

COBIS Poetry Competition 2025/26

Through Another's Eyes

Key Stage 4-5 Runner-up

As Simple as a Cup of Tea

When you get older,
the world starts talking in
half-sentences.

You recognize the
tune,

but not the words.

People say,

and you smile like you do.
Because it's easier than saying
you don't.

"Remember?"

And maybe that's how it starts—
not with forgetting,

but with pretending.

He used to laugh at that kind of thing.

"Nothing's broken, kid—just
needs a little tightening."

And I'd believe him,
because he always could.

When I was little, he

In partnership with:

could fix
anything.
A bike chain,
a leaky tap,
me crying over something dumb.
He'd smile,
wipe his hands on a rag,
and say,
"Everything's got a trick to it."
And he was right.
Back then –
he was the trick.
the magic in the
room
, the reason mornings worked.
But then—
one morning,
he asked me how to spell
"Wednesday." And
we laughed. Both
of us did.
But the laugh felt wrong—too
thin,
too fragile.
Like the sound was holding its breath.
The next week,
he left the kettle on.
Twice.
Said he was "just thinking."
And maybe he was.
Maybe he was wandering through his thoughts, looking
for the light switch.
The kettle clicks—
clicks—
clicks—

Steam curls around his face. He
doesn't like tea.
He makes it anyway.

"Gives me something to do," he says.
And I know
what he means.
It's not about the tea.
It's about pretending you still can.

Still can fix, still

can make, still

can matter.

I think that's what breaks me. That
he still wants to fix it.

Still tries to tighten time.
Still looks for the trick.
And I can't tell him –

there isn't one this time.

Because how do you say
that the man who fixed everything can't
fix himself?

He used to call me "kiddo."
Every single time. "Morning,
kiddo."
"Rise and shine, kiddo."
"Don't tell your grandma, kiddo." One
day he just said—

And I said, "It's me."

"Hey, you."

And he said,
"I know."

But I don't think he did.

Growing up feels like finding cracks in

the people you thought were walls.
Like watching the world you leaned on
collapse beneath your hands.

I kept pretending it was fine.

Because what else do you do
with the sound of someone forgetting

how to be themselves?

The fridge hums,
The floor creaks,
Time leaks,

and everything still looks the same—But
it's not.
God, it's not.

He still tells stories,
but they don't always end.
He starts to laugh,
then looks confused,

then says,

“What was I saying?”

And I fill in the blanks. Every.
Single. Time.

The kettle clicks—

clicks—

clicks—

Steam curls around his face.

He doesn't like tea.
He makes it anyway.

And I—

I stay.

Because this is how you love someone who's
slowly becoming their own echo—

you learn to listen harder.
You learn to hold what's slipping.
You learn the sound of leaving

long before it's gone.

When I was little, he could fix anything.

Now—

I just fix the tea,
and wait—

for him to remember
the sound of his own name.

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