

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Patience

by Steve Brown

I.

Not happy, not unhappy – but a stiffened
black endurance: a crow, under hammering
rainfall, his tattered mac
hugged round; the characteristic slouch
of head, but the single curve of body,
head to tail-tip, holds;
a cowed monk, hunkered down,
and gripping on the faith it cannot voice
except in its own harsh name
of Saxon ‘craue’. It has been here for ever,
with this bared tree, the slate-coloured, flattened hills,
the slate-washed skies – until,
with one lazy flip of wings, it sags
upward, then cuts a curl against
the gravid cloud. All this trashed domain
is his, his black eye presiding
and dispensing his dark justice: lord
of others’ endings – and, look! – his companion
tumbles from across the valley,
and it’s ‘two for mirth’ after all!
They clasp the valley round them,
their hard-beaded eyes, blunt-headed nails
keeping the winter sky in place, known
for what it is: a poor world but their own.

II.

Not happy, not unhappy: the seed knows
waiting; gripped tightly round its heart, the dreams
of starting. Deep within, watched dials
of warmth and moisture, light – all poised
to jump. Soil is alive with opportunities,
feeling for their own trigger – thousands
wishing to be. Patient, eager blueprints
for the root and shoot and curling leaf
that could be, a buried army,
prone in armour, husks to hold
the potential green within – set slow-ticking
for that moment – this year, a hundred years on –
a button pressed – and springing out and upward,
bursting into the impossible and free.