

# **TONGO EISEN-MARTIN**

**CUT A HAND FROM A HAND  
MAY WE ALL REFUSE TO DIE AT THE  
SAME TIME  
CHANNELS TO FALL ASLEEP TO**

## CUT A HAND FROM A HAND

“if you reverse the car any farther,  
you will run over all the scenes in the back of your mind”

I never cared for teachers...just the pattern of fainting spells induced by wall art.  
Propaganda is courage, man

The price sticker hid my tattoo  
-I treasure my problem with the world

“My mother becomes from Brooklyn first thing in the morning”  
-a proverb around these parts  
    proverb or peasant entrance password

Writing short notes to famous Europeans  
On the backs of post cards  
With ransom requests

They reply with a newsreel or cigarette announcement (I can't tell the difference)

-Noble dollars then you die inside  
    (but only inside)

“They call it, ‘sleeping deeper than your stalker.’  
And stalker is all that badge makes you,”  
says a great spirit dressed in the bloody rags tuxedos became

meanwhile my punch is feared by no one  
    “Proud of yourself?” I ask the fret hand

“Porch Lights” is what they call our guns  
    I've seen this house in a dream  
    I've seen this chair on behalf of a dream

*I believe a trumpet was the first possessed object to fly*

“keep going,” she cheers

the draft in the room becomes a toddler  
obsessed with the altar  
the altar becomes a runaway train  
got a thousand paintings cascading down my skinny arms  
Dictionaries piling up to the window bars

basements called dope fiend cocoons  
crowd into the part of my mind  
referred to as my heart  
-a reminder to the population that  
your blanket can work with  
or against you-

human reef/  
we will be a big human reef  
for concepts that finally gain a metaphysical nature  
and they will swim around our beautiful poses

we stop being flashbacks  
then stop being three different people  
then I was alone [the pistol is one city away]

one of the drug triangle's lines runs through my head  
tap the bottle twice and consider the dead refreshed  
“don't you want to rest your bravery?  
don't you want to be a coward for a little bit?”  
-back and forth to a panic attack with no problems nor fears

a man gets a facial expression finally  
a Friday finally goes his way  
his life is finally talked about happily in his head

*I can't possess the body of a hermit  
I must be the last of his smoke  
Now running away with three blocks of alley  
Tucked under my arm  
You ever see a man  
get to the bottom of his soul  
in a car ride down a missing cousin's street?  
half step to the right  
I mean I took the whole car outside of history  
Half step to the right  
I mean a whole pack of wolves stepped to my left  
-Deep in the recesses of the main recess*

“road marker” is what I called the light bulb we had for a sun  
a whole civilization might slink to the sink  
chain gang shuffling next to a sucker

-the long look in the mirror [a stack of money starts talking from four cities away]

## **MAY WE ALL REFUSE TO DIE AT THE SAME TIME**

“I believe I wasn’t born yet, when a young woman put her first gun under a car seat,”  
The painter explained  
in front of his work  
with a .38 in his back pocket

Combination of conversations you may call it:  
The day all the saints clocked in late  
mixed with the first serious talk  
seven year old best friends have about war.

What war stories taught me I now teach you

“the world is just a constellation of walls.  
Twitch a little less than everyone else.  
That’s the key.”

I miss her  
Or is the cage of a west bound interstate bus ride beautiful when all but three people are  
asleep

I’m writing poems for the rest of my life again

Taught by the greats:

“friends make friends. You just be a good liar.”

“you would not believe the grains of blue

I found after they laid me to ground.”

“fit in, youngster.”

“fit in, trigger man.”

“watch your nickname mean something to more than five people.”

*the newspaper is on fire. forget about the car.*

A white giant was born without a third dimension.  
It wanders under county jail slippers and people who smoke by themselves in old city  
parks

Electric chairs are not complicated  
Have a drink. Go to work.

*“They lynched his car too. Strung it up right next to him... You see, a smart man  
makes up his own set of holidays... Mind. I had a mind once. Served my immediate family well.  
But that’s all over now. Now I live in america... A smart man switches the dates around of his  
holidays too. Because enemies have a sense of humor.”*

A most impressive reimagining of a painter

Up here  
Where the tenth floor  
Might as well be a cloud of dust  
Or a version of myself that  
I can point your attention to  
While I count my money and curse mankind

The best way to pay me  
Is in my left hand  
While my right is juggling  
A cigarette  
A steering wheel  
And a negotiation with the ruling class

Maybe you are not a sleepy employee in a project lobby  
Maybe you are blood on a fiber  
Maybe you are my friend

*I have ruled the world.  
Let me sleep this off.  
Is that your tongue in the sky?  
That's the only weather I need.*

*Lazy conversation  
-the only way physics advances*

my right hand jogs away from the band

this getaway is live

this instrument  
is not yet invented

Coming down  
With the rest of the sound  
-the young woman and me about to be born

“And there. There is you. Dancing with someone’s daughter in front of the precinct”

## CHANNELS TO FALL ASLEEP TO

While shoe box to shoe box travels my childhood

Professionals roll garbage cans around a conference room

Half the size of a holding tank

Half the hope of a holding tank

Full of third world retail flattery

“nothing wrong with the blind leading the blind,”

we think they just said

the entire train station crouches behind a piano player  
and why should Harlem not kill for its musicians

“He is in a dream”

“A spirit world”

“I should introduce myself”

“And convince him to sleep”

porcelain epoch

succeeding for the most part

dying for the most part

married for the most part to its death

when a hostage has a hostage

that is u.s. education

stores detach their heads

and expect you to do the same when you enter

God says, “do not trust me in this room”

Two fascists walk into a bar

One says, “let’s make a baby.”

The other says, “let’s make three... and let the first one eat the other two.”



your sky or mine  
read from  
the book of pool room enemies

“I’m the best kind of square. Poor and in love with the 1960s. The first picture I ever saw  
in my life faded from my storytelling a long time ago.”

Not even ten years old  
And most of you are on my shoulders

The store’s detached head smiled

casually be poor  
teach yourself  
how to get out of this room  
and we’ll leave you enough blood  
to turn off the lights  
on your way out

casually be poor  
they are all cops when you are poor