

Lingering Over Language

by Dianne McKnight-Warren

The mornings he comes in, my heart beats faster but he doesn't know. I steam milk for his latte, watch him out of the corner of my eye where he stands at the counter reading his newspaper folded into a manageable square. I love that about him and I love how handsome he is, his overcoat impossibly black, not a speck of lint, his shoes shined, shirt starched. A small man with dark hair, he is beautiful, perfect, down to the shape of his head.

One morning he'll come in and my heart will beat faster and someone, maybe another customer or employee, will say something about my poetry, because sometimes people do, something funny or nice. Maybe they read a poem somewhere or they'll ask me how the writing's going, and he'll notice. I'll see his eyes move and change what they see.

And the next morning he'll come in and my heart will beat faster and I'll watch him out of the corner of my eye and see him watching me and I'll turn a little to look at him and he won't look away, won't even pretend he's not looking.

He'll pay in two crisp dollar bills like he always does and I'll reach out and put his change in front of him like I always do, the change he never takes. But this day he'll take it and put it back in my hand, carefully place the coins in my palm, press them lightly like a doctor taking a pulse, my heart fluttering, a tiny bird taking flight.

