

TONGO EISEN-MARTIN

Cut A Hand From A Hand

“if you reverse the car any farther,
you will run over all the scenes in the back of your mind”

I never cared for teachers...just the pattern of fainting spells induced by wall art.
Propaganda is courage, man

The price sticker hid my tattoo
—I treasure my problem with the world

“My mother becomes from Brooklyn first thing in the morning”
—a proverb around these parts
 proverb or peasant entrance password

Writing short notes to famous Europeans
On the backs of post cards
With ransom requests

They reply with a newsreel or cigarette announcement (I can't tell the
difference)

—Noble dollars then you die inside
 (but only inside)

“They call it, ‘sleeping deeper than your stalker.’
And stalker is all that badge makes you,”
says a great spirit dressed in the bloody rags tuxedos became

meanwhile my punch is feared by no one
 “Proud of yourself?” I ask the fret hand

“Porch Lights” is what they call our guns
 I've seen this house in a dream
 I've seen this chair on behalf of a dream

I believe a trumpet was the first possessed object to fly

“keep going,” she cheers

the draft in the room becomes a toddler
obsessed with the altar
the altar becomes a runaway train
got a thousand paintings cascading down my skinny arms
Dictionaries piling up to the window bars

basements called dope fiend cocoons
crowd into the part of my mind
referred to as my heart
—a reminder to the population that
your blanket can work with
or against you—

human reef/
we will be a big human reef
for concepts that finally gain a metaphysical nature
and they will swim around our beautiful poses

we stop being flashbacks
then stop being three different people
then I was alone [the pistol is one city away]

one of the drug triangle’s lines runs through my head
tap the bottle twice and consider the dead refreshed
“don’t you want to rest your bravery?
don’t you want to be a coward for a little bit?”
—back and forth to a panic attack with no problems nor fears

a man gets a facial expression finally
a Friday finally goes his way
his life is finally talked about happily in his head

*I can’t possess the body of a hermit
I must be the last of his smoke
Now running away with three blocks of alley
Tucked under my arm
You ever see a man*

*get to the bottom of his soul
in a car ride down a missing cousin's street?
half step to the right
I mean I took the whole car outside of history
Half step to the right
I mean a whole pack of wolves stepped to my left
—Deep in the recesses of the main recess*

“road marker” is what I called the light bulb we had for a sun
a whole civilization might slink to the sink
chain gang shuffling next to a sucker

—the long look in the mirror [a stack of money starts talking from four cities
away]

The Confidence Scheme

The neighborhood looks like someone put their kitchen outside
(I've been rehearsing my speeches all summer/tracing car keys on paper and
calling it poetry)

I am a spirit who paints
And thinks too much for a man killed by a herd

And therefore it is better to cry than cry through your hands

Thunder, please pick some thunder for me
"I shed blood and call the blood brother to my art"

A lake tide playing with the wall
Or the Midwest doubles
as both box and earth

I had a craft once
But then we folded up our tents
and headed west
walking with stilts over soggy graves

Me? Me, I dance with my debts in front of my children
With tinsel bullet casings
"you were all born on warrant paper. Children"

I stood to the side
With all the rest of the predators
Not because I saw prey
But rather because predators were trying to be like me

Because I have been betrayed by, but have been all sides of violence

Divisions all over my favorite wall
"The world is my favorite wall"
"The walk home was my favorite wall"

we went to the movies

then left the country

“baby, I’m on drugs again and therefore will not make a move”

brother, I wrote all the poems that I am going to write about godlike women
and the guns through which I interpret them

or were we all child soldiers of a scattered war machine
battlefields in wind chimes
where all my hopes are charismatic

you ever look down at the world from a wind chime?

Miracle oriented lately

Junkie meditation

As instructed by the window curtain

Is the way I look for love (even hate)

“What a miraculous route you took through the threat”

“Write your poems. Then write your poems on paper.”

Channels to fall asleep to

While shoe box to shoe box travels my childhood

Professionals roll garbage cans around a conference room

Half the size of a holding tank

Half the hope of a holding tank

Full of third world retail flattery

“nothing wrong with the blind leading the blind,”

we think they just said

the entire train station crouches behind a piano player

and why should Harlem not kill for its musicians

“He is in a dream”

“A spirit world”

“I should introduce myself”

“And convince him to sleep”

porcelain epoch

succeeding for the most part

dying for the most part

married for the most part to its death

when a hostage has a hostage

that is u.s. education

stores detach their heads

and expect you to do the same when you enter

God says, “do not trust me in this room”

Two fascists walk into a bar

One says, “let’s make a baby.”

The other says, “let’s make three... and let the first one eat the other two.”

your sky or mine

read from

the book of pool room enemies

“I’m the best kind of square. Poor and in love with the 1960s. The first picture I
ever saw in my life faded from my storytelling a long time ago.”

Not even ten years old
And most of you are on my shoulders

The store’s detached head smiled

casually be poor
teach yourself
how to get out of this room
and we’ll leave you enough blood
to turn off the lights
on your way out

casually be poor
they are all cops when you are poor

Originally from San Francisco, **Tongo Eisen-Martin** is a movement worker and educator who has organized against mass incarceration and extra-judicial killing of Black people throughout the United States. His latest curriculum on extrajudicial killing of Black people, *We Charge Genocide Again*, has been used as an educational and organizing tool throughout the country. His book of poems, *Someone’s Dead Already* (Bootstrap Press), was nominated for a California Book Award. His latest book of poems, *Heaven Is All Goodbyes*, is the 61st City Lights Pocket Poets book.