

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Silence

by Paul Hunter

Silence, I discover, is something you can actually hear.
Like when I'm in the classroom and ask for a volunteer.
A wave of indifference tinged with a sneer.
Slaps me on the forehead, so loud that I can hear.

Silence in a discussion will kill it almost dead.
I change tack and choose a victim, yes that's what I said.
What I'm hearing now is resentment, loud and clear.
The silence is deafening but I try to show no fear.

15 minutes of silence and I'm beginning to lose the plot.
Surely one of them will crack, I've given it all I've got.
I have to keep control, I cannot raise my voice.
But I've tried everything else, they leave me with no choice.

Their silence fuels their confidence, growing by the minute.
Mine is slipping slowly away. I think I've reached my limit.
Smirks and grins spread around the room as they realise they've won.
Another stark reminder that teaching isn't always fun.

The bell breaks the silence and my class disappear.
I wait for the feedback that I don't want to hear.
My tutor looks up and my mind fills with doubt.
He slowly clears his throat but nothing comes out.

"For God sake say something," I nervously shout.
"I don't think you built up much of a rapport with them."
"Rapport! The little shits hate me and want me to fail!"
"You saw them goading me but I'm not going to bail."

It turns out, it was all a test and I'd performed well above the rest.
Some of my peers were close to tears or gave up on the class too soon.
Some said it was torture and should never have been allowed.
I was just glad it was over and perhaps felt a little proud.