

CONTROL ALTER DELETE · BY K.L. KETTLE

CRAFT SPOTLIGHT — READING LIKE A WRITER

"Dad's chair", up close · English · GCSE AO2 · KS3–KS4

A whole passage about grief that never once says grief. Read it as a writer: how does Kettle make you feel a loss the narrator refuses to name?

Half awake, I shuffled across my room to my gaming hub: Dad's old game chair with its foam-picked arms. Mum had found it in the storage lockup, years after he left us. There were old coins in the creases, which was cool, like a loot crate. It used to smell of him, crisps and stale coffee. It was the safest place to be while my perception was logged into my favourite game: Altercation.

From *Control Alter Delete* by K.L. Kettle.

WHAT THE WRITING IS DOING five moves worth naming with a class

"Dad's old game chair with its foam-picked arms"

Grief arrives as an *object*, not a feeling. The worn arms carry years of use without a word about loss. **AO2 · show, don't tell**

"years after he left us"

The loss is tucked into a subordinate clause, almost in passing. What hurts most is said most quietly. **AO2 · structure / understatement**

"old coins... which was cool, like a loot crate"

A child's gaming simile softens a relic of the dead. The voice stays young; the reader feels the gap the narrator can't. **AO2 · voice & dramatic irony**

"It used to smell of him, crisps and stale coffee."

Two ordinary, un-sentimental smells do what "I miss him" never could. Specific beats stated. **AO2 · sensory imagery**

"the safest place to be"

Never "sad", never "grief". The whole passage is an emotion the narrator won't name — so the reader names it for them. **AO2 · withholding / implicit meaning**

Step back — the design.

An object, a smell, a child's simile, one buried clause. Not a single feeling-word — and it lands harder for it. **AO2 · whole -passage method**

Reading like a writer — your turn

Describe a character's feeling through one ordinary object they keep — *without naming the feeling*. Let a small, specific detail (a smell, a mark of wear, a thing left in a pocket) do the work, the way the chair does here.

For librarians and reading groups. Deciding whether to shadow, stock or recommend the book? This is the writing — not the worksheet. From Carnegie-nominated K.L. Kettle; more free resources, reading-group kits and author visits at klkettle.com.