

Surf's Oasis

by Milo Pittman

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a poetry chapbook by

Milo Pittman

Sand

bunny-shaped pancakes

i often sit beside the river and wish badly to follow it to its end, to where it's nothing but forests and crunchy leaves and trees that block the sun and shelter the animals.

i often wish to take you with me, to build a small cottage with the satisfaction of our own work and the solitude of nothing interrupting our love.

i often think of how it would be, how you would sit and watch the deer and rabbits and birds living like we are, listening to the soft song of animals from the highest branches to the lowest burrows,

how i would go out and collect mushrooms and work in a small garden, a little farm of carrots and leafy greens and pumpkins that i'd share with our neighbourhood foxes who aren't used to the kindness of a soft hand.

i often consider not wanting to give up creature comforts so i'd order in things like pancake batter so i could treat you to cinnamon and vanilla scents and bunny-shaped pancakes in bed,

how you would hate to give up your comfort creatures and i refused to let you, so we go to sleep every night with a dog in a comfy separate bed, and a black cat who sleeps wherever she chooses.

a nest away from it all

i've never been a city bird.

all the tall buildings, too tall to perch from and see the view, too tall to hide in,

too tall to avoid the people you know and the people you wish you didn't.

all the loud noise, too many beeps to rest your wings, too many screams to call for help
without being drowned out.

you're my only hope around here, darling. you're my fly-or-die-of-a-speeding-car, my rock
(and garbage bin connoisseur), telling me what 'rocks' are edible.

birds of a feather flock together, and we've definitely lost too many feathers to not flock as
close by as possible.

quite often, i dream of getting the flock outta here.

my cousins live way out in the country, and it's so much better. no tall buildings to worry
about, no sudden screams to kick you out of slumber like an idiot's shoe on the sidewalk.

heard the rent's cheaper out there. and the housing's more permanent.

plenty of trees to perch our forever nests on together, to leave the big city and its fake dreams.

to migrate like us birds are known for, and get our lives properly started. and more
importantly to lose our feathers from old age and not stray cars.

home is where the hostility isn't, darling. so wouldn't you like a nest away from it all?

moonrise lookout

constellations in the night and the hues in the day. we spend our days admiring the sky together.

i've never felt so messed up like this.

sitting with you has me covering my face, stumbling over my words like an untrained hurdle runner.

having a picnic together at moonrise lookout, watching the sun disappear on the skyline and my troubles disappear with it.

it's insane to think how badly i've fallen for you.

i want you by my side,

i want to play video games with you

(and happily lose),

i want to cook you the best meal you've ever eaten

(even if i've got no clue how to make a thing)

i want to watch trashy tv until our eyes go square

and our legs hurt from crossing them too long

and our bodies are so tired from not moving that we lean into each other and melt.

you've got my brain running faster than it ever has been, my thoughts speeding on the highway while we scream the lyrics to the most romantic songs i could find in my lovestruck rush

you make my thoughts spiral up and up before unfurling into a thousand hearts, it's such a fluttery feeling that i hate not being used to and can't wait to enjoy with you.

we meet at moonrise all the time. we watch as

the moon comes up,

the sun goes down,

the moon goes back down,

and the sun comes back up.

till nine deaths do us apart

we meet under streetlights, under high-rise neon lights, under nothing more but the starlight
and the moons attempts to bring life to our shadowy lives.

we're two black cats who've mastered the blade, an art that goes to waste in our use of it
behind each other's backs.

across the entire planet, we're brought together by what some cruel gods decide to be fate.
across years, decades, centuries, millennia, eras that should really be separating us, we come
back again and again to fall for each other, to see who can weaken first. who can fall into the
other's blood-stained paws to be betrayed first.

we meet in shadows to hide the reality of our love-hate living, traverse the darkness as a way
to stay together while keeping each other at arm's length.

keep your friends close, your enemies closer, but your lovers the furthest.

keep your cards close to your chest, your knives at your waist and your crossed claws behind
your back.

alas, in a twisted turn of fate,

as we both twist a knife in each other's final wound,

the gods give us yet another nine lives to try again.

and when i hear this, i take your paw in my paw, hold you close, and ask just a single
question,

despite knowing the answer before it comes from your traitorous, loving muzzle:

will you live a life in the shadows and moonlit forests with me, till nine deaths do us apart?

raccoon mafia

any room's a panic room if you give me a goddamn second.

we own this town and you know it. don't forget for a second how you tremble in fear at the sheer sight of grey and black fur.

