

Ang Pabalat

Para kay KATHA,

Ito ang sandali ng mga gunita ng bawat hirayang iyong hinabi. Sa lilim ng buwan, malasin mo't alalahinan ang mga pakikibakang iyong pinag-alayan. Salaminan ang makulay na rabaw at lalim ng pagkataong pinagtibay ng antigong pakikipagsayaw sa liwanag ng buwang aandap-andap ang pagkislap sa piling at yakap ng mga sangang kalansay at agnas na dahong tinanigan ng mahabang panahon ng lumbay at pangungulila.

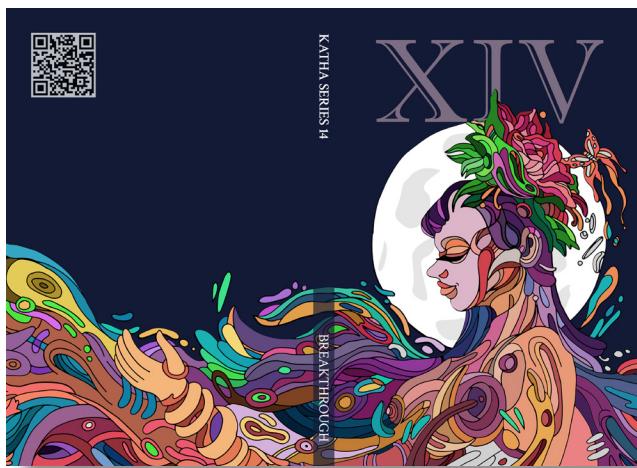
“Sino ka nga bang halos?” marahil sa mga gabing tahimik mong ipinagtugumpay batid mo ang sagot. Ang mga kabiguan, pagbagsak at luhang namahay ay nag-iibis ng laksa-laksang sidhi upang tumahan at magpatuloy. Kasaliw ng mga sitsit ng

kuliglig hayaan mong masanay ang iyong mga mata sa tanawing nilalatag ng bagong buwan; nakamamanhga, primal at mistulang busilak, salamin ng makabagong kabanata at pag-usbong.

Ngayon, habang marahan at patuloy mong binaybaybay ang buhay, mithiin mo sanang minsang magbalik-tingin at tuklasin pang lalo ang hiwaga. Sapagkat ang bawat aral na hinulma’t hinuha, ang lundayan ng iyong walang kaparang paglikha.

Kailanman, ikaw ang pinakamarilag na Katha ng Maylikha

Mula sa iyong puso,
Diwa



Mga salita ni Jayven Borja
Likhang sining ni Jasper Cariño
Pinahusay na digital ni Patricia Lofamia

Paunang Salita

Palubog na ang araw at mangungusap na naman ang buwan. Sa hanay ng mahuhusay, gaano ka na nga ba katagal na nasa huli? Tila ang buhay ay isang paligsahan na nagsisilbing patimpalak ng iyong kapalaran. Bago ka makarating sa tuktok kailangan mo munang harapin ang mga pag-subok.

Minsan ka nang nadapa ngunit bumangon at naglakad muli.

Minsan ka nang naligaw ng landas ngunit natuto sa pagkakamali.

Minsan ka nang lumuha ngunit patuloy kang ngumingiti.

Sa nakakapagod na hamon ng buhay, ilang beses ka ng huminto sa iyong paglalakbay?

Nakakabilib, dahil kung iiispin ay halos masanay na ang iyong mga mata sa pagtangis subalit nakahanap pa din ng dahilan upang maniwala at magpatuloy. Gaano man kahaba ang

linya ay hindi ka mananatili sa dulo. Kung pakiramdam mo ikaw ay tila nasa isang kompetisyon, isabuhay ang disiplina sapagkat siguradong ikaw ang magiging kampeon.

Bawat tao ay may kanya-kanyang pinagdaanang problema, nasa sa'yo ito kung paano mo panghahawakan at dadalhin. Hindi man natin makontrol ang mga suliranang padating, nawa'y lagi tayong maging positibo at manalangin.

