Börkur Sigurbjörnsson

The Foreign City Is A Beautiful Maze We Navigate In The Search Of Hidden Gems

flash fiction

Urban Volcano

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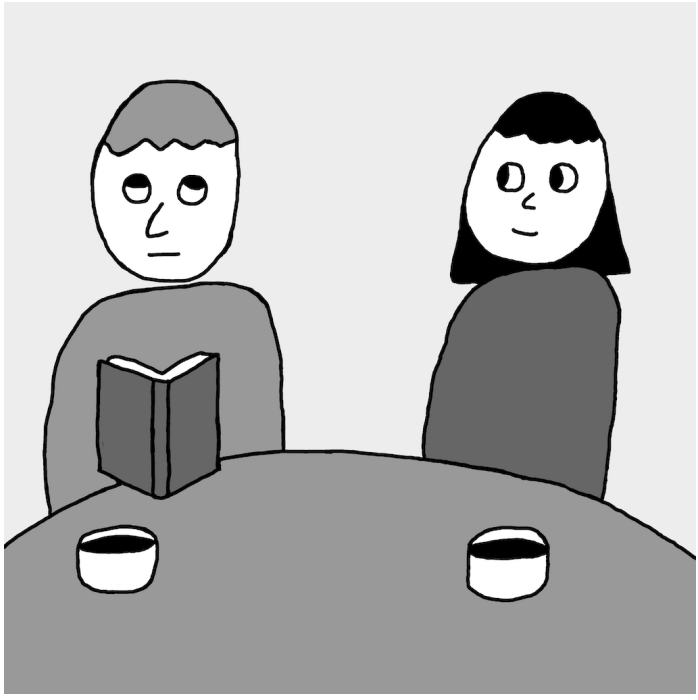

The Foreign City Is A Beautiful Maze We Navigate In The Search Of Hidden Gems

I found myself a nice table in the shadow of a mature tree, sat down and admired the vibrant square—one of so many in the city I was gradually starting to call my home. The sky was clear and there was quite a crowd around in the Sunday morning sun—people of all ages, conversing seniors, teenagers engaged in acrobatics on a line that had been stretched between two trees, children running around and chasing pigeons under observant parental eyes.

A waiter came over to the table and I nearly exhausted all my knowledge of the local language by ordering myself a latte. When my drink arrived, I opened the book I had bought from the bookshop on the opposite corner of the square. I stared at the page in front of me, transforming the unfamiliar words into yet stranger sounds in my head, without being able to associate any meaning to what I was reading. There were so many foreign aspects to my life these days—the weather, the names, the customs, the language…

"Blah blah … Blah blah blah … blah?"

I looked up from my book and viewed the woman who had addressed me in the tongue of the natives. I had not understood a word of what she had said, but by the tone of her voice I guessed it had been a question.

"Sorry, I don't speak the language," I replied in the *lingua franca* I hoped she would understand.

"I see. I just asked if this chair was free."

"Oh. Yes. Go ahead."

Contrary to my expectations, she did not grab the chair and bring it to an adjacent table but sat down at mine. I smiled awkwardly in order to hide my surprise. I wasn't sure if I should get back to reading or if she expected my attention, so I just stared at her while she turned around in her chair, called a waiter and, if I was not mistaken, ordered an espresso.

"Interesting read?" She nodded toward the book I still had open in front of me.

"Well…" I wasn't sure how to respond.

"So, you can read our language but not speak it?"

"Actually… yes… the reading is not that much of a problem… it's the understanding that is more complicated."

"Let me see," she said, reaching out for the book. "*The foreign city is a beautiful maze we navigate in the search of hidden gems,*" she read out loud. "That's what the first sentence says."

"Thanks," I said as she handed the book back to me. I reached for a pen and scribbled the translation at the top of the page. That should help me get started with deciphering the remaining text.

"You're welcome!" She downed in one gulp the espresso the waiter had put in front of her, put a few coins on the table, stood up and disappeared into the crowd at the busy square.

Börkur is an avid storyteller with a keen eye for quirky characters, funny dialogs and vivid scenario descriptions. Much of his writing falls within the genre of realistic fiction and his stories are more often than not based on real events in the author's life. Although the tales contain grains of truth, they are melded with fiction, making the reader curious to know the line between reality and fantasy.

Books

Among Other Things, flash fiction (2024)
Talk To Strangers, short stories (2019)
Flash 52, flash fiction (2017)
999 Abroad, short stories (2012)

Links

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