Bourne toWrite... creative writing workshops

Erebus

by Susan North

A question: do I know why I was christened Erebus, the personification of darkness? No, I do not—not today, nor did I yesterday.

I lived with my parents in Oxford. Greek gods and goddesses flowed out of everything—in the lanes, halls and walls, and the spires—and it was part of my existence.

My name followed me everywhere. One midsummer, I looked to the River Isis for solace. I looked to the silence of evening; it comforted me.

One early evening, I unexpectedly came across a man lying on the grass by the path, drinking wine. He was watching the river. I spoke to him and enquired if he was enjoying the evening.

"Yes," he said, "but I'd watch my step if I were you. Accidents are terribly punctual here."

Did he mean the paths by the river, the chiming of the bell in the nearby church or, even worse, an unknown threat? What sort of accident? Falling in the river, like Hades passing into the underworld?

Who was he? He looked ordinary enough: white shirt, brown trousers. Was he waiting for somebody? It was intriguing.

He invited me to join him, and I did. It was an adventure. He didn't know my name. I felt at ease.

After an hour or two of companionable silence, my Greek gods wandered off and disappeared out of my mind. He and I sat sipping the wine, and after a while, we went our separate ways.