Palubog na ang araw ngunit hindi ka mananatili sa kanluran, lagi mong isiping may panibagong bukas sa siliangan. Ito ay para sa lahat ng mga hindi inatrasang mga pagsubok ng buhay. Sa lahat ng pawis, dugo, ideya, at mga luhang ibihunos para sa paghahanda ng publikasyon sa obrang ito. Labing-apat na kapitulo para sa lahat ng mga panaghoy patungo sa tagumpay. Marami pang haharaping kabanata kung kaya't ito ang ihahandog naming KATHA XIV.



Mary Grace De Vera
Outgoing Literary Editor

Message

It is a common response in the eyes of society to give emphasis on the outcomes and rarely hold high regard about the process. Just like the phases of the moon- from new moon to full moon, we tend to appreciate its beauty at its fullest form. We only applaud the success and never the experience and adventure throughout each stage until they reach it.

Success isn't linear; it's all ups and downs. However, in your process, everything is valid. Your dreams, disappointments, efforts may be appreciated or not, your breakdowns, the progress and mistakes, they are all part of your becoming.

It's never about how you break or falter in life, it's more on the steps you make to bounce back stronger and deal with life as a challenge. Human beings need to bleed in order to grow, and the happiest person in the world has the most painful and adventurous journey in life.

As the moon knows its track, may we also seek balance and fortitude and conquer the right path towards our best version. It's okay to fall, to pause and even to be vulnerable. It's okay to outgrow relationships, to have boundaries and even to prioritize yourself.

To live in constant growth is to be HUMAN. Just keep pursuing your dreams.



Mark Christian D. Abasolo
Editor-in-Chief



Nilalaman

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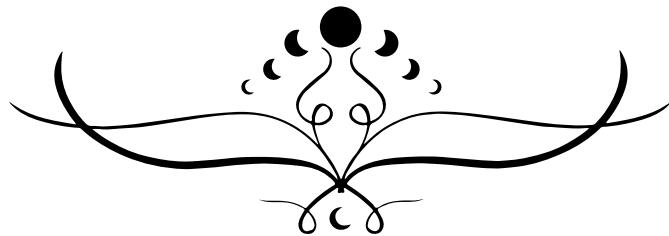




