



appalachian transsexual

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twelve poems by kyrsten

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my body
writes into your flesh
the poem
you make of me.

audre lorde, "recreation"

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content warning: "the ice cream poem" contains extreme depictions of sexual violence.

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. children being 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 my teeth. the care bears. the little plastic tables that hold your pizza together.

being yelled at. the sound of someone playing with a switchblade. being cut open. being stabbed (again). the sound of fingers tapping in quick succession. tap tap tap tap. tap. tap tap tap tap. tap tap tap tap.

the clink when teeth accidentally touch. the smell and taste of abscessed teeth. the smell of burnt hair. 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. 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 forest. it hits the hotel room 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. trying to sit down on the toilet, but i can't. it hurts. more than i have ever hurt. and i have hurt a lot. i hold my eyes closed until they crack open in pain, i finally sit in 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. 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 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.

i just put out my yard sign

and it reads: in this house, we believe... trans women are women. all cops are bastards. john hinckley junior did nothing wrong. kurt cobain is trans. all landlords are liars. devine is still the filthiest person alive. in this house, we say faggot and tranny and we graffiti girdicks on cop cars. and yes, astrology is real, but so are the stars. so, fuck it. long live lesbian poetry. trans men are hot as fuck. free luigi mangione. no one is free until everyone is free. non-binary people don't owe you androgyny. appalachia is not a graveyard. they didn't burn witches, they burnt women. libraries are sacred spaces. infinite jest is actually hella eggy. anarchy is a love language. dinosaurs had feathers. invisible disabilities are real. zines are revolutionary. land back, now and forever. pronouns are poetry. disco never died. queer joy is resistance. borders are just scars on stolen land. mutual aid saves lives.

free palestine. free congo. free sudan. free haiti. water is life, and corporations shouldn't own a fucking drop. fuck the supreme court. sign language should be taught in elementary school. drag is for everyone. black lives matter, always and forever. love is a verb, not just a feeling. ramps should be everywhere, not just where they

think we belong. sex work is real work. rest is a radical act of rebellion. science is real, but so is magic. consent isn't sexy, it's mandatory. queer rage is righteous. in this house, we believe it's not about the fucking bathrooms. it's never been about the fucking bathrooms. when they put us against the wall, it won't be because we used the wrong fucking bathroom. and capitalism is a horror beyond comprehension, but even then, it can be defeated. because you are beautiful. and so is the world. and together we can defeat anything. because in this house, we believe that a better world is still possible. because in this house, we believe that a better world is still possible. because in this house, we believe that a better world is still possible.

as long as we fight for it.

inverted, the empress

inverted, the empress.
a sense of femininity
and negative
emptiness, rusted.
disharmony in my body
my inner desires
neglected, an unexpected
opening, a new wound
opened
in myself, holding
hands in harmony
my body, i haven't shaved
my legs, i haven't shaved
my breasts, in weeks
my tender window
into femininity
a prescription dose
my communion, with
myself. i've neglected
allowing myself joy
i've neglected being
myself, the woman
i've named kyrsten
who or what am i
anymore? what can
i do with this body?

i'm obsessed
with looking
into the mirror for
myself again. is
she in the mirror?
is she
longing for,
what never was
an impossible
orchard of memories?
me, myself
lost in "her" again
the thick curtain
of sadness
the music of myself
atonal, chords, chimes
who am i?
what am i?
how do i continue
when i've never really
started, anything.
not me or myself
lost in "her" again.
i'm lost, again.
i'm lost –

executive orders

they want us dead ..

buried, gone, erased, eliminated, annihilated, silenced, extinguished, destroyed, isolated, excluded, abandoned, cast out, shunned, forsaken, alienated, vanished, desolate, hopeless, exiled, condemned, suppressed, outlawed, suffocated, restricted, prohibited, invalidated, detransitioned, misgendered, deadnamed, dehumanized, policed, censored, banned, disenfranchised, rewritten, abolished, forced into hiding, made invisible, humiliated, objectified, ridiculed, ignored, vilified, demonized, persecuted, hunted, imprisoned, tortured, executed, incinerated, exterminated, eradicated, forgotten ...

but we're still here ..

living, loving, thriving, transitioning, growing, healing, breathing, empowering, evolving, adapting, transforming, discovering, nurturing, motivating, imagining, dreaming, hoping, shining, marching, organizing, screaming, demanding, manifesting, enduring, cherishing, connecting, dancing, defending, being fearless, holding out hope, inspiring, laughing, protecting, rejoicing, singing, soaring, triumphant, uplifting, surviving,

fighting, resisting, renewing, rallying, mobilizing,
persevering, affirming, becoming, embracing,
celebrating, liberating, transcending, undeniable,
unbreakable, unshakable, unstoppable, free ...

we will always be, free.

my nsa agent broke up with me

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

my computer shuts down
and i see myself
in the black screen's reflection

but i wear the cat ears in the relationship

but i wear the cat ears in the relationship
i get to purr and paw and play,
curl up in sunbeams and chase yr string,
with a twitch of my tail and knowing grin,
i arch my back, my eyes half-lidded, waiting

a soft pain stirs as i rub against you
you claw my back, and whisper "good girl"
and i listen, my ears tilting towards you
my body hums, i purr deeply

but i am a feline, fierce, and free —
a creature wild beneath your hand
you may hold me close
but you'll never cage me

i'll stay because i choose to,
because my heart beats
to the rhythm of wild moons,
and my soul thrums
under the shadows
of an untamed longing

the snake, preacher

if a snake's a snake, the snake is a snake
and i'm suddenly awake, swallowing my spit
and the air is thick with the ghost of –
her shape slithering through my memories

the snake, preacher, with the burnt tongue,
scabbed heart, slithers around you
she wants you to be broken
she wants you to be her sermon
she'll talk to anybody about you but you
she doesn't want to fix what's wrong
she wants to be right, most of all

she won't hold you when
you are hot with want and need
she'll watch you writhe, choke on the ache
she preaches forgiveness,
but prays for vengeance
humming hymns
while carving scars into your back
and once you break her heart,
she sets her sights on destroying you.

