

kyrsten nerys hodge

poetry reading 10/21/2024

taylor books

charleston, wv

in my memories, i remember that
that's between you and your god

i just want to be

goddamnit kyrsten, goddamn

"ohio should be illegal"

the person i used to love

my nsa agent broke up with me

"very close friends"

we need more

triggers

the ice cream poem

in my memories, i remember that

i'm just how i always imagined i was
my body, confusing emptiness for nothingness
and my heart, confusing sympathy for empathy

but either way i'm going to feel something tonight
because i want to lay prone and powerless

and finally feel
and finally feel
and finally
feel —
finally.

that's between you and your god

and me and my

teenage mutant ninja turtles

because what you did to me

i forced them to learn

smashing plastic bodies together

donatello wrestling raphael

leonardo pinning down

both bebop and rocksteady

and me confused

from figuring out

why their cowabunga sneers

suddenly felt so empty to me

and why their frozen faces revealed

a pain that even tearing apart

april o'neil won't fix

i just want to be

the person

you thought i was

being

when i was

the person

i thought i was

being

the person

i thought i was

goddamn it kyrsten, goddamn

purrs my imaginary girlfriend

who i just broke up with again

after the greatest

hate sex

we've ever had

and i honestly

have no idea why

my imaginary girlfriend

is so forgiving

my cute little cat girl

her big breasts bouncing breastfully

she's kinda fucking intolerable

my beautiful, incredible, and exhausting

imaginary girlfriend.

this poem
is called
“ohio should be illegal”

thank you.

the person i used to love

stashed her condoms in
a 1992 mcwitch bucket
and was always herself
for halloween
every, single, year.

the person i used to love
spoke these sentences
with sudden sinkholes
that always surfaced with
these "scare quote" echoes
and god, she had a amazing laugh

the person i used to love
loved me not a long time ago
and maybe one day
i will love her too
maybe one day
i will love
this girl
i've named kyrsten

my nsa agent broke up with me.

after nine years of
surveillance together.

i had brought up a new text
document and typed
– how are you today?

my screen flashes three times
which is how they respond
– "good"

i type into my search bar
– do you want to get lunch?

my browser window shakes
side to side, which means
– "no"

i type into a new email
– why not?

my screen flashes
sixteen times, which means
– "i don't know if
this is working for me"

i bring up a new word document
and type in comic
sans font size 72
– i love you.

my agent takes
control of my cursor
closes the new document
and saves the file as
– im_sorry.docx

and then my computer shuts down

“very close friends”

when the dude who started
blenko glass in milton died
he requested that his ashes
be spread over the grave
of his very close friend
the socialist firebrand
eugene victor debs

this dude's name was
william john blenko
and he was
a total fucking comrade

blenko had met debs
in kokomo indiana
and they were both
very close friends

blenko wrote debs
dozens and dozens
of love letters
for over thirty years
and they were very close friends

and that's the story
that's all there is
because the
dozens and dozens of
love letters
were burned by
concerned family members
because william john blenko
and eugene victor debs
were just “very close friends”

we need more

silly little bois
and big goons
and trans girls
obsessed with
tossing the shark

we need more
gummy bear butches
and transsexual tops
and squishy enbys
with date mates
carrying mushroom purses

we need more
dapper little mascs
with millennial
finger mustaches
and genderflux zucchinis
in checkerboard suspenders

and we need more queers
because we always need more queers.

triggers

marlboro cigarette smoke. large dogs barking, anyone touching my lower back without asking. the taste, texture and smell of vienna sausages. fluorescent light. being restrained (most times) especially being physically restrained by someone bigger and more powerful than me. children being hurt or murdered. children dying. children being sexually assaulted. abandonment. gruesome gore on my eyes. large escalators like the ones at the mall. driving cars. anyone being disappointed in me. waiting for long periods of time. the tug of a retainer on your teeth. the care bears. the little plastic tables that hold your pizza together.

being yelled at. the sound of someone playing with a switchblade or similar knife. being cut open. being stabbed (again). the sound of fingers tapping in quick succession. tap tap tap tap tap tap. the clink when teeth accidentally touch. the smell and taste of abscessed teeth. being told i have to kiss him and feeling the ridges of his teeth pull at my lips.

the smell of burning rubber. the high-pitched whine of electrical appliances. the feeling of someone else's sweat trickling down the back of my neck. rapid breathing. picking cotton balls from medicine bottles. the scent of spoiled milk. wet underwear clinging to my tiny body. the feeling of bleach eating away at your fingertips.

neapolitan ice cream.

the ice cream poem

i can't do a good job of pretending to be vanilla anymore. not after what was done to me. you are going to learn something horrible. the reason i can't eat neapolitan ice cream.

now close your eyes and imagine. now close shut your eyes and *stop fucking squirming chris*. now close your eyes and hold your breath. a six grade field trip. colonial williamsburg. busch gardens. a hotel room in rural virginia.

teenage boys wrestling. his jock body easily pushing and pinning me down. his fist around my belt, yanking it loose, yet somehow still holding me down. the way my belt betrays me, it comes off so easily, that i laugh uncontrollably. he tosses it like a copperhead found in the forrest. it hits the hotel carpet with a thud.

my mouth now inaudible, caught in a moment. my entire body is silent. unsure if it was going to happen again. i close my eyes. i imagine my hands running across cds in the fye at the mall, i am anywhere but here. he spits in his palm, and prepares me, and –

later. sitting in the shower. trying to sit down on the toilet, but i can't. it hurts. more than i have ever hurt. i hold my eyes closed until my eyes crack open in pain, i finally make it into the shower. i see maroon stripes... my sour asshole red with blood, brown with shit and white with cum.

chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry. neapolitan ice cream. i am a little kid's mother. so i have been to a dozen different little kid birthdays. and it's always the same shit. it's always neapolitan ice cream.

i never eat the ice cream. it always makes me feel sick inside. sometimes i would stare off and try not to shake. sometimes i would forget that i was a little boy's father. *buckle up and be brave, daddy*. but i always i look down on the paper paw patrol plates and all i can see is blood, shit, cum. blood shit cum. blood shit cum mixing together. neapolitan ice cream.