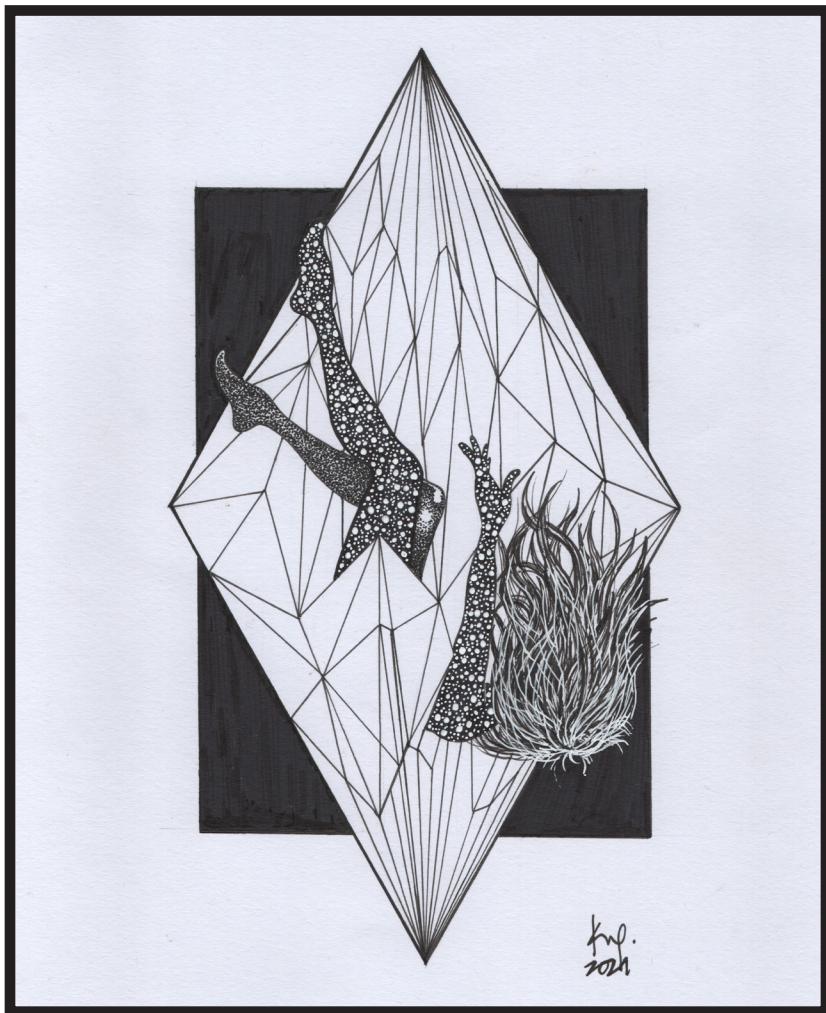
I

Seeing the Light

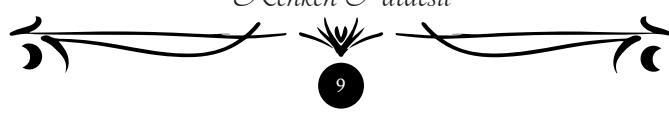
In this pitch-dark place
I see the light from afar
Igniting my heart

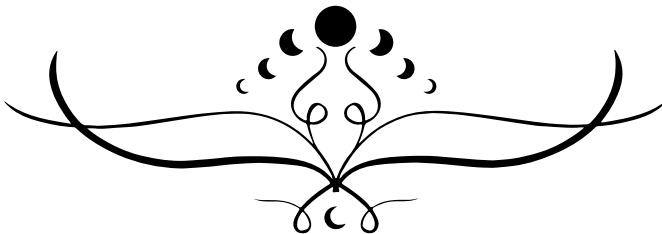


Finding The Stairs



Kenken Patacsil





Outcast

Nobody dares to talk to me,
For they think I cannot utter a word;
That my mouth is sealed: not free,
And throw acid and sword.

But you dare talk to me,
Thinking I am a good speaker;
You said I bring smile to your lips for free,
And you want to see it forever.

Nobody dares to walk with me,
For they think I can tread alone;
That my limbs are strong enough to flee,
And kick everyone in my zone.

But you dare walk with me,
Beside me, you guide me to step;
You said that I am a good company,
And let you feel at peace like when you are asleep.

Nobody dares to touch me,
For they think my skin burns;
That my body will transform into a horrible bee,
And prick a hole on my foes.





But you dare to feel me,
Wipe the tears I have not recognized falling;
You said I look like an innocent child in weary,
And needed a hug and caring.

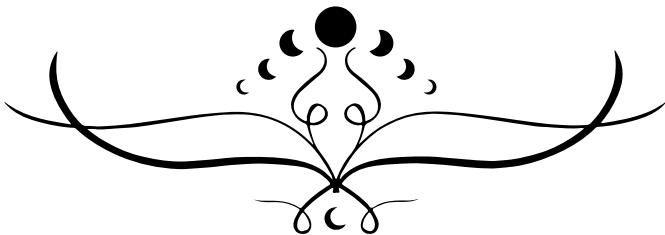
Nobody dares to write for me,
For they think I will criticize their art;
That my mind is programmed to correct: wrongs to see,
And trash those given from the start.

But you dare write for me,
Even though your handwriting sucks;
You said I should try fight gravity,
And don't do more believable acts.

You see...
You are different from everybody.
A new friend.
A new one.

April Jane Paquita





Life is Suffering

You're a moonchild they said, but why is it so hard to live
in this tiny world when the universe has too much to
give?

