

“one of my life’s loves is exploited by the navy: a triple sonnet”

by Christian Aldana

1.

in the summer of 2013 we met sweating under the sun
shirtless and panting. your nipples, tiny american islands ,
your chest, not yet seafaring, but a raft more suitable
than tom hank’s in *cast away*. your suits, still pressed
& wrapped, have been in my closet since 2016 since you moved out.
the last time i saw you was in lake forest, illinois
for your bootcamp graduation i almost missed
where military police called me a fucking hippie
as i drove in in a borrowed toyota corolla that had more rust stains than miles.
i remember walking through the great lakes naval base, how foreign it felt,
how as i sat through the bootcamp ceremony not clasping my hands, not crossing my
heart.
i’m not sure if i stood or sat but i remember whispering to myself,
how bizarre it was & i couldn’t wait to leave with you next to me.
walking down the bleachers i heard footstep thuds surround me.

2.

i scanned crowds & blurred apparitions for a tall nut-nose white boy
who’s too smart for his own good & i remember finding you & you rushing up to me
with your bootcamp buds. we drove to hansa coffee in lake bluff for cortados & a free
small drip
we’d sip on as we looked on lake michigan toward canada.
we went to my dorm after & the first thing you wanted was to strip
out of your dress blues, which you thought were embarrassing;
i wish you didn’t uber back with your wife. i reread my training journal
in the summer of 2019 and how i ran past your base on sunday nights
for an entire midwest winter, which was seven miles away.

i remember hearing your voice through a nokia 1110;
we've evolved from private firework shows to late night voicemails
from kurt vonnegut to patricia smith from prosciutto to raw salmon
from scientist to artist. this is all an indirect way of me saying
i know i couldn't do what you're doing.

3.

i couldn't live on sleep deprivation, radioactive assignments,
& screaming. you've made me hate the military. what it does to people.
how they drive humans to death. service people shouldn't have a tree
they'll crash into picked out & if they do their work hours shouldn't increase.
you've made me hate the military. service people that attempt suicide & fail
shouldn't have their hours increased. i don't want you to bash your head
till your skin splits and leaks over your hands; i don't want your bloody fingers
trailing along the walls & i don't want those trails to lead to signs that read:
i hate you. what i want is simple: you & me with too much shellfish,
with coltrane, with outward life on the edge, with our taints washed
with cold water, with our breath heavy as the land itself.
what i don't want: i don't want you to feel the misery you do,
but if i had the opportunity to take on your burdens i wouldn't,
because i'd have driven into that eastern white pine long ago.