

Lit. 405

“OCD: A Love Poem,” by Neil Hilborn

The first time I saw her. Everything in my head went quiet.
All the ticks, all the constantly refreshing images just disappeared.
When you have Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, you don't really get quiet moments.
Even in bed, I'm thinking:
Did I lock the doors? Yes.
Did I wash my hands? Yes.
Did I lock the doors? Yes.
Did I wash my hands? Yes.
But when I saw her, the only thing I could think about was the hairpin curve of her lips..
Or the eyelash on her cheek
the eyelash on her cheek
the eyelash on her cheek.
I knew I had to talk to her.
I asked her out six times in thirty seconds.
She said yes after the third one, but none of them felt right, so I had to keep going.
On our first date, I spent more time organizing my meal by color than I did eating it, or talking to her... But she loved it.
She loved that I had to kiss her goodbye sixteen times or twenty-four times when it was Wednesday.
She loved that it took me forever to walk home because there are lots of cracks on our sidewalk.
When we moved in together, she said she felt safe, like no one would ever rob us because I definitely lock the door eighteen times.
I'd always watch her mouth when she talked
when she talked, when she talked, when she talked, when she talked
when she said she loved me, her mouth would curl up at the edges.
At night, she'd lay in bed and watch me turn all the lights off. And on, and off, and on, and off, and on, and off, and on, and off, and on,
and off. She'd close her eyes and imagine that the days and nights were just passing in front of her.
Some mornings, I'd start kissing her goodbye but she would just leave because I was making her late for work..
When I stopped at a crack in the sidewalk, she just kept walking..
When she said she loved me, her mouth was a straight line..
She told me I was taking up too much of her time.
Last week she started sleeping at her mother's place.
She told me that she shouldn't have let me get so attached to her; that this whole thing was a mistake.
But how can it be a mistake that I don't have to wash my hands after I touch her?
Love is not a mistake; it's killing me that she can run away from this and I just can't.
I can't go out and find someone new because I always think of her.
Usually, when I obsess over things, I see germs sneaking into my skin. I see myself crushed by an endless succession of cars.
And she was the first beautiful thing I ever got stuck on.
I want to wake up every morning thinking about the way she holds her steering wheel..
How she turns shower knobs like she opening a safe.
How she blows out candles
blows out candles, blows out candles, blows out candles
blows out..
Now, I just think about who else is kissing her.
I can't breathe because he only kisses her once - he doesn't care if it's perfect!
I want her back so bad..
I leave the door unlocked.
I leave the lights on.

Elements of Good Narrative

Where do you find examples of these in Hilborn's poem?

1. Creates a smooth progression of experiences or events.
2. Uses specific narrative techniques (e.g. dialogue, imagery, pacing, description, reflection).
3. Use precise words and phrases and sensory language to convey a picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters

How does the poet tell two stories with one word as the central idea of this poem?