Maybe because you always lick the melting point of your
sanity, where you feed yourself with citrus peels, too
bitter for you to curve those lips into a beautiful smile you
were once confident with.

Maybe because you're afraid that band-aids can't patch
your wounds enough that no matter how much you try to
grow the seeds of light running through your veins, you
will never be satisfied.

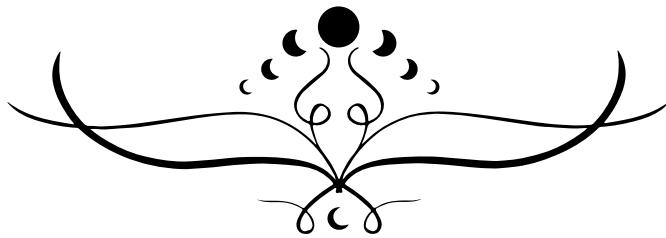
But darling, let me tell you this.

**YOU LIVE TO SUFFER AND TO LIVE, YOU HAVE
TO SUFFER.**

You just need to find which one is worth suffering for.

Teresa Andrea Cabanela





While She Was Hurting

Feeling melancholy with no justification at all.
Morning came then I laughed like there is no tomorrow.
When the period of darkness comes, I am all alone,
Searching for something unspecified or unknown.

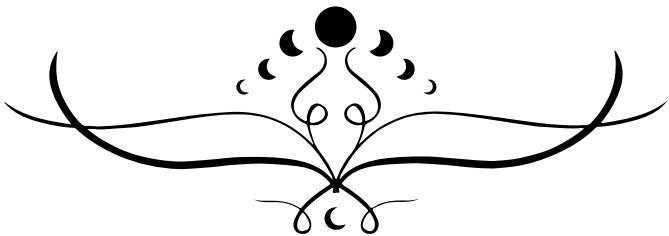
I stood up and gone ahead to the fridge,
Walking so freely, desiring to be encouraged.
Mom came to wake me up,
What a mess I made; I want to stop.

She guided me while climbing the stairs,
Slowly wiping off her tears.
Suddenly, realization found me,
She was also hurting - my Mommy.

While she was hurting, I didn't notice,
Now that I am, I will be here
Until she found herself again
Until wounds heals and become flowers.

Mary Joy De Leon





That Night

Sad night,
My guide is the moonlight.

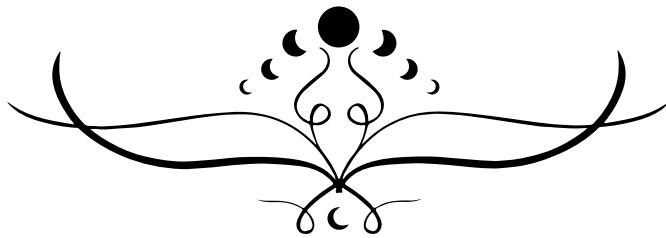
Sad night,
Please hug me so tight.

Cold night,
I don't know how to be alright.

Cold night,
Please help me see the way out.

Dark night,
Inside of me there's a fight.
Dark night,
I don't really know how to make it right.





Post Tenebras Lux

As I stare at nothingness,
Thoughts filled with darkness.
Acceptance seems out of grasp,
Yet judgement and criticism is being clasped.

I had always been a prisoner.
Prisoner of my own conception.
Burying myself into oblivion,
Losing life's color.

I succumb to life.
Yielded in trying.
And then YOU came.
And changed everything.

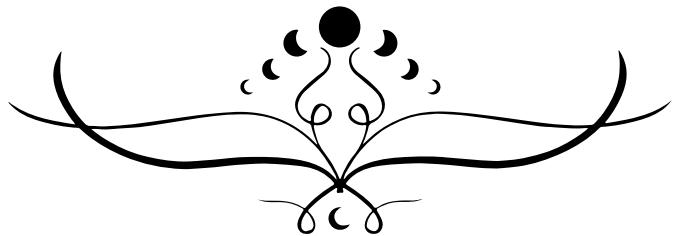
You've released me.
Away from negativity,
Closer to positivity.
I was never the same.

