

Forward/emagazine Creative Critics Competition 2020

RUNNER-UP

things i am freezing to come back to later

after The Larder by Vicki Feaver

the cold shock of the river water kissing my waist
the feeling of realising too late that the sun was branding me red
the taste of heat in the back of my throat, on my forehead, between my palms
the cans of pina colada we bought, the face you pulled after your first sip
the scent of barbeque in the air, the way it brought back a memory i couldn't touch
the outline of a square where the market once was, evacuated
the way you spread cream on your scones, the way you pronounced the 'oh'
the light creeping through my curtains at 3am: foreshadowing.
the first day the weather turned, wool strangling me lovingly
the guilt relaxing between my ribs, settling down above my diaphragm
the email i started writing to my old english literature teacher about it all
the smell of charity shops, of other people's memories
the knowledge that not everything is temporary
this poem.

Reflective commentary

What I loved about Feaver's poem was the way in which it combined attention to detail with a general sense of nostalgia and longing. In my poem, I decided to take the same concept of storing things to remember but take on the new form of a sonnet and new themes of moving away from home for the first time and the seasons changing.

In terms of imagery, I was inspired by Feaver's sensory descriptions and fine details, such as the 'petal-shaped crater where the flower withered'. I tried to mirror this in my writing with phrases like 'the way you spread cream on your scones'. As Feaver's poem gets a lot of its power from understated, conversational vocabulary, I also wrote in a more casual style, hopefully making readers feel like they are looking in on an individual reminiscing as opposed to reading a 'public' poem.

I also loved the way 'The Larder' changed after the first three stanzas, focusing in on one key image. The transition between my first and second quatrains is intended to echo the gradual transition from summer to autumn, with the volta marking a more dramatic change in tone. Personally, I found the end of Feaver's poem to be a particular highlight, with the vivid image of 'crushing/its tangy pulp on my tongue.' I wanted the ending of my poem to be similarly striking, but in a very different way, and so decided to play on my title. I also liked the idea that poems can often seem like they are never truly finished; with regard to meaning, I wanted to suggest that life goes on even after what feels like a significant change.

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