Dausi Church
Flower
Reason

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R. TORRES PANDAN

Falling Star

Sometimes, looking up just
In time to catch a falling star,
I'd worry that it is some planet,
One with friendly gases,
One with people in it, with houses
And nice furniture, small children
And their pets, hurtling toward
Its fiery doom. And while this planet
Slipped out of control
In the empty sky, I'd wonder
How soon we might share its fate,
With its late skills in French
Or basketball or with its vain loves
Or losses. But yet, this plagues me
Most of all: would anyone even
Bother to catch our own brief apparition
Of dust, forgotten—soon gone—
And falling across no one else's sky?

VICTOR PEÑARANDA

Dauis Church

I strolled to Panglao Island one morning years ago,
When lanterns of fishers still shone far out at sea,
And ended up lost in thought near old Dauis Church
Wondering if it was wise to enter without favor,
To worship its cumulus ceiling of illuminated tales.

I recalled swallows gliding through its open doorways
Threading eye of my heart with mystifying secrets:
The trapdoor, the hidden well in front of the towering altar. There beneath the floor an ancient source of fresh water, The sweetest in the whole island, had been sighing for ages Waiting for someone to genuflect on that very spot, Peak of dry spell, to slake thirst without yielding to baptism.

Among scattered ruins beside limestone shore I lingered Heard the wholeness of prayer flowing from the cavernous church: They were chanting, luring the dawn with rhythms only heard When forests reclaim abandoned fortresses with feral splendor. I turned pagan round the radiance of the communion chalice.

(1998)

Flower

The wind falls behind as our boat touches The mouth of a great river known for carving, Haunting seascapes after the rainforests died. The open sea hesitates then swallow-tails Into a maze of mud flats and waterways, This delta of boundless wetlands ungoverned By outriggers or flocks of migratory birds. Each island, exposed by receding tide, Offers a riddle for children with bare feet. The nipa fronds seem consumed in mystery, Wilderness relaxed in my lungs. This territory I once called home has lost Track of places where desires touch lightning, Ghosts haunt the roots of mangroves. Names have become elusive as silver eels.

I return bruised with love to reclaim Tales locked within the gaze of kingfishers. My travels introduced me to new worlds, Allowed me to explore the nature Of labyrinths where words and objects stray Then lose the power of their meanings.
Sorcerers took me into their company.
In a city made infamous by traffic gridlock
I recovered secrets from ancestral belly,
While drivers committed acts of homicide.
“Burak,” I whispered at busy junction,
And the image of a heron, white as cotton,
In a field of black silt, on a lake of blue sky,
Sprang to life inside a bus crowded with people
Committed to drown in forgetfulness.

As our boat negotiates with the dusk
I whisper “burak” to salt-laden breeze.
It means “flower,” the name of my coastal village
Where ilang-ilang trees once bloomed in cascades,
Seducing the righteous to commit infidelities.
Childhood caught us gleaning one morning
When horses stormed out of a military camp,
Racing without riders, wild to the scent of insurgents,
Gunfire recoiling in perfumed air.
Marooned in a meadow of turtle grasses, my body
Became a shore of legends, freight of blue sky,
White heron dreaming in burnt-out garbage dump.
I whisper the word again and feel a slender moon;
Quietly the landscape begins to possess us,
Flowering like sea anemones in the speed of light.

(Samar)

**Reasons**

I step out of the house,
Still warm from breath of cooking,
To converse with the breeze . . .
Darkness and dewdrops lace
The hills of Kalamalamahan.
Fireflies reason in pulses.
Friends are feasting
On fish and rice in the kitchen.
Someone breaks into brittle laughter.
When I look up the sky
Stars graze my forehead;
Entire constellations seem
Concerned with our modest affairs,
Exploring reasons
To keep expanding the universe.
I hear my name called—
My turn to wash the dishes.

(Rogongon, Iligan
2000)

ALLAN POPA

Dapithapon

Mula sa pahinang binabasa
Tumingala ako at pinagmasdan ang daloy
Ng mga paniki mula sa yungib.

Kasunod nilang umahon
Ang mga minerong nakayuko sa paglakad
Na waring kay bigat ng gumagabay na liwanag.

Nang balikan ko ang tula sa aking kandungan,
Mariing kumapit sa papel ang mga titik
Na nanganganib mahulog sa bitak
Sa gitna ng aklat.

Sinalat ko ang isang munting salita
Upang tumatag pansamantala sa pagkalula.
Sa sandaling iyon, waring maikukuyom ko sa palad
Ang lahat ng naghihintay na maunawaan.