You've released me.
Out of oblivion
To being conscious
I'm now an escapee.

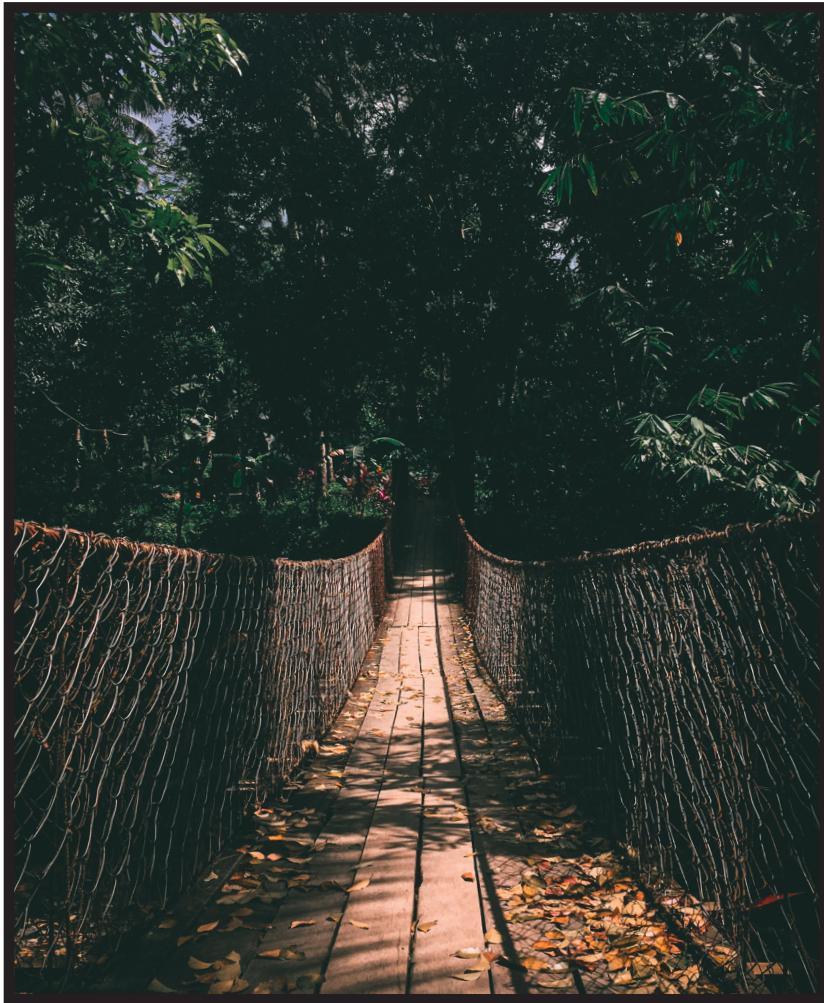
It was only the beginning,
You're with me throughout the process.
Encouraging, motivating
Gifting me with promises.

