

Tuesday Is Blueberry Muffin Day

By Sofia Stevens

1st Place in the 18-25 Age Category

You are always lending me your eyes.

The sunset is apricot tonight, you say,

then correct yourself -

no, peach,

or the pink inside a conch shell.

I let you search for the right colour.

You tell me the woman opposite

has a long, ruby raincoat,

that the dog beneath her has a smaller, yellow raincoat,

and that someone has hung Christmas lights

along the high street

and they are so beautiful.

You should see them.

You say this softly,

as if beauty were a room

I have been locked out of.

So I don't tell you
that rain has seven voices.
On the bus shelter
it is loose change scattered on a table.
On leaves, a thousand small hands.
On your hood, close and hollow,
like someone knocking from inside.

I don't tell you I know when Dad is tired,
because his keys take longer to find the lock.
I know Tuesday by the bakery vent,
Tuesday is blueberry muffin day,
December by the sting of frost inside my nose,
the park by where the cobblestones come loose five yards before the grass.

I know when you are lying.
Your sentences become too tidy.
I don't tell you I know when you're happy,
because your footsteps forget to be careful.
I don't tell you I already know you're looking at something beautiful,
because you always breathe in before you describe it.

Still, you give me your world as you know it.
The moon is so low it looks caught in the trees.
There is a rainbow in the puddle ahead of us.
Look!

then the little silence
when you remember.
I have never minded.

I like the way you gather things for me:
clouds, shop windows, strangers' faces,
the ridiculous jumper in the café,
a robin balanced on a railing
like a drop of something bright.

I do not think the beauty of the world
has passed me by.
It has simply come to me differently;
in the sound of my dog dreaming,
his paws tapping on the wooden floor,
in my mother's cooking,
which I could find among a hundred kitchens
by scent alone.

There is beauty, too,
in the way you invite me into yours.
How you cannot bear to find something so beautiful,
without making room for me inside it.

There are so many ways
the beauty of the world makes itself known.
Sight is only one of them.

Then, one December evening,
you are telling me
about the Christmas lights,
when the whole street goes dark.
Your hand finds my arm.

"I can't see."
Around us, the world is still there:
the bus exhaling at the stop after a long day,
the loose paving stone beneath my shoe.

I know this street.
I take your hand.
Past the bakery.
Left at the railings.
Fourteen steps to the crossing.

Behind us,
the Christmas lights flicker back.
For our entire friendship,
you have described your world to me:
its colours, its distances and its shapes.

But when the lights went out,
you reached for my hand.

For once, you did not tell me
where the world was.

You let me show you.

And when the lights came back,
you didn't let go.

"It's all right," I say.

"I know the way."