we're scavenging your rubbish for the food you refuse to give us, and fall for the animal traps you leave us only to lull you into a false sense of security.

we're bandits who work in the night, banging at your windows to rob you of the sleep you steal from us.

i ask for snuggles, but all i get is struggles.

we harvest the fruits from your gardens, something you'd never do yourself because you're 'sO buSy'.

we're thieves of careful kindness, taking the packages from your doorstep to save you the clutter of yet another impulse buy.

we're stealing the crunchy autumn leaves from your lawn, taking them so you can't put off sweeping them away.

it's been lovely, but i must scream now.

we lunge at your windscreens with foam filled mouths, avenging the lives lost at the hands of your gigantic wheeled machines.

we're digging in your drawers for the knives, taking away the problem and putting it in the solution's hands.

we're the raccoon mafia, taking over this town for the better and removing the worse.

Sky

to the people i'll never meet

the sydney transport system is a wonderfully screwed up thing.
it can bring people from a to b (with a stop in granville in-between) in record slow time.
the trains are brilliant, and the buses are designed so you can't see the filth of the unwashed seats.
but this isn't a poem to the delayed timetables, or the unreliable announcements.

it's not about the convoluted routes, or the expensive fares.
this is a poem about all the people i'll never meet. the people i see on trains and buses every day. everyone taking the same route as me to an incredibly different destination.

some doors close, some doors open to the people who have train maps downloaded on their e-readers, and the people who have to resort to year old train maps posted on graffitied frames.

to the people who travel every day in fast food uniforms, and the people in fancy business suits that cost more than i'll ever earn in my life.

to the people writing novellas in their morning trip, and the people who type on a laptop showing nothing but a yellow screen.

to the people who know exactly where and when to press the stop button on the bus, and the people who yell murder it isn't working when the bus is already stopped.

to the people on their way to a party in an outfit sparkly enough to outshine the stars, and the same people on the hungover ride home.

some doors open, some doors close to the people who compliment outgoing outfits, and the people who scream homophobia with hate deep inside them.

to each and every person on public transport, every insane and calm personality, and every rushed or relaxed passenger,
this poem's for you.

if only i could share the starry night with you

we met online, chatting over something i'll never remember.

it wasn't long before we fell for each other, talking all the time and sending each other goofy selfies of our hair looking fluffy or like a mop from the soaking rain.

we agreed that we would meet someday, after i finished high school.

it was almost every day, talking about what we had going on in life, or what we wanted to eat, or whatever was on our minds at the time.

but even as we fell, i knew it wouldn't last.

it never does, distance.

whoever said the heart grows from such a treacherous disorder was trying to tide over their own fading relationship.

we were two worlds apart. geographically not far, but in real life it would've never worked.

i suppose i'm grateful. you've grown so much, much better than you would be with me.

i never consider our relationship anything romantic. i was absolutely bewitched, obsessed, lovestruck and every other word i could come up with for this. but it wasn't love, i'd say. it was growth, and kindness, and friendship, and platonic mateship, but not love.

so i go around, talking about never having a relationship because i don't consider us 'us'. i consider us the closest bros, until one of us disappeared. someone i fell for so quickly, so foolishly, falling for the leaf pile atop the bottomless pit.

this heart aches for you,

yearns for you,

misses you,

thinks of you,

but not in the way of love, no,

it was never anything with love.

so as i sit atop observatory hill all alone on a night clear as water, i look at the sky in the hopes i'll see you.

dartboard atlas

train maps, bus timetables, plane ticket prices, hotel bookings.

my walls are coated like flaky paint with the plans of the future in the skies i've always dreamed of.

where do you go when you can go anywhere?

so many intertwined routes to follow from place to place to place, never stopping too long for fear of missing too much, flying everywhere not in a way to escape but in a way to explore.

the good thing about this world is that you're never out of places to go or things to do.

i've never taken the train from sydney to canberra, or the 44 bus to kotara, or the f1 ferry to manly.

my life is full of ambition, of wishes, of things i'll never get around to in my fleeting time in orbit.

there's a whole wall made of whiteboard material, covered in a giant world map. there's annotations wherever they could fit, and a cup full of magnetic darts sits on the table for when i need another destination.

and with the click of a dart, another place is chosen to explore, and another trip starts just before one comes to an end.

like a drowned rat

(after English Trial Paper 2, 2023)

traversing treacherous tunnels on
a tummy empty in
a travesty of a boat to
travel to shelter and
safety
something stupidly for
so i sit soundly
listening lowly
moving slowly

until i eventually end up
against a shore,
surely a feeling of
not needing more?

sore, climbing from an upturned boat,
having stayed afloat
to look around and find
something unfamiliar

a place where, hoping i would find safety or something like that
the people simply ignored
this drowned rat.