Marie Connie Sapurco





Passage



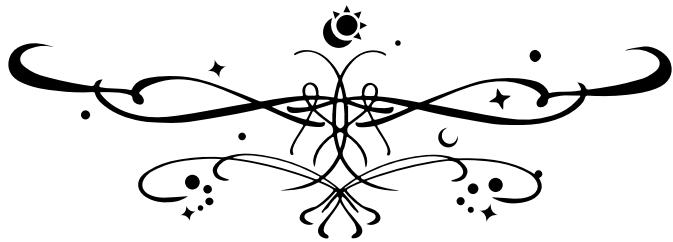
Rachell Ann Umbao



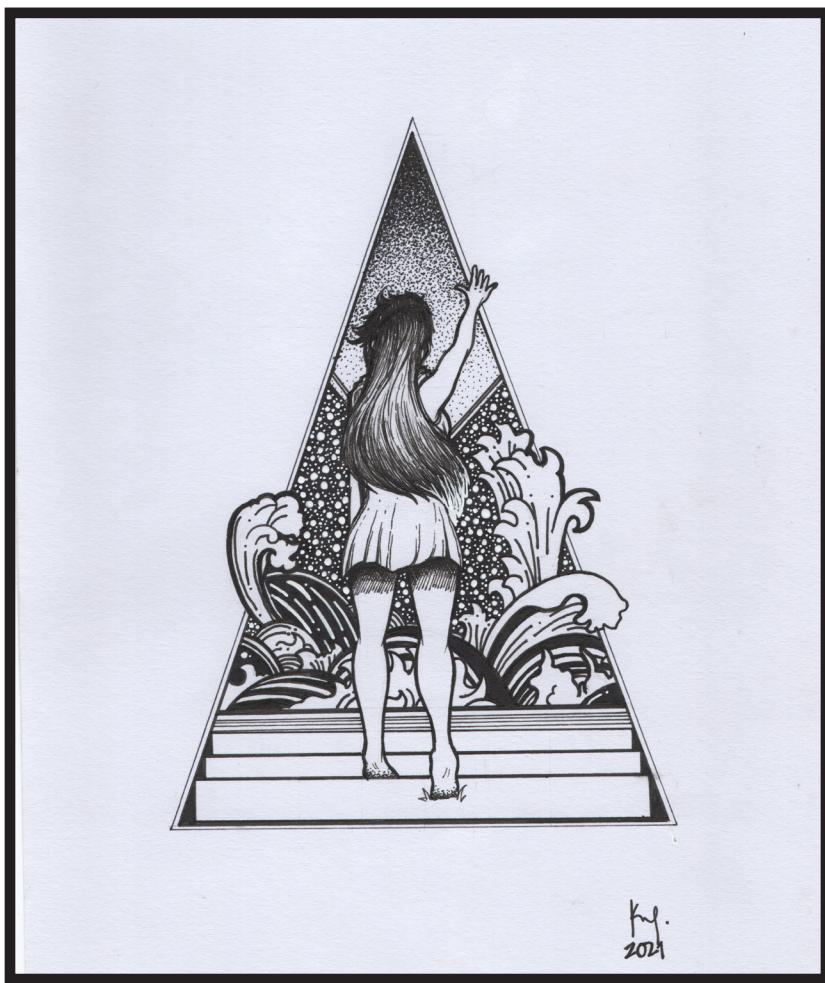
II

Following

It's looking for me
So I don't hid anymore
I took some steps

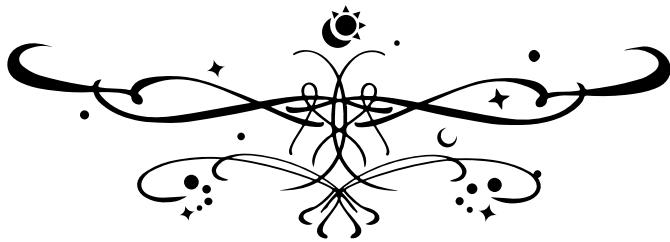


The First Step



Kenken Patacsil



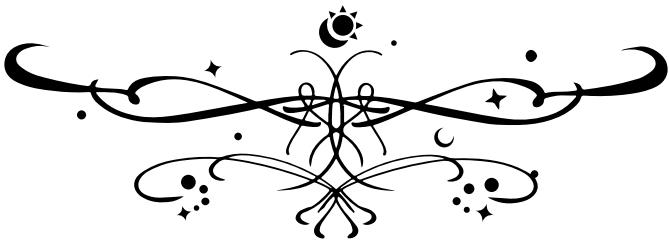


I Am Infinite

Longed for angelic stars to draw constellations on my sheets. The archer's arrow aimed against my chest, pierced deep in hollow spaces in hopes to find blackholes with teeth to bite its sour patch bait, pulled me in spinning light years, warped in a world where fishes never feed themselves with zoloft flakes. Instead, they swim on collarbone ponds and relish home cooked meals, calories weighted on justice's arms, banana milks don't taste like cartons but sweet in all its flaws. Sleep feels like lying on a transparent waterbed, flowers float like nymphs, cotton pearls for pillows, as comfortable as the thought of dying but i'm still searching for solace through the tornadoes whirring underneath my skin. I want to slip my toes in coral reefs, breathe in seafoams and exhale octopus' ink. I want to stare at the horizon, where the best of both worlds meet. I blink to see myself at the end of a cliff, arms raised as wide as my muscles could, i walk closer and petals stain the ground but the wind erases it. It huffs a fresh breeze that smells like life in all its colors. Screaming. Breathing. Calming. I feel small but i'm remembered. I'd love to live. 134340, I am infinite.

Teresa Andrea Cabanela





Through the Lenses

A dark surrounding.
Nothing can be seen.
Slept on the floor.
Suffering no more.

There's a hole of light.
