

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

One Foot on the Ladder

by Stuart Carruthers

Thursday 14:25, the weather is overcast.

Yesterday while sitting in a café on Platform 5, a young Indian lady said I was getting old, maybe she was right. We laughed out loud.

Our conversation started when she politely asked for the sugar. Her deep blue eyes, brown hair and delicate smile reminded me of a time I can barely remember.

We hear about old container ships sent to dry docks or a scrapyard on the other side of the world to be stripped naked, embarrassed, after such great service. Unloved, unwanted in these changing times. What becomes worthless to one person is a means of survival to someone else. Today I feel like that. From the sidelines I'm unable to play anymore.

For some reason this morning I remembered father's blue duffle coat.

It's ivory-horned shaped white buttons hanging on for dear life. Stuffed into a black bag that she left outside a charity shop for a random dog to piss on. The great man's life perfectly summed up.

I guess it's a sign of the times. While passing last week, I looked in the window and a faceless mannequin was wearing it. If only she knew.

If you sit below the station clock your guaranteed a view across the concourse. During the summer months a golden haze descends from the glass roof. Someone said once it was the only time you could see God's love. I watched a young couple lovingly embrace; eyes closed. Holding on as if their lives depended on it. Around them stressed out rush hour commuters head for the underground. I was once them. I found myself telling them, don't let go.

For the knowledge you passed down, thank you.

The soft hands cradling an innocent face, thank you.

Spit polished black shoes and hand-me-down clothes, thank you.
For the endless stories, dog-eared books and papers from far off lands, thank you.
You said don't return with a nipper or a ring on your finger, thank you.

Look carefully beneath the wooden benches tight against the walls,
mice go about their business.
Sushi, Vegan bread, is their delicacy of choice. O how times have changed.
from up north, sit motionless on the hardened tiled floor.
Their stained white coffee cup, empty. For coins are old tender now.

I'm worm out.
No one notices the old man, smartly dressed as he passes between the on rushing
crowd.
At the end of Platform 2 you can just about see the sky between the towers.
Carefully folding the blue coat, it's yours now.
Another step and it's no return.
A sign of the times, when you feel the odd one out.