

**NATURE
POEM
TOMMY
PICO**

 Tin House Books
Portland, Oregon & Brooklyn, New York

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The stars are dying

like always, and far away, like what you see looking up is a death knell
from light, right? Light

years. But also close, like the sea stars on the Pacific coast. Their little
arms lesion and knot and pull away

the insides spill into the ocean. Massive deaths. When I try to sleep I
think about orange cliffs, bare of orange stars. Knotted, glut. Waves are
clear. Anemones n shit. Sand crabs n shit. Fleas. There are seagulls
overhead. Ugh I swore to myself I would never write a nature poem.

The sand is fine. They say it's not Fukushima. I feel fine, in the sense
that I feel very thin—I been doin Tracy Anderson DVD workouts on
YouTube, keeping my arms fit and strong. She says *reach, like you are
being pulled apart*

I can't not spill. Sometimes it, sometimes . . . what you see is what you
glut. There are sometimes insides.

I can't write a nature poem
bc it's fodder for the noble savage
narrative. I wd slap a tree across the face,
I say to my audience.

Let's say I'm at a pizza parlor
Let's say I'm having a slice at the bar this man walks in to pick up his
to-go order
Let's say his order isn't ready yet and he's chatty
Let's say I'm in Portland bc ppl don't tawlk to me in NYC
Let's say he's like, *meatballs are for the baby, pizza's for the little man,*
Caesar salad's for the wife and the beer he points to the beer and then
thumbs at himself, *the beer's for me.*

He has one of those cracked skin summer smiles

He keeps talking like I want to hear him
Like he's so comfortable
Like everybody owes him attention

I'm a weirdo NDN faggot

He puts his hands on the ribs of my chair asks do I want to go into the
bathroom with him

Let's say it doesn't turn me on at all

Let's say I literally hate all men bc literally men are animals—

This is a kind of nature I would write a poem about.

I don't like boys, men, or guys.

Don't like how they kick it on couches,
laid back, calves cocked

the neck muscles thrust up.

Don't like their dumb biceps bouncing the thunderclap laugh
choosing trucks over pink!? The musk the swoony wake, the misc
bulges, stupid weight training *Spot me bro*—

I was like *pfffft*, I says *yr kind of hard to miss?*

What they say to anyone ever in history, or in the locker room when they
think no one is listening in a tight towel. Or everyday when they expect
attention, ppl wide-eyed ears like satellites the words (apparently) torch
torchin to truth.

Don't like them tweeting, texting, um *peeling rubber wetsuits off in the
parking lot*

sweatpants no discernible underwear lookin like *whatever*

Or! When they slick back swab the deck pocket square shoulders—

The wave, the fade, the bang bangs.

Men dancing is fine tho.

Or like maybe men in socks? I dunno

I can't write a nature poem
bc I only fuck with the city
and my dentist is the only man who'll stick his meaty fingers
in my mouth rn. The office of my hummingbird heart rattles the
sparkling office.

*It's okay, he says. It's kind of . . . You'll hear when I clap my hands, but
you won't really care.*

Sooooo it's like gas-induced sociopathy?

Crickets.

He twists the knob

feeling bobs the biochemical

delta—care rolls out to sea. Cut off the head?

and a body can jerk for minutes afterward. Is life more than a
byproduct of nerves

crunch crunch heave have you ever eaten

rattlesnake? Not to be cliché, but it tastes like chicken. Everything
tastes like chicken, but then again I have shockingly little taste.

It's hard

feeling like a carcass bc u literally can't *feel*
like a carcass. You feel around instead.

I come around slowly, oxygen fuzzy dead bone spittle—a hole in my head.

Winter is a death threat from nature, and I don't respond well to predation—

it's not like summer, death in the form of barking men

takin issue w/the short shorts and the preen and the queenly holding hands

god forbid u step into the gnashing cold for a fizzy water and grapes, forget yr keys, the cell battery

dies n yr roommates out of town with their holiday families

plus mittens are dumb af

AND it's easy to fantasize abt snow when yr raised on the cusp of a desert—

Kumeyaay ppl aren't built for winter like metaphor—I mean metabolically and it happens, get this, it happens every. damn. year.