Blurry from the sight.
Like a crawling vine.
It's coming to shine.

Handful of clear things.
Voice on the brain sings.
A sea widening.
Changes happening.

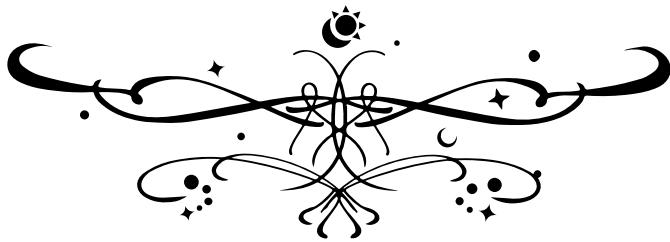
Then one eye opens.
Shattering fences.
Allowing ally.
Forgetting a lie.

So, both eyes dilate.
See it a bit late.
Though nothing is wrong.
An own pace, own song.

Through pupils awake,
A wobble state.
Another step.
Cages out of it.

April Jane Paquita



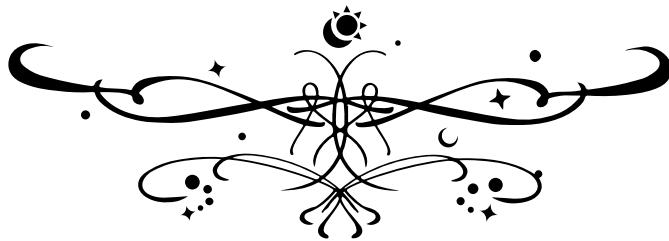


Luck Does Not Exist

A four-leaf clover symbolizes luck...
But I think it does not. There are no such things as
luck. Everything is a result... of something. Everything starts...
with the opportunity that knocks. It's up to you if you'll welcome thy
opportunity. Open the door or shut it down. The choice is yours to make
Will you accept the invitation? Or turn it down? Embrace thy chance.....
Let the ship sail.
Take that step. Lead the way. Pave your path. Start your...
journey. See what awaits. You just need a leap of faith. You've got what
It takes. It's time to take control have courage, don't doubt yourself. If
You feel left out, take a break and look back. See what you've
overcome. You've come this far, don't you dare
walk away, luck didn't lead you here. It's the
opportunity you took.
....
.

Ana Lea Villaluz





His Name is Risked

Cowardice is not just a word.
It basically defines his entire world.
He could not even cure his own wound,
Because of the fear raging inside his cord.

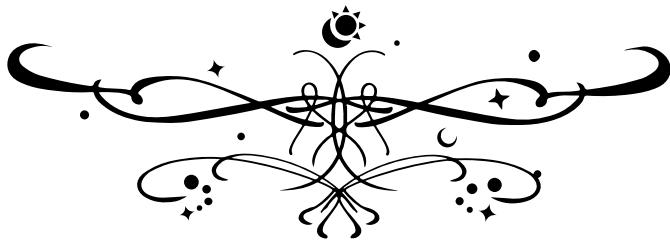
He is wondering what the life would be,
If he just grabs all the given opportunities.
He was so caught up by the scenery,
Of the sadness and the dark, it locks him up tightly.

