

## Are You Troubled by the Following?

*Derek Chan*

*Do you worry excessively about dirt, germs, or chemicals?*

I believe I am beautiful                    only because they said so  
 in the hospital                    while I was being scrubbed clean  
 of my mother    I still believe I am beautiful when I chip  
 away my skin with a pine-cone                    lemon peel bursting  
 in brain stem                    until I finally find the crystal shards  
 laced delicately around my bone                    glimmering  
 like rainbow trout skin                    and I know I am

*Do you have unwanted ideas, images, or impulses that seem silly, nasty, or horrible?*

Even a dog digs up its owner on the sixth day  
 of mourning    to feed on the hand it once fed off  
                   it's impossible to tell hunger from love  
 so of course I will never kill someone in my sleep  
                   even though I have heard it is possible  
                   please wake me up  
 the dogs are eating your sister

*Are there thoughts you must think repeatedly to feel comfortable or ease anxiety?*

With butterflies for hands everything I touch ripples like a shredded flag  
today you drop a watercolour onto concrete tomorrow a beautiful monarch  
butterfly drops dead like two bright blue hands tossed onto quicksand  
I suppose only God understands the significance of the 6th cereal box starting  
from the back of the shelf the old men can say what they want to say about me  
I think what I want I think what I want to think what I want I think I want  
to think what I want to think I think I want to think what I want to think

*Do you wash yourself or things around you excessively?*

If cleanliness is next to godliness then I would like to be packed  
into a washing machine and sent spinning through space  
and when I land on Pluto I will emerge with a halo  
of underwear hailed as an angel  
a lighthouse brighter than its light

*Are you always afraid you will lose something of importance?*

As a young boy  
my appetite for beauty  
was infamous. My tonsils a colony  
of diamonds,  
arteries pulsing  
with rubies, rainbows  
spilling from  
fingernails  
painting walls  
into glass. Once ago I swallowed a quail egg  
whole and warm.  
Even now I desperately  
gulp nests of warm duck down  
for a sign of life.  
I can bear to lose  
almost anything. Just please  
not this.  
The moon  
inside my belly.