

Tric O’Heare

Witness Sestina

We make our witness statements one by one
to a young man with arms of autumn leaves
and *carpe diem* on his wrist like a cheat-note.
He types two-fingered, slow as an old man,
and uses your first name when he refers to you –
you would call his hair strawberry blonde.

It’s not physical facts like whether you’re blonde
or tall, of a slight build or have even one
interesting scar to distinguish you
that we are here for tonight. The leaves
on his arms flex as he types like a man
who believes his sole life purpose is to note

something that’s been missed, to note
something about a girl – tall, slight, blonde,
that’s revelatory. He’s a young man
who doesn’t want you to be just another one
who vanishes utterly when she leaves.
It’s late, but he lets us talk on about you.

His fingers plod behind what we say about you
catching details to add to your life's footnote.
When he needs to print, autumnal man leaves
the room, runs his hands through his short blonde
hair and orders the old machine to print one
more time. A typical tall young man,

he takes the chance to stretch. *This* young man
has been up all night looking for the you
that we knew, the girl who left us, one by one.
He asks me to read my statement and to note
spelling errors – makes a joke about being a blonde
speller, vacates his chair for me and leaves.

Leaves me to read his version of my words, leaves
me to pick up errors – shows he is not a man
who is just another man in a chair, this tall blonde
young man, your age. I ask him who found you
as that's a fact I can't see in any note
and he comes back to say he was the one.

It was this tall, young, blonde man who found you
and found your thoughtful 'first responders' note.
A man with autumn leaves tattoos– not just anyone.