

**'River running over'**

Natasha Carthew

Quay Words Winter/ Met Office Informatics Lab writer-in-residence,

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All week they stood and stared into the abyss. Forgetful, trying to remember something scratch at their heads until they found a scab to pick and something fell loose; the right idea the right thought the one that made the most sense said here, somewhere here is what we miss.

I see this  
from where I drift  
my good eye milky but moving  
gone over with slow filmic shutter speed  
plastic bags the new world seaweed  
I see things differently now  
oil on something  
what was it?

Each day they crept up the same way hands and paws patting the ground feeling around for the unfamiliar press of a puddle, their tongues thick with the shit and grit of question after question, they didn't get it.

What had they done when they knew what well what could they do?

They asked this often some days when spit allowed they shouted it, nothing was the answer, it was nearly over.

I told them this despite my thick lip split from the battle of hit and miss.

I am drunk but not the good kind, too many times punched they finally did what I knew they would, I'm down, zero to the ground, almost out.

All week, every week every month and year each decade I have lost time to that ticking bomb, no matter how I clear my head of fag-ends and the lids of Costa coffee cups try to remember the boats and the bustle, the rope and the rigging and the trade coming in on a spring wind, I miss the swim of things.

Sometimes I hear them talk about the seasons, words trickling into my good ear where the tar is not so thick they say how they miss the winter storms how they hated the floods but despise this neat heat more.

I agree.

Once I tried to show them  
I shrank drop down into something manageable  
something they could use, could carry  
at first I thought they loved me  
took me home in buckets to covet  
they brought me into their lives like I was the eighth wonder

Turns out I am  
close to gone.  
I have some memory of what was said; sink, toilet, kettle, pathogens, flower bed.

Yesterday I learnt a new word shouted out from kids sticking a dog dead-centre in my  
belly, the word was drought.  
It made me shake despite the heat meandering muscle memory had me lose myself, few  
drops left.

Remembrance returned and put upon the quayside the men in their rough handled hats  
and the women in their heavy skirts hitching up against my banks I learnt the words like  
they were my words

Carding  
Spinning  
Kersey  
Serge  
Long wool  
Fleece

One summer I met a deaf girl who worked the mill used to talk when she thought no one  
was listening I was, always. Feet catching the drift of me head in the clouds, she'd lost her  
hearing at the shuttle side me my sense of touch together we sat and looked up at the sky  
made memories of the anvil clouds wished upon the same occasional rainbow

Beautiful  
colourful  
water in  
water out  
like breath it ripped the heavens open

now nothing  
sky baited  
everybody waiting  
tragic.

Today I woke in the knowledge that this would be my last day, could feel it in the way my skin peeled revealed the bones that had contained me more rust than rock, the Devon earth that had stayed with me all these years was crumbling, folding, packing up and going home, so long

Years  
months  
days down to a fine trickle

If this is it  
if this is all there is  
I have come to realise  
one thing  
they will miss me more than I could ever miss them  
their thirst for how things used to be will make me smile from beyond my refraction  
my laugh drawn out in perfect fine arc lines  
running  
no tears no water to cry  
the death of them will be shocking  
but worth it  
and the tragedy of what they knew as water  
river  
will be over.