

Three Poems

Clara Anderson-Cameron

touch, or, beautiful people

it's the first real snowfall and I'm outside of the library, through the secret exit,

the side door.

there are people there with me, beautiful people next to me and we are rolling big wet piles of slush

and snow

and leaves

across the patch of grass that we expose in intersecting black lines to build a snowman the height of me,

and I'm tilting my face to the sky

and the flakes are kissing my cheeks and

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I wonder if anything else will be allowed to touch me there, where fine lines under my eyes have appeared, jarring, in the mirror and I can't decide whether to

hate them

or love them with a fierce protectiveness because they're

mine

and I *earned* them.

see how I've smiled?

more so in recent months, thanks to these beautiful people in the snow and the one

with long red hair that's flecked with strands of gold is cold and the one

with soft eyes and strong shoulders pulls close to her and takes two icy hands between her own.

together they become a small painting in the dark,

I think I'm the artist with my gaze that freezes them where they're half concealed by the clouds of steam that expand after each exhale and I'm glad I can't quite see their eyes,

their lips,

the red of their noses,

the glint of their dark mouths when they say things,

quiet things,

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insignificant things, I'm sure, but still, my eyes drop away

because it feels too intimate, too foreign, like listening in on a goodbye when you're in a different country, where tongues form different sounds,

beautiful,

sad,

longing sounds

and from my vantage point, I do feel worlds away because never have I invited such closeness never has someone drawn near to me only because I was cold and irresistible

and later when the one with soft eyes gestures me to her side so that we are standing there, three dim forms against the newborn snow, I feel

trapped,

(warm)

and cornered,

and I am too close to their beauty, too conspicuous, and I wonder how long they will tolerate me out here under the biting snow and when it hits my cheeks now

I feel it sting

and I wonder if anyone will ever touch me like that

and if I might let them.

residual

Where am I? Still in the yawning quiet after you told me.
The sharp cut of your teeth and the red of the flush
On your cheek. Moving forward because it's quieter
That way. Again and again, by my hand, we break apart
Then crash together in the silence that followed and if a tree
Fell between us I doubt we would've heard it, because
It was too loud, the stilted exchange of our wanting.
Separate, the same. Today I'm hungry, and I miss you.
I can't find a difference between the two. I haven't heard
Your voice in three years but I still feel it in the space
Between my eyes, and along the ridges of my spine,
And you exist there, still. So I do, too. So I settle back into
To the armed chair and the gray table in the sun
Where we were trying to learn French and where you told me,
In no uncertain terms, that you'd be taking up space inside
Of my body for the rest of my life. And I still can't understand it,
How all of that was contained in three words,
Dripping, dangerous, like poisoned syrup from your lips.

library magic

I think I was reborn here, in the stretch of
Books and corporate carpet with sidelong looks
From the boss who stalks past with his long
White eyebrows and the way your heart
Pounds beneath the skin that heats my palm.
Your pink mouth liquid in a way that
Catches my eye and I just wish someone
Would tell me why it's so hard to resist
Speaking when there's nothing much to say.
But the way you're looking at me now
Puts words into my mouth that I never
Imagined, your back against the oversized
Shelves where the books are heavy and full
Of beauty and art which makes sense to me
In a way it didn't before and the barest brush
Of your body on mine pulls out more of the fine
Words you've placed in my mouth, more of the
Love with which you've colored my insides.

All of this is brand new and almost too sore.
All of this is bright and soft and decidedly yours.

Clara Anderson-Cameron is a third-year English and French major. She enjoys writing and reading, although it becomes difficult during the semester. If she's not doing either of those things, she's probably listening to music or playing rugby with the UND women's team. Her goal is to work with words throughout her life, in any capacity.