

Four poems of James Fenton from the volume *Out of Danger*

Beauty, Danger and Dismay

Beauty, danger and dismay
Met me on the public way.
Whichever I chose, I chose dismay.

Out of Danger

Heart be kind and sign the release
As the trees their loss approve.
Learn as leaves must learn to fall
Out of danger, out of love.

What belongs to frost and thaw
Sullen winter will not harm.
What belongs to wind and rain
Is out of danger from the storm.

Jealous passion, cruel need
Betray the heart they feed upon.
But what belongs to earth and death
Is out of danger from the sun.

I was cruel, I was wrong –
Hard to say and hard to know.
You do not belong to me.
You are out of danger now –

Out of danger from the wind,
Out of danger from the wave,
Out of danger from the heart
Falling, falling out of love.

Serious

Awake, alert,
Suddenly serious in love,
You're a surprise.
I've known you long enough –
Now I can hardly meet your eyes.

It's not that I'm
Embarrassed or ashamed.
You've changed the rules
The way I'd hoped they'd change
Before I thought: hopes are for fools.

Let me walk with you.
I've got the newspapers to fetch.
I think you know
I think you have the edge
But I feel cheerful even so.

That's why I laughed.
That's why I went and kicked that stone.
I'm serious!
That's why I cartwheeled home.
This should mean something. Yes, it does.

Hinterhof

Stay near to me and I'll stay near to you –
As near as you are dear to me will do,
 Near as the rainbow to the rain,
 The west wind to the windowpane,
As fire to the hearth, as dawn to dew.

Stay true to me and I'll stay true to you —
As true as you are new to me will do,
 New as the rainbow in the spray,
 Utterly new in every way,
New in the way that what you say is true.

Stay near to me, stay true to me. I'll stay
As near, as true to you as heart could pray.
 Heart never hoped that one might be
 Half of the things you are to me –
The dawn, the fire, the rainbow and the day.

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