

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Late Pentecost

by Steve Brown

Lately we'd been hanging on for that one sole moment when everything we had held as true about ourselves would vanish in a flap and clap of wings, and we could be beheld, revealed, in that fresh vernix smeared across both body and soul.

But, just then, we had been arguing about the bill in that small upstairs room – who had had the turbot, the grapes crushed in ice from Lebanon, the breasts of doves sequinned with fish roe, from out amongst all the more usual corned-beef hash – when a xanthic light enveloped all the table. All eyes were reeling with a kind of wild surmise: was this really the beginning of that promised end? Were we about to cast off these loathed bodies we had worn so comfortably our whole lives – that collection of bad habits making us the cantankerous old men we were, which we all hugged proudly, privately, to ourselves, by now complacent in our arguments with the world.

And then, those flames, hanging above heads, like floating lightbulbs in those cartoons, the obvious metaphor for bright ideas. Who had ordered, who had bargained for *this*? Who was prepared for this amount of letting go – one in which our wives would no longer recognise the stiff-jointed, shabby-cardiganed complainings of our every days?

I can't remember
who first began to talk, but soon every tongue was waving
furiously. The sound, I'm sure, was meaningless,
but with a kind of meaning in which anyone who heard
could recognise themselves, their own secret knowledge:
their shelved desires, the buried shames, the torn photographs
of discarded memory. We were just discovering
that we could say anything and everything at once –
as if we were flailing in a chamber of forgotten echoes,
servants of some darkly lambent truth.

And, in truth,
the day had made us new. But, still,
who did not feel the gravity of our old lives,
the sweet arthritis of our moulded shapes, the encasing kiss
of that insensibility we had spent so much acquiring?
Who was really ready to pay the bill for making all things new?
We swam out into the harsh sunlight of a pained and painted
rebirthing:
our legs and vowels rejointed for our out-of-season spring.