

# [Yokohama Threeway by Beth Lisick](#)

written by Gabino Iglesias | April 1, 2014



*Yokohama Threeway*

by Beth Lisick

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You know the story about that time when everything fell into place, you looked like the coolest person on the planet, and everything turned out great in the end? Yeah, no one wants to hear that story. You know what we do want to hear? Well, that tale about the time you had the runs at the airport and ended up having to wipe with your socks because you walked into the last stall and there was no toilet paper. We want to hear that story because other people's failures, pains, and embarrassments are entertaining to us. Author Beth Lisick knows this, and *Yokohama Threeway*, a collection of small shames, is a testament to that.

*Yokohama Threeway* is packed with short narratives (I'd call them flash, but a few go well above the 1000-word mark) and a handful of poems about the most awkward moments of Lisick's life. I could select a few favorites and give you a synopsis, but a 200-word synopsis of a 500-word story strikes me as a waste of time. Instead, I'll give you a list of things you'll find in this book: a horny old Italian man who "tongue rapes" the author, a sparkly blue dildo in a dryer, a PSA about not having sex to a Portishead record, a spelling bee gone very wrong, a few celebrity stories, and a musical career that went nowhere.

The first thing Lisick does right in this collection of cringe-worthy stories is leave shame at the door. The author opens up about her mistakes and shares her most awkward moments with a prose that carries the comfortable cadence and humor-tinged candor of a conversation between old friends. As a result of Lisick's straightforwardness, the reader is drawn into each narrative and shares a bit of the feelings the author experienced in each case. For example, the pain and indignation she feels in *Panda Ambulance*, a story about leading book club discussions for the daughters of rich women, jumps off the page and leaves readers with a lingering taste of resentment.

Despite the preponderance of humor, there are also a few horrific moments in *Yokohama Threeway*, instances in which Lisick abandons hilarity and crosses into hair-raising territory. A fine example is the poem *Baby*:

Safely on the bed  
On his back like they teach us  
Monitor crackles

Wine with my mother

What a nap he is having  
Never naps for this long

Sprint to the bedroom  
My god where is he

A cry muffled by carpet  
Never on my knees faster  
Up with the flowered bedskirt

How long was he here  
How long has it been

Also, there is a bluntness here that probably comes from Lisick's spoken word/performance background. Having a paper toilet seat stuck inside your pants while performing on stage or confessing that you went on a date with your stalker are personal things, but they still belong to the realm of things you would comfortably discuss during dinner with a few friends. Lisick repeatedly treads this fairly relaxed/proper territory, but she also takes the essays further, right into ultra-personal territory and subject matter that would probably wouldn't make for a great discussion during Thanksgiving dinner. In "Asshole," Lisick confesses she was never taught to wipe her bottom until the toilet paper was clean, which might have lead to a few bad moments and uncomfortable situations that she only realizes when a man she's dating takes matters into his own hands:

"We stepped into the shower and started kissing. And then he got a bar of soap. He lathered this soap between his palms and started aggressively lathering up my ass, soaping the buns. I'd seen that in a movie, bun-soaping, but then, working the crack. I'm not saying he didn't have an ass thing, maybe he did, but it was probably just the average ass thing most people have, which is more than is credited in polite society. But it felt more than that. It dawned on me in that moment, as a young man's San Fernando Valley hands worked my asshole, not as a porn star might have, but more like an attractive hospice provider, that I truly had been neglecting the cleanliness of that region for my entire life."

*Yokohama Threeway* mixes equal parts of pain, humor, and honesty to deliver a short, fast, satisfying read. There are jokes, apologies, anecdotes, and confessions that range from the deeply personal to the universal and from the philosophical to the horrible. When you're ready to accept that you're as bad as the rest of us and take pleasure in the humiliation of others, pick this one up.