

Casey Charles

Tico & Other Poems

↳TICO↳

I want to write about him. Javier.

I want to tell his story, my story.

I want to. If I can.

Bring you to him.

This cook in Quepos.

What he looks like,

what he feels,

what I feel,

body surfer,

Norte Americano.

Start with the gaps

between his smile,

with a tea dance.

Sunday, sunset.

If you go to Costa Rica,

you will see it.

Dusk melts there like butter,

spreads like butterfly wings.

His stocky build,
a Mayan calendar
on his chest.

He wrote his number
on my napkin.

I dialed nine at midnight,
an outside line, a local call.

In low tones he said okay.

I paced the parking lot.

The key, our shower.

If you could see him
eat vanilla wafers,

lather his hair,

see him rinse

the black and white of it.

If lines could express
the way he pressed his soles
against my ankles,

the way he lay

still wet on my bed.

Hear the fan

click in circles,

feel white tile

cool underfoot.

Slow and low

he spoke of his place

in this place,

in this palace

where he came
to come with me,
where he could only hope
to take tips
in his hand.
If you knew
what he'd been through,
if I knew how to say
the way his parents threw him out,
how he flew south from Managua.
I tried to put myself
inside him.
I wanted to find out
what he wanted.
If he wanted
what I wanted,
if he wanted
money for dues
to his gym
where he was to spin
at seven.
He saw my shape,
wanted to be in shape,
his fingers ran down my ribs,
felt my cage, his cage,
my definition.
My hand between his thighs
a floss of white
streamed from his moan,

me behind him,
on my side, on his side.
If I could find a way to know
how he felt I felt
when he brushed his thumb
across my chest,
my fingers inside his,
when I caught the crest,
rode the ocean alone.
Sand in a handful
of dollars I handed him
for his taxi home.

♣OUT IN THE ROCKIES♣

We have come to be discreet, to take wives,
adopt children, meet in toilets and cubicles.
We enter in the alley, park a block away.

We have come to post photos on websites
designed to match us with others in latex,
leather, tight t-shirts. Masculine we insist,

ready to rent cabins near Lost Trail, ready to raft
the mighty Salmon, share a snoring tent with bears.
We are trying to quit—social drinkers, we down

drafts in tanktops, looking up at videos of painful
penetrations. We long for the long term but settle
for fumbling buttons at the Econolodge. Our jobs

are anonymous, and we live in fear of slurs
thrown from pickups. Baseball bats, tire irons.
Christians who knock on doors with verses.

We were born this way. We knew at nine,
saw the high jumper in the shower, stripped.
We try to hide and would if we could play ball.

The police our enemies, basement comfort
our Madonna, our jello shot, our hook up
with the tattooed man who waits tables

until midnight guides him to the dark park,
rest stops and steam rooms, to mazes
and rambles where teeth tear the foiled condom.

Free of disease, we seek muscles under thirty.
Our sisters join the march down Main Street,
While we stay home with You Tubes, Netflix, iPods,

catalogues for underwear and crabs
unquelled. Our eyes locked, stomachs flat,
we seek aqua islands, outcasts from the mainland.

From The Tina Turner Sonnets:

↳ **ON SILENT WINGS** ↳

I try to hide what I feel inside, your eye fire
gone to another slow song. If I could just
take off—a mute swan who skims long lagoons,
a tern who soars above the sound. On air waves.
You deaf to my wail, off island in P-town.
No flap, no flack. If I could just glide across
Flat Bottom Pond, lift off from this hurt earth,
stop my prayers to gods who never answer,
release that angel whose counsel came between us.
From his wings, I saw your promise fall, broken
into a tide pool, ink-lit at dusk. A quill to pen
my well of loneliness. The love, the sting.
There was a time I would have followed you
to the end of the cape. Where gulls cry.

↳ **Typical Male** ↳

You swim in infinity, a pool atop Vallarta.
Bronze with ear candy. Tuned out to my plea.
My email attachment deleted. Typical.
My case dismissed. My wit outmatched
by your clever smile. Your dive under water.
You never opened my book, the one I gave you
about the trial, about my trouble with the law,
my suit for damages. What you did to my soul.
I in briefs, still dry, foolish. Defenseless. Burned

and blind without shades. Like justice. Like love.
Those ignored emoticons. Why won't you open
up and let me in? All I want is a little reaction,
just enough. No more mojitos, shrimp cocktails,
no more scales tipped, turned over. All I want.

Author Bio

Casey Charles teaches Gay and Lesbian Studies, Shakespeare, and critical theory at the University of Montana in Missoula. He is the author of two poetry chapbooks (*Controlled Burn*, Pudding House, 2007) and *Blood Work* (re-issued from Finishing Line, 2013). His novel *The Trials of Christopher Mann* (forthcoming in May, 2013) tells a story of love and jealousy between law students set against the backdrop of the 1979 trial of Dan White for the murder of Harvey Milk in San Francisco. His recent collection of essays, *Critical Queer Studies: Law, Film, and Fiction*, is currently available (Ashgate 2012). In his spare time, he tries to catch fish and hike the mountain ranges of Montana's wilderness.

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