

Wounds & The People Who Poke Them

by XXXX

My friend once told me about this island of trash in the Pacific. He said that if you threw a piece of trash in any body of water it would find its way there somehow. It's supposed to be larger than Texas. It felt good to know that. It felt good to know that even trash has a home, and if that's so then maybe so do I, even if it doesn't feel like it. I felt like jumping in the water and seeing where that takes me. Will I end up in that island of trash? What would that mean? Maybe I won't care what that means. Maybe I'll just feel like after twenty-one years of faking it and sleeping in a house of strangers, I will just feel as if I have arrived home.

This friend of mine is that friend that is having difficulty with his thesis. One time he was trying to run his ideas about poetry through me and I just wasn't buying it. He said: "I am going to go home and cry." I don't know if he knows it, but he's used this line twice now, the other time we were talking about a girl and we were eating Japanese food. We were at a coffee shop by the bay again, and it was raining. We were sitting outside even if it was raining because the coffee shop was playing trance music and it distracted me because I have the attention span of a ferret.

I said: "Why can't you cry here?"

He said: "I can't cry here in front of you."

"Sure you can," I said. I raised my voice and pounded my fist on the table. "In the interest of Truth, cry!"

He didn't cry. I don't know if he did when he went home, but he didn't cry when we were there.

Talking about his thesis makes him upset now. I always say: "You know what I want to ask you, right?" And he will shake his head and he will say: "Let's not talk about it. It will make me upset."

I like making people upset. I have been doing it for a very long time. It is like when someone has a wound and you poke it and ask if it hurts when you do it.

One night I was poking at his wound. There were Korean ladies at the table with us. It was a large table and we shouldn't be allowed to occupy it just by ourselves.

He said: "Sometimes I feel it is just a waste of time. I think there are only five people that I can talk to about these things and three of them are you."

"That right there proves that you will know more about poetry than I ever will. I couldn't make up something like that if I tried," I said. "Your frustrations are because you have experienced the vividness of the landscape of poetry by actually being there, and I cannot comprehend it, because all I have ever done are look at maps and make them."

I realized I have said more than I wanted to say. I said: "I am only disappointed because you have been somewhere I have only seen in maps and you cannot tell me what it looks like."

He hung his head, tired of my litanies, and behind him, across the bay, two lights blinked, one red and one green, that said without words: You can sail no further. There is nowhere to go but nowhere.

Someday I will die in my sleep, and I will go to hell, and I will open my eyes, and I will be in the same house. This is what I fear most of all.

