

Breckland Flint

If my Dad was ever hunter-gatherer, it was when he returned from Norfolk to the north and shook out samples of Breckland flint from his suitcase slips.

Such snapshots defy erasure: my first feel, blackly smooth as eels or rooks, the clicks as they rubbed together redolent of snooker balls, the barbarity

of the stone shapes – disfigured trapezoids, lopsided rhombuses, some bits similar in outline to malformed beaks, lugers, nachos, or with the paperweight girth of hooves of a bygone beast.

You find me bowed prayerfully
over a mosaic of flints I've taken to collecting. Just as the earth bequeathed
us these shatterings, these flakes, these rinds, flints with pestle-heft or thin
as sucked-sharp glacier mints, so I preserve the legacy, channeling my inner
Iceni tribesman, perennially observant for pieces expectorated from biscuity
soil, meshed in trench and marl pit, flint that in a harsher age would stud
a church tower or wall, that might have been prised from a mine shaft
with an antler pick then knapped to a knobbly spearhead, a conical tool
inhumed in a barrow with a body after an unseemly ceremony.

Son,

see these chalky veins, strata marks, lysergic streaks, prehistory wailing
– cretaceous transmissions, and what they're trying to tell us,
is if you know the skill with flint-strike on steel, there's a fire to make,
foster and grow. Promise me its warmth will outlast the night.

Samuel Prince

3rd Place in the Open Poetry Category

2021 International Competitions - Wells Festival of Literature