

# STINGING RED and other poems...

By Sam Smiley

*Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: These are worth a look, some interesting lines and thoughts. Stinging Red is a lovely little allegory hyperbolizing the incidental; Toxic Penetration, a somber reflection. Treachery, 'Are your tear ducts obstructed or is it just your heart?' . . . 'I am from empty job promises / and dwindling savings accounts.' From the mundane to the mysterious comingled—if only I had a modicum of emotional intelligence. There are times when my undiagnosed psychopathy conflicts with my critiques.(Spacing is poet's own.)*

## Stinging Red

When I was little,  
I never wore goggles to swimming lessons.  
After a few times,  
I got used to the way chlorine burned my eyes,  
leaving the pool with red where white should've been.

The world was the same when I grew up.  
It made me hurt and shake with anxiety  
until I forgot  
what it was like to sleep regularly  
and not have burning eyes.  
I got used to the pain.

Three weeks ago, my doctor wrote me a script  
for some little blue pills.  
She told me she was giving me goggles  
and that life would be easier now.

I don't know how to tell her  
that these are my fourth pair of goggles.  
They all leak  
and my eyes are still red.

Toxic Penetration

He walked on water  
but unlike God,  
he didn't float.  
As a mortal,  
he sunk down  
into the depths,  
wrists slit  
to poison the blue.

It's polluted down there.  
We cannot escape to Mars  
and he cannot enter the depths  
to escape the toxicity of the air.  
It's sad that he couldn't see  
that red seeping into blue  
doesn't always make purple.  
Sometimes it makes brown.

Treachery

We're on an island.  
We are the island,  
a bubble of hope and mist  
surrounded by nothing but water,  
away from the perils of civilization  
until I hop on a plane  
and the fog clears.  
Only then I realize  
our island was a peninsula all along.

Would you be okay if we were landlocked together?

I dream of a sea,  
together we sit side by side  
rocking with the water  
until I wake and realize  
I'm covered in your sweat.  
The calm ocean I saw  
was a tsunami for you.

Does it scare you to have me so close?

Your room fills with water  
that drops from my eyes.  
How are you so calm  
while the room fills and I drown?  
Your gills protect you.

Why didn't you tell me you were a fish?

I want you to pull me under the sea,  
drown me in your tears.  
Show me that you love me  
enough to cry,  
enough to kill me  
with the sadness of us being apart.

Are your tear ducts obstructed or is it just your heart?

Through impassioned kisses,  
water flows until  
we create the ocean blue.  
Skin on skin, we are the crashing waves  
Until your mouth opens up and  
You swallow me.  
Please let me go.

Will I ever be able to find my way to shore?

I am again on an island,  
desolate and bare.  
Staring at the water,  
I watch you row the boat away.  
Our boat.  
Your boat now.

Are you leaving me shipwrecked?

### **THE POET SPEAKS...**

*I wish I could say that I had intentionally chosen to write water-themed poems, but after months of poems flowing out of me, I noticed that water kept coming up over and over. I started to realize that we are initially grown in water, full of nutrients, living in amniotic fluid. We live our*

*lives made of 60% water and can only survive three to four days without it. This connection that we all have to water, along with growing up a block from Lake Michigan, made me see water everywhere, in everything. I embraced this theme and started to explore how water shaped the person I am and how I see the world.*

*For me, poetry is understanding and connection. I write because I feel a compulsion to explore the world and to share that with others, to connect in mutual understanding or misunderstanding. I find that connection in misunderstanding is almost always the most intriguing.*

*I read and write because I have to. I cannot imagine the world another way.*

**BIO:** *Sam Smiley is a writer from Racine, Wisconsin. They currently live in Chicago and study physics at DePaul University. Sam writes poetry and short fiction inspired by their experiences in the midwest. They are non binary, use they/them pronouns, and can be found on Instagram @wordsflowlikewater.*