

"...Everything is delicious and pink, like candy stolen from the corner store..."

"thou shall not steal... thou shall not commit adultery..." Luke 18:12

"This kiss is like that first perfect summer blackberry, warm from the sun, juicy and sweet. We were silver again, new and young, the colour of photo paper before it is developed and a soft red glow everywhere."

Select passages from Bitter Waters,

"It was getting late, but I didn't care. I wanted to get caught, I wanted to be found lying there, my horrid plaid skirt wrinkled on the floor along side his shirt and my bra. My sodden saddle shoes were lying snug up against his damp black dress shoes while we were cosyed up with each other.

...Everything is delicious and pink, like candy stolen from the corner store. The smell of candy canes and gingerbread surround us. My mouth takes in his tongue and I taste caramel, beer and the sweat he licked off my body."

There is one photograph of Ryan's that I remember very clearly. There is nothing terribly memorable about the picture, yet it stands out in my head more than any of the others. It was taken up in the mountains of Utah where the Aspens grow. It was not yet autumn but the Aspens had already begun to turn a flaxen yellow. They stood out acutely against a deep cobalt sky. Their white trunks, tall and straight, contrasted with a scraggly dark pine, the only one among the stand of thin quivering Aspens. The pine looked haughty and regal. It was the colours of the photo that affected me; they were so strong and saturated. There was unease in the photo; an undefined electricity in the air, captured and trapped by the camera. The trees were so still and I remember wanting to release them from the stillness so they could sway and dance.

I think about that photo as I walk down to the train platform that evening. Ryan is standing there. He is calm and collected, as always. I feel frazzled, nervous, a cliché of bundled nerves. I look around to see if I can avoid him in anyway, but the platform is sparse with people. It is early yet and there is nowhere to hide.

He sees me, smiles and I am lost in it. I walk over to him, “Hey, again.”

“Hey, no hubbie tonight?” he asked.

“Nope, late meeting, just us.” I rock back and forth on my heels. Seeming to be relaxed and casual. I don’t pull it off.

“That’s too bad; I was looking forward to meeting him finally.” He’s lying.

We get on to the train and sit down. He sits beside me, which strikes me. Most people would sit across from each other, but he sit down close. I can smell him, and it’s that same sweat-sock cinnamon smell I remember from long ago.

...“Craig?” I mount the steps to the second floor. He is in our room. “Hi,” I say acting as nonchalantly as I can.

“Who is he?” is all he says. He is moving about the room and there are clothes and a bag on the bed.

“Who’s who?” I ask warily, *what can he know?* “What are you doing?”

“Who’s the guy?” There is a pause, neither of us speaks. “I saw you. I was on the bus, coming home and what do I see when I look out the window? My wife,” he spits the word, “kissing some guy out on the street. Like some common harlot.”

“Harlot, what sort of word is that? It wasn’t me.” I am becoming frantic; my world has just dropped out from under my feet...

Ryan was always so sweet; he really did smell like cinnamon. I remember in art class when he would just stare at me with an odd look on his face and I couldn’t look away either. And offering me a ride home that first day, my teeth ached with the sugary appeal of it. A pink innocence made it even more enticing.

There was one day that he walked past me in the crowded darkroom and he blew delicately on the back of my neck. I couldn’t do a thing about it because I was elbow deep in the developing tank. No one else saw.

Then there was a day when we were working with clay in art class. My hair kept falling in my face. I tried to brush it away but my hands were covered in clay. He found a rubber band and he tied back my hair. Every inch of me was touching him. My body itched with delight.

Nostalgia smells sweet; I have always liked sweet things.

Visit the not so official website of Bitter Waters, a novel, for more info, updates and other fun stuff.

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