

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Playing the Fool

by Fran Duffield

You learnt early, watching them
spiralling down to despair:
Poor Tom's a-cold and hungry, or so he says:
pleading for pity brings cold charity,
or kicking in a dark doorway

learn to entertain, watch their mean faces
crease into witless grins,
knowing you must keep always
one pratfall ahead, keep dancing
to the edge of the stage,
swaying almost to the tipping point
but always keeping your balance

You must play the fool for life,
too frightened to be serious
in case they see the scars