a while ago ...

the rabbit asked me,
what kind of animal would you be?

and then tells me i'm a snake
tongue split with sharp words i never spoke
i slither away from the rabbit's gaze,
the preacher's shadow, the suffocating air
she'd prefer her sermons over actual anarchy
swallowed lies and a love that won't obey

i am a snake, no, i am not a snake,
i am what you made me –
molting skin, leaving behind
the ghosts of what you wanted

dissolving into darkness

our pangs of lightning
haunted by ghosts of longing
and electric whispers
that cackle through the void

falling into shadows,
where breath meets skin,
a tethered yearning unravels
the storm murmurs our names

a shiver — mine, then ours —
light bends and breaks,
in this haunted silence
desire braids its rhythm

and the hollow sounds fills itself,
fingers tracing constellations,
only to empty out again
as we dissolve into the darkness

everything feels impossible

everything feels impossible
but not everything needs
to be done right now.

the loneliness i feel?
it can wait.

the ache in my chest,
the pull in my body?
it can wait.

the constant buzz of worry?
it can wait.

the endless scrolling,
the hollow craving for something
the longing for longing
that isn't my own?
it can wait.

the fumbling for connection?
the desperate search for meaning?
it can wait.

because everything changes,
and nothing stays forever.

not even me,

not even this moment
when the want is heavy
but the stillness is louder.

so i'll reach for it —
this heat, this ache —

i'll let it pass through me,
like a storm that tears open the sky,
then fades into nothing,

because
everything feels impossible
right now

so i wait,
with this weight
on my chest,

waiting,
hoping for something —
anything —
to shift, to break,
to happen
inside me
right now.

but the silence suffocates me,
and all i can do
— is wait.

the same monsters

the same monsters licking their lips
to scream tranny at me in the mall.
follow me until i get uncomfortable.
laugh at me. point.
jealous they can't. be me.
want me.

i know what they see —
hunger with no name,
a mirror they don't recognize
but still
want to smash.

they dress it up in spit and slurs,
and half-swallowed shame
their fists clenched tightly around
whatever power they think
they hold

but i walk on
the tile beneath my boots
snapping back something
they will never have
a rhythm, a certainty
a body that is mine

let them choke

on their own wanting.
let them whisper
their whimpers into beer cans,
into steering wheels, into pillows.

i am already gone,

and i do not stop to turn around.
they are not worth the look
back

they are not worth it.

i'm gone

a whisper among the fireworks

girl, it's never too late.
i took my first estradiol pill
in the cvs parking lot
on september first,
two thousand and twenty-two.
i was thirty-six years old,
and those tiny blue pills
tasted so surprisingly sweet.
i held them under my tongue
until they completely melted away,
just like the girls on reddit told me to do.

and when nothing magical happened,
i realized a week later, i was the magic happening.
the first change i felt was in my hands.
they had become soft, and then softer still.
and the feeling surprised me,
because i had never liked my hands before.
but i love my hands now.

and then, a few days later, i cried —
my first big, ugly, estrogen cry.
and it felt better than anything i'd ever felt before,
because even feeling bad feels good now.
the terrible feelings have become tolerable —
a whisper among the fireworks.

and girl, it's worth it.
goddamn, it is so worth it.
because i'm slowly seeing
a woman smiling in the mirror,
and the woman smiling back is me.

artwork

the cover artwork for "appalachian transsexual" is a reinterpretation of the communist iconography of the hammer and sickle where the hammer is replaced by a hitachi magic wand vibrator. i affectionately call this the "wand and sickle" and i am not the first person to draw this logo or make the connection. a quick search of "hitachi magic wand and sickle" will show you other imaginings and variations of this idea. take a look.

the hitachi magic wand, an iconic symbol of sexual liberation and personal agency, paired with the sickle, a tool of labor and survival, is not just a visual pun; it is a declaration. it asserts that liberation must also include bodily autonomy and sexual pleasure as acts of resistance and liberation.

for me, the wand and sickle also represents a declaration of personal and communal power, liberation, and sexual solidarity. it is also a reminder that joy, especially queer sex and trans joy, is radical and that trans existence itself is a revolutionary act in a world that seeks to deny us the autonomy of our bodies.



about

kyrsten nerys hodge (she/her) is an appalachian transsexual poet from huntington, west virginia. she is the author of the self-published poetry zines *missladyma'amwoman* and *appalachian transsexual*.

instead of swiping through dating apps, kyrsten has decided to find romance and connection *stardew valley*-style. if you'd like to get to know her better, consider bringing her three carrots.

kyrsten, it goes without saying, is an *aquarius* and would love to be your friend.

you can find her online at www.kyrstenhodge.com

twelve poems about... lingering triggers, neapolitan ice cream, yard signs, inverted tarot cards, executive orders, getting dumped by your nsa agent, the cutest cat girl you've ever met, betrayal that hisses like a snake, sapphic ghosts whispering in the dark, the weight of waiting, mall chasers, and taking estradiol for the first time.

poetry / queer / appalachia

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<https://www.kyrstenhodge.com>