

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Cleopatra

by Sue Hitchcock

Was I asleep? I remember nothing.

It is so dark and I cannot move. Did I eat too much? My body feels bloated, my skin stretched tight. I'm never going to eat again, especially not that buckthorn. Oh why do I remember its name. It is my home, my food, my alter ego. What is this holding me so close? It feels rough, fibrous, old and wrinkly, like parchment and so dark.

Let me out! There must be someone, something there. I can feel movement, I am being moved. I am lifted, but lowered again. Am I going anywhere, or just round in circles?

Wait, my leg slipped a little, now another one. Wriggle, there's got to be a way to get out. My eyes should open, but they are already. Try hard to see if there are any cracks. It certainly seems less dark, the skin around me stretching thinner.

Aah – that is bright, but I will acclimatise, yes already I can see the slit. Now puff myself up and open the space, jiggle all the legs at once and push towards the hole. If only these other limbs were strong, but they are so compressed. What a fight, but the constraint is gone and I am resting in the sun. My folded limbs are unfurling, fluid flowing through the veins. Am I beautiful? They spread wide, yellow and with orange centred next to my body. There are even matching dots on each lower wing. The wind is pulling me aloft, where shall I fly? If I flap, I can explore. What lovely fans of leaves, layered, sun filtering through, but I am not alone, there are more like me and paler ones too, which smell so sweet.

Alien creatures below would frighten me, but they are not moving, just staring.
They call out, "Look, it's a Cleopatra!"

