

Chronic TO Wn # 20 and oTHer p0ems 000 000 000

By Glen **A**rmstrong

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... Glen Armstrong has s fascinating sub-textual affect on me. If I had a most adored trope, it would have to be a dissimile: Cabbages and kings, hawks and handsaws. How many beans make five? Knowing yellow is tubular; and not knowing if it's Piccadilly or Wednesday. I just love this Shinola. Ideasthesia and synaesthesia (one a concept the other a condition?), I can only surmise, appears to appeal to a contrarian nature. Enough of my limping preamble, Armstrong hits one out of the park, straight out of the gate (mixing sports metaphors): "Handcuffs and oysters. / I am unsure." Happy daze, here's a mind worthy of dissection. "I eat lemon pie sometimes / and cancel the days / on the calendar..." "I learn to summon demons that glisten and burst like soap bubbles." "...that becomes elastic when remembered." If you admire Armstrong as I do, it may be either time to check out or get checked out. (Spacing is poet's own.) HS*

Chronic Town #20

Handcuffs and oysters.
I am unsure.

If this is defeat.
Or a much-needed rest.

I am pretty sure.
That when Michael asks where.

The war is.
He does not really want.

To know.
Showtime approaches.

I will hold.
Your place in line.

Lemon Pie

Sometimes I ask a dog.
Sometimes I ask a shoe.

I don't trust

teachers
and recruiters.

I don't ask at all
when I don't want an answer.

I eat lemon pie sometimes
and cancel the days

on the calendar
with an

X

which is a kiss.
Sometimes I cancel my hand.
Sometimes I cancel

the lady fidgeting

with her tank top
in the magazine.

House of India #7

The House of India puts out its own fires. It never confuses that which is ancient for that which is rare. A silver fork and a pear. A silversmith and a box of silver parings.

She ignores worldly purpose, never hurrying. Her every step gives me time to improve myself. I memorize and recite an epic poem about a whale and the barefoot girl who loves him. I learn to summon demons that glisten and burst like soap bubbles.

The words, the musical phrases that the epic poet pared away, remain as vapors. I breathe them in. I spin.

Are there daily specials? The waitress nods her head and recites what she learned by rote earlier in the day: *good parenting; some sort of onion-like event, cut into rings and fried; my feet hurt in these shoes; our soup of the day is a place, far from home, that becomes elastic when remembered.*

THE POET SPEAKS... *There's a certain finality to a story that I can never quite achieve. Narrative seems so damn sure of itself, and that's most likely why I lean toward the lyrical. The fragmented and broken still matter, still hum. Certain rhetorical patterns accessible through verse remind me of my birthplace, Pontiac, Michigan, where there are scraps of the past in the streets too forsaken, too interesting to focus on a rebuild.*

Some sort of need or desire, however, must have built that city in the first place. I like a poem that sets up a system, a logic, a theorem, a bookish nugget of some-such and melts into beauty and mystery, that outwits the book by foregoing wit. I see such movement in the poems of John Ashbery, Dara Wier, Fred Moten . . . I don't see the about or the lamp in a poem about a lamp; I hope to better understand light and the strange shades of emption that it allows when I turn on a poem.

AUTHOR BIO: Glen Armstrong holds an MFA in English from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and teaches writing at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. He edits a poetry journal called *Cruel Garters* and has three current books of poems: *Invisible Histories*, *The New Vaudeville*, and *Midsummer*. His work has appeared in *BlazeVOX*, *Conduit*, and *Otoliths*.