

Tom Daley – Five Poems



Feature

Shiva

to the memory of Joe Cohen

On the nineteenth floor, the view on one side
is the kettle pond they call fresh,

on the other, a cemetery. And beyond, on both
sides, the escarpment which slopes into

the Boston Basin. From here, the gulls
lug their heat over the air. From here,

pinus fetch their inundations of scent
designed to ward off beetles.

We have walked here in sight
of these windows, and insect-like,

crawled over belvederes and asphalt
paths. For ten years or so

the now deceased has pushed his last decade
into the realm of companionable verse,

has distributed headshots of the poets,
has slipped into the tears that the prostate

preaches. Here let us commemorate
his narrative, his vainglory, his kindness.

Let us sit in rooms which never
had a mirror to cover, and cough a little

in deference to the struggle of his
last and latest breaths.

The Tomcats

for my brother, Bill

April morning. Now
you wake me before the sun.
Stunned, you show me how

the near-leafed maple
beside the oily garage
has crammed with scrabbling

tomcats, each one stretched
into a yowl and straining
towards the fetching

pheromones our stray
female sprays into the yard.
Look at that! you say,

your voice a whisker
nibbling me from my yawns.
The tomcats, brisker

in their hepped-up moans,
seem to shudder their catcalls
as if spewing stones

at garage windows.
They stuff their raucous yearning
through the green windrows

to summon all taint
and tinge of shecat sprawling.
Their bawling spurs faint

light. The dawn inches
around tails and sportive claws.
Their grasping cinches

each bud-studded branch.

We sway, astonished and swung
by their roughshod raunch.

In the years to come,
we would prove, we sterile two,
tomcats of a some-

time trade. No litters
balking from our noisy loins.
We only dithered

in creation's game.
Only spilled our spurious seed
to tomcats' disdain.

Threshold: The Hallmaster

for Gene Legg

That bangs-and-rooster hairdo
favored by the glitter rock
raconteurs. That blonde and wry
uptick of the eyebrows. That mischievous
recliner spread out while you were
grading papers. We crowded
your apartment every night
for tea and ribaldry, no tea
ever being poured.

You had a glint for every
variance, a stent for every occlusion.

You were miraculous to us,
an adult provisioning carefree
balm, anointing our hideous
anxieties with your lighthearted
insouciance, greasing our joints
with your apple-flavored guffaws,
your pert imitations of a cornball
lustiness, your mimic
of the caricatures who floated
with helium inattention
down the corridors of your domain.

You gave yourself, your sleep, your
hangers, utterly to our badgering,
to our starved earlobes and eagerly
flared shoulders, to our gargantuan
wish to be drizzled in the weather
of your wrists and your palms.

When did you have a minute
to dream, or lesson plan,
or find a woman to nuzzle
your heart so big it almost
saturated your ashtrays,

your button-down collars,
your tall tales and smiles
wide as a doorsill?

Ghost Story

Someone has stationed and lit
in the pile of boxes and furniture
a stick of incense

to fume away the last
details of your final days
in the bedroom where you died.

We have opened the windows wider
to let your palpability
ply its muscles

into the wind off the Pacific,
the cold moist wind that,
in today's sunshine,

dries you and your suffering
to a paltry oblivion.
Dear gaunt ghost,

loose now over the Marin
headlands, winking with the freighters
that bulk their way over the horizon,

remind me now and always
of the terror-inducing love
you offered up like a smoldering scent

to my nostrils that flared against
and revered your every pronouncement,
that could not factor

the strange arithmetic of your death wish,
the cumbersome joy of your lungs,
the knotted sting of your sweetness

that spooked behind your sour blinds
you kept flush against the sun

in every grieving season.

Goose Summer

for John

Now the dangerous ripples
riffle the goose calls.

At the edge of contentment,
still madrigals rub their din

with the blow of the gears
and the fault lines of the fan belts.

Our attachments are snared
in the subtle sway of perch and wind.

That lone bird is not half so lonesome
as I am when you have left me for the day.

With nothing to feast on,
the ants still dream in their crevices

beneath the rock wall.
Nothing can imagine us sweeter

than the scars which keep us close.

A machinist for over twenty years, **Tom Daley** leads writing workshops online and in the Boston area. His poetry has appeared in *Harvard Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Fence*, *Crazyhorse*, *Witness*, and elsewhere. His first book, *House You Cannot Reach—Poems in the Voice of My Mother and Other Poems*, was published by FutureCycle Press.