

teLlin g a StRanger...ger...ger...ger

By Sean Fitts...Fitts...Fitts...Fitts...

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... Sean spawns a delightful interior monologue, here, before our very eyes that Fitts “you in a formulated phase.” Along the lines of J. Alfred P’s: “...for decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.” Oh, do not ask, who is Fitts? “Let us go and make our visit.” (Yes, it is sad when the poetry editor is found out to be nothing more than a vulgar punster.) But not Fitts: Feast your eyes on the phrases he fashions without the aid of punctuation: “great danes with the names of gods / walking independent of their owners” And the courage he musters ‘Telling a Strange’ “the pleasure it brings me to part / that long hair like curtains and / take each nipple between my lips...”it rivals being Fitts-Rated. However, he becomes gentler, less familiar (almost discreet) and more conversational in a wonderfully discretionary, discursive and digressional, rhythmically meandering sort of way... “and there will arise a moment / you distrust my judgment / even scold me for my generosity”*

(Spacing is poet’s own.)

Telling a Stranger

If I had your ear
what would I tell you
clear statements about myself
would come first you
do not know me you
have never stood beneath
shoreline stars along the eastern
coast foreign smoke coughing
the throat right out of you

great danes with the names of gods
walking independent of their owners
at the water's foaming edge
what would I tell you
I would tell you I believe
in magic in the mind
because it is as easy as believing
in God
you do not know me so you
will laugh
I would tell you what attracts
me to a woman the way
long hair falls in front and
covers her breasts complete
the pleasure it brings me to part
that long hair like curtains and
take each nipple between my lips
one at a time
you will tell me I've become
too personal and perhaps
you are right perhaps
but you are such a good
listener so eager that I would
have no control over my
own privacy
you will apologize but there would be
no need
so I would tell you the last
time I'd cried I'd cried because
my plans had been ruined
that I had felt cheated
when I should have felt secure
and you will place your palm
over my sadness kept just
below my elbow
I would tell you rain
is not unpleasant to me
that I often wonder if the first
to notice a sunset had feared
the sun would never rise again

light never shine again
only a world of darkness would remain
I would tell you the story
of my mother the story of my
father how they'd met in New York
City studying acting how neither
had made a career of their art
you will tell me
now that so much time has passed
now that you have grown
more comfortable
more at ease in your
position as listener that I am keeping
secrets from you
things I'd rather you not know
and perhaps
you are right
perhaps
so I would tell you of my friends
this quiet conversation will lead
us to them
of their successes and failures
of their habits and addictions
some have married
some have raised children
and there will arise a moment
you distrust my judgment
even scold me for my generosity
a scolding of ten thousand words
of two thousand gestures
I would tell you my name
you will not have asked
I would not have offered
I would tell you I appreciate the shortness
of my first name my middle name
belonged to my maternal grandfather
my last name rhymes with scores
of misfortune I would tell you
death is the next part of our passage
a story a hallway a highway

to be read to be walled to be driven
you will have questions I will let you
ask them
I would tell you I am too young
to know
if I am afraid
to die
you will recognize a naïve man
and perhaps you are right perhaps

THE POET SPEAKS... *The first draft of "Telling a Stranger" was written on an airplane a few years ago. The plane was small, and my ticket placed me on the side with only one seat per aisle. With no one seated next to me, I wrote a poem about what I might tell a stranger if there had been a seat to my right and a stranger filling it. "Telling a Stranger" is as much a daydream as it is a poem.*

I took stylistic influence from Beat poets, ee cummings, and Kay Ryan. I neglected punctuation for two reasons. First, it lends to the stream of consciousness effect I wished to create, giving readers (I hope) the sense of rushing water, an open faucet of language. Second, I like that it affords readers the opportunity to create their own stopping points, their own complete sentences, perhaps allowing them to derive new intentions. Perhaps.

The importance of poetry has been undeniable throughout my life. It's acted as both a form of sustenance and meditation. It encourages me to read slowly, to read once, twice, ten times, to mentally bathe in a poet's carefully selected (and placed) words. Writing poetry is a divine mixture of pleasure and frustration, of emotional outburst and stylistic control. While writing can sometimes feel like an unnatural act, I'm certain it will continue to play the role of necessary outlet for years to come.

AUTHOR BIO: My name is Sean Fitts, and I am 34 years old. Throughout my life my poetry has been published here and there, and I've given a few live readings. While I haven't submitted my work with as much regularity as I'd like, the engine that keeps me writing has never ceased.