There's no exposure in Southern California,
no clanging heat in San Diego.
in LA? The snow comes in a can.

Cold was a curiosity, like rain. A ghost. No. A reanimation, a flourish of calendar art and novels with families in living rooms, huddled in a blizzard's fist.

We used the fireplace
for its smoky tang. When rains came from the eyelids of the sky, I cd feel the land licking the roof of its mouth. Hella satisfied.

Men smack

the monoliths in Mosul back to stone and dust. I'm devastated
in the midst of Vicodin

*Thank god for colonialist plundering, right? At least some of these
artifacts remain intact behind glass, says History*

Kumeyaay burial urns dug from context, their ashes dumped and placed
on display at the Museum of Man. Casket art, mantelpieces in SoCal
social well-to-do living rooms

A warden is seldom welcomed, I say.

Lives flicker, says History

I, too, wd like a monument, says Ego.

I'm abt to get fucked by Don Draper on a rooftop but stinging smoke
wraps us like thick blankets I wake up like *fuck did I have a cigarette
last night*, no dry sockets plz
but it's just my neighborhood on fire—I

rush outside the billow yanks across the sky and into Queens. It's an
archive burning, a record storage building near the water. Singed bits of
text rain onto the concrete, streets swallowed in fragments like a Sappho

How do statues become more galvanizing than refugees
is not something I wd include in a nature poem.

Captive and being returned to the wild
captive breeding and release program

Marius the giraffe put down by his handlers at Copenhagen Zoo,
dissected in front of patrons and fed to the lions

literally fed to the lions

in 2014

child slaves sleeping on fishing nets in Somalia, in Bangkok

OkCupid asks what's worse—a starving child or a starving dog, and
I'm like *is this a fucking joke?*

Dragonflies experience a kind of quantum time, see a much richer
spectrum of colors like a range of snowcapped mountains on molly and
mushrooms and sherbet watercolors

and I'm supposed to believe *we're* such miracles?

Ray Rice punches his girlfriend unconscious on camera and drags her
out of the elevator, and I'm supposed to give a fuck about pesticides?

That's not a kind of nature I would write a poem about.

Janjaweed, the Lord's Resistance Army, Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram,
Oscar Pistorius, the Tea Party, Andrew Jackson, the Niña the Pinta
and the Santa Maria

WHAT'S YR NATIONALITY!?!? This guy shouts at me during drag queen karaoke at this gay bar two stops down the line.

In order to talk about a hurricane, you first have to talk about a preexisting disturbance over the ocean, so you have to talk about mean ocean temperature, so you have to talk about human industry and sun rays, so you have to talk about helium, so did you know helium was named for the sun god Helios and was defined by a gap in the solar spectrum so literally not itself but what surrounded it, so of course we have to talk about the solar system, the Milky Way, the networks of universe and the Big Bang.

How far back do you have to go to answer any question about race?

UM, AMERICAN? I say

or

KUMEYAAY. I say *I'M FROM THE KUMEYAAY NATION*,

which are both technically true, but I know that when he says NATIONALITY he's saying *you look vaguely not like a total white boy* plus I'm trying to get lucky, so I put on my face that's the opposite of a tall can tipped over and glugging out onto the floor

I'M FROM AN INDIAN RESERVATION NEAR SAN DIEGO I burst back, over the drag queen sort of singing the Michael Bubl  version of "Feelin Good."

When James hugs me hello
he stoops
(bc he is very tall)
nuzzles his forehead into the hook
of my neck
takes a big, long *sniff*
growls soft and low.
James is a stone
cold
dummy. But when he does *that*?
If this was an 80s hair band music video
I wd totally groupie
toss my frillies onto the stage of James.

Dear Gays,

I wish yr attention span was as “athletic”

as yr bod