singing birds?

Your belly needs feeding, but what joy is food,

If, without smell, it doesn't taste good?

I laboured for flowers and what a reward

they gave to me here. The ghosts are abroad!

Our ancestors are watching. They're very nearby.

Please don't denounce me! It's here I must die