



TAM NGUYEN

**don't take me back to summers**

don't take me back to summers  
to the wet junes and their knee-deep puddles  
to the closest I made to the bones  
which is to taste a bullet in my mouth and  
saw a speck of my mother's gods  
don't take me back to the summer where  
I meditated on the account nameless dead man  
on the lukewarm afterglow  
of the sun where all I did was watching  
shadows that looked like mine  
passing  
and chose to live instead  
don't take me back to the summer when I  
first learned to hold my tears in the sea  
it freed me  
like the miles-long strolls away from home  
where my vision boiled down to  
the deathbed in a wall-less shack  
on the side of the paddy field  
don't take me back to the summer  
where I became a poet commissioning words  
with honorarium paid in ghosts  
made me so wealthy in hell  
I wanted to show g what he actually meant  
by saying *the gays are so artsy and talented*  
don't take me back to the summer nights I left  
barbarisms' *heaviest breather* on repeat for  
I occasionally forgot there's still air  
to the time when nothing guaranteed  
me not puzzling anyone  
when I open my mouth and do what a boy would  
to another bewildered boy  
while counting on each other's  
trembling fingers until one of us  
closed our eyes nearly for good  
don't take me back to summer I bisected  
my silence-thick house revealing  
my exceedingly buoyant self about to break



and look

I could go on and on about this  
giggle some more

cry some more

replace the *don't* with nothing else

and see what it took and continues to take  
me to enter summers



## **It's possible for something to weigh the world**

It's possible for something to weigh the world, your hands. This is the quietest place, your chest. Years ago, I was so scared my body as hot as coming out of a nuclear explosion. But I swear, I saw the bedrock and almost mistook it for your skin. I admit that I had imagined us kissing, eyes closed, but it was like swallowing fistfuls of herb balls. A country isn't a country until you forget your boyhood. I sat in the dark and let my country outgrow me. I tried. But the toothless wolves were so nimble they'd only open their mouths for mercy. Once you told me you'd hit the straight punks if they make me feel uneasy, I already thought about how I, silent as a house, started picking up shards of broken lilacs falling from your eyes as you stepped into the water; how I'd end up drowning myself all over again, on purpose. To walk in winter boulevards and still burning; to devour vast autumn skies and still hungry. I'm ashamed to admit that the safest landing for me isn't onto my mother's arms. Hands in my pocket, I watch the most grotesque parts of myself turning into a monster. Still, you were there. I landed onto your globed shoulders instead. I could have gnawed my fangs to suck off the last fungus sprouting from



your neck, but I chose to surrender.  
The most magical thing is to  
crash into each other without  
a code of conduct and still, your  
pulses so real you almost want  
to die again and see what happen.  
Once, in a cheap motel  
room in a nameless town, there  
was no mirror. So the only way  
to see myself was to look at him,  
and we were both ready to ask  
for forgiveness for the rest of our lives.  
Look, we're so small, we're almost  
nothing. I'm afraid to see too far,  
as much as an eye that peels  
light off the ozone, just to reveal  
another inexhaustible part of  
darkness. The suburban afternoons  
we spent together so short I'd  
make a finger-cross every time  
you left the room. I swear I'd set  
fire to the moon and watch it lit.  
We are proven to become  
vulnerable before sentences that  
end with *please*. I said *please*, and  
fed the ghosts what they wanted,  
and hiccupped through the night.  
*Don't crawl, just lay there,*  
the ghosts said. I learnt the  
best life hack is to muster until  
there's nothing left but myself,  
to enter a body, your body.  
I'm not gonna lie. Your beard is  
quirky enough for me to plant  
every flower I mishandled before.  
But meanwhile, I promise I won't  
hide underwater, even though  
it's true that my corrupted lungs  
can actually hold much longer.



## BIOGRAPHY

**Tam Nguyen** is a poet and emerging art writer, born and raised in the south end of Vietnam. His creative works have appeared and are forth-coming on various journals and magazines such as [Heavy Feather Review](#), [Softblow](#), [diaCRITICS](#) (Diasporic Vietnamese Artist Network), [MAYDAY](#), [Overheard](#), [Dryland](#), among others. He's working on his undergraduate degree in Art and Media Studies at Fulbright University Vietnam with an interest in modern and contemporary art histories in Southeast Asia.