Sea

point nemo

i paddle alone in a boat.

i made sure that i could fit no one else with me.

i made sure no one followed me.

i sit in a small single-person boat, checking a map and looking around at my lack of surroundings.

i made it to point nemo.

i'm away from everyone. every single distraction, every annoying person.

i'm separated from all the people i want to punch, and all the people i want to yell at.

i'm distant from every human i long for and every animal i yearn to pet.

i'm angered. pessimistic.

i'm .tranquil. peaceful.

i say hello to the space stations above me.

i'm at such a solitude point in the ocean that the closest to me are the space farers.

i've always wanted to go to space.

i've always wanted space.

i adventured all the way out here just to get space, after all.

i'm all alone here.

i'm at point nemo, the most alone place on earth.

i have no worries of anyone around. there's no one around to worry about.

i'm missing the world.

i want to leave.

i threw away my map a while ago.

i'd float out to sea with you

we were a small raft, but both of us would always stick together.

from when we were young, we would swim, dive and eat like we were connected at the side.

two otters, side by side no matter what.

as age swept away our childhood sparks, we rode the waves together and explored. floating away from our childhood, the places we lived going with it.

the raft we had spent our whole lives with slowly disappearing, but we felt as vibrant as ever.

we swam through every reef, trench and current, making sure to never stray too far from each other or our food.

i shared my rock with you in your lowest times, because to me you are my rock.

the one solid thing i can rely on, even when the riptides try pulling me away from you.

i shared my everything with you, only because you've done the same for me.

only because i know you'll always do the same for me.

people always say that childhood love never lasts.

our love has lasted longer than even the beaches.

while the stones and the sand erode over the years, our love has only changed for the better.

people always say that distance makes the heart grow fonder, but something in me never wants to test that.

the only distance i want in this life is distance with you.

i fear that if we let go, if we lose grip of each other, then we'll float away in an ever ruthless ocean.

i'd do anything for you. i'd float out to sea with you.

but only if you promise we can stay together.

‘jump in, the water’s nice!’

your every word is like the deepest end of the deepest pool. it starts off with such safe promise.

you say it’s not that deep, that you can feel the bottom.

but i know better than trusting you. you've drowned me before. you've pushed me past my limits against my will, shoved me over the edge of the pool into a 6 foot fate.

so of course, i'm sceptical when you say the water's nice. it's the lie that's stood the test of time. and when you coerce me, you convince me that it'll be perfectly warm and safe to jump in, how could i resist?

how could i not trust such an innocent, pool floaty like you? someone who's always been there for me?

and yet again, i jump into the water, and yet again your every word hurts like hitting the sharp edge of a rocky pool.

and yet again, you let me drown in my own gullible trust.

i should've known the water was icy cold, and i should've known that you were just the same.

small talk's worst enemy

every day, without fail, you ask the same question.

'how was your day?'

sometimes you have some variation.

on mondays it's usually 'how was your weekend?'

i hope you notice me never asking you the same.

it feels so incredibly forced; you're trying to manoeuvre a conversation by pushing on a pull door.

my answer is always some cheery iteration of 'good'. from the best days to the worst, you get the same answer to your same question.

recently it's gotten worse. you've started asking how i am in passing conversation, inquiring on my weekend plans while i leave the room.

a part of me, the part that wishes we could make an actual conversation work, wants you to at least try to hide your disinterest in every word i speak.

i don't understand how you enjoy all the small talk so much. you start every conversation with it. you sprinkle it like kindness into all your interactions.

sometimes i consider that i might be making assumptions that your every word is worthless.

it's entirely possible that you're not in fact making small talk.

i think i've begun assuming you're such a big fan of pointless questions that every question you ask is one.

i think that before i leave, i should just ask you one thing.

so,

how was your day?

the cut that always bleeds

we stopped being friends months ago. our friendship ended in absolute disaster.
we had a massive argument, and we were disgusted just to look at each other.
it felt like after years of trusting each other, you jabbed a knife as far into
my back as you could manage. the worst part is you've left it there. the wound's
healed, but if i take the knife out i'll probably die. you've sentenced
me to death.

we would hang out almost every day. we would take the same bus route (the 802),
meet every day to go to school together. i even moved to the same
school as you, just so we could stick together more. we would go to cabramatta
together, buy each other gifts and food and bubble tea and shout each other the
train fare home. you bought me tarot cards because i said i wanted to
try it. it's still sitting at the bottom of my bookshelf. i can't get rid of it. i hope i've
left an influence on you. i hope i've gifted you something you can't
rid of.

i haven't seen your face in almost five months. ever since we had a massive
argument, and you cut me with razor sharp disinterest in your eyes, you've been too
'scared' to show up to school. you were never scared to insult me. to jab me with your
switchblade. to slice me with your constant lies. i'm hoping you
decide to come back soon. i really want this to not become
the cut that always bleeds.

i've never been a fan of wilting roses

valentines day hits every single shop like waves against a rocky shore.

- candy hearts
- flowery arts
- big teddy bears
- chocolate to share

it all feels so pointless. to gift someone something that disappears so quick that there's no time to enjoy it.

sweet candy hearts. because nothing says i love you - well, other than candy hearts that say i love you - more than the harsh crash of sugar, comparable to a messy breakup where these hearts are just thrown against the wall as a mess to clean up later.

a bouquet of lovely roses. because nothing says i love you more than a vase full of gross, wilted hope, shrivelled up just like most valentine romances are.

fluffy, cuddly bears. because nothing brings more romance than a constant reminder of what probably wouldn't be.

a box of sweet, tasty chocolates. because nothing feels better than finishing the chocolate and being left with disappointment, and the realisation that this would be the first and last gift you'd send me.

oh how i wish for so much more than physical, fading gifts. a song or a poem or a handwritten letter, or any letter at all. or even taking me somewhere. try one of the other love languages for once.

this makes me, arguably, sound like a horrible, loveless person. unfortunately for you, you were my first love, and then you might be my last because i'm fucking this up so badly.

this isn't a poem, it's a cry for help. i'm begging you to try other things, to use another love language. if you'd be willing to translate for me, you know i'd try the same for you.

human-infested beaches

be careful heading to the beach, my darling.

there's plenty of humans there, and everyone knows that it won't be long until they come again and say that we're the unwelcome ones in our waters.

they put signs up warning other humans about us in the waters. they have these terrible, terrible signs, things like

'shark infested waters, keep out of water'

'sharks need to go back to the murky waters they came from'

'sharks deserve their rights stripped like the lives they've taken and be left with their fins torn off like the ships they've destroyed'

of course, us sharks have the forbidden knowledge these people avoid like... us.

we're not some terrible beasts who fight every chance we get, excited to soil the water blood red with some random people who swam out too close to the horizon's sun.

we're not a villain who terrorises every scientific crew just because they want to research the deep sea. we're more than happy to share what we know, if only people would actually take it.

tonight i'll be posting up some of my own signs. give these humans an overdose of their own toxic medicine. they're the ones who invented the concepts the whole animal kingdom must follow, so surely they'll handle their own rules well, right?

Surf's Oasis

merely an orca

i'm merely an orca.

a single being that's part of eight billion others on a planet

that's part of nine others in a solar system

that's part of three thousand, nine hundred and sixteen others in a galaxy

that's part of two hundred billion others in a universe

that's part of who knows how many others.

in the grand, grand scheme of things i'm absolutely nothing.

i want to rise to the sky knowing i left a good thing behind. i want to leave many good things behind.

i want to donate to charity. i want to write and write and write until my hands fall off, and i've given the world more books than the libraries can ever hold. i want to share the love of writing like shredded paper holding the lives of the lost all over so everyone can feel. i want everyone to know how to feel, how to show, how to tell. i want the world to know my name, and know it for nothing but good reasons and amazing influences and altruistic philanthropy and everything.

and in the small, small reality of things i'm absolutely everything.

and i need to hit the bottom of the ocean feeling no one will know my name. i need to move to a small country town where no one knows anyone fully yet everyone knows each other so much more than they thought. i need to make a tiny difference in the smallest way by opening a cafe and giving to the homeless and making the absolute best damn lattes this town's ever seen. i need to be known in the smallest town around, to be the most interesting legend passed around for a decade and forgotten by the children of the lives i affected by a bit.

but i know that by the end of it all i'll take absolutely anything. i'll take resolution in the term something, i'll settle for anything in the effort of sticking around longer than i'll be allowed. i know that things will end abruptly and i won't get the time to finish. i know that eventually time will take the pen from my hands and leave this story unfinished.

but all of this is just to say that in the grand, grand scheme of things,
i'm merely an orca.

but in the tiny, tiny point of things, i'm absolutely something.