Deeper, deeper, the wounds are getting deeper,
Like petals of a rose that has fallen in the winter.
His heart hurts every single hour,
But then he realized, he was not named Risked for
nothing.

Yes, his name is Risk.
He is now willing to stand up and peck a kiss.
A kiss of goodbye to his old self,
Because now, he is ready to fight back to life's challenges.

Mary Joy De Leon





Abstract

Sa mga blangkong pahina,
Kasama ang panulat na nag-iisa.
Malinis at maputi pa,
Hindi malaman kung saan magsisimula.

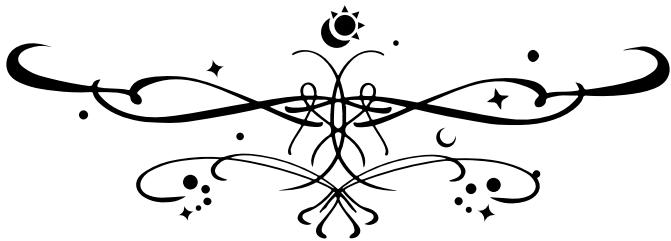
Pinikit ang mga mata,
Sinubukang isipin kung anong magagawa.
Huminga ng malalim,
Sisirin hanggang ilalim.

Alamin ang damdamin,
Isa isahin ang mithiin.
Hayaan ang kamay,
Kaliwa, kanan, taas o baba,
Kumpas nito ay igalang.

Nabuo ang mga guhit pahilis at pahalang,
Wari'y walang patutunguhan.
Ngunit unti-unting nabuo ang larawan,
Ganito pala pagtadhana'y hinahayaan.
Hindi man inaaahan may ganda pa ring kalalabasan.

Purple Pen





Parihabang Guhit

Nais na mahawanan,
Parihabang guhit na iyan,
Sabik na sabik na ang aking katawan,
Ang paghakbang ay nais ko ng simulan.

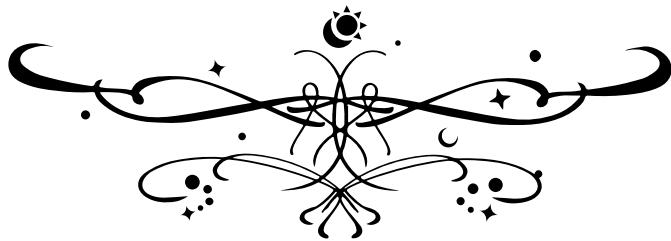
Aking sinisilip at pinagpaplanuhan,
Pati mga paa't kama'y pinagpapawisan,
Pagkat di alam kung paano sisimulan,
Pasensya, first timer ako kaibigan.

Nagsimula na ako sa pagpapatayo,
binat ng kamay pati na mga paa,
Heto na, madali lang pala,
Malapit na kaibigan, malapit na.

Malakas na sigaw akin ng napakinggan,
Kasabay ng unang pagputok sa aking tagiliran,
Saba'y takbo patungo sa unahan,
Upang mauna lang sa guhit ng finish line.

Marciano Gaza





Pagtingín

Hindi ko alam kung saan sisimulan,
Di ko rin batid kung paano ko uumpisahan
Maaari bang ibalik ang panahong nalampasan?
Maaari pa bang dugtungan ang tuldok na winakasan?

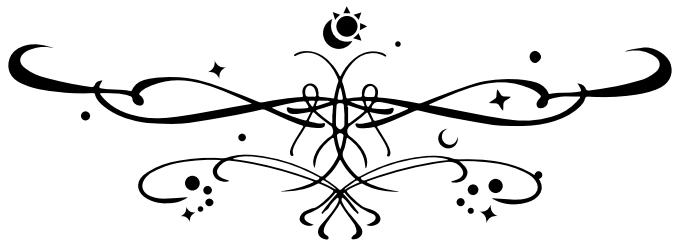
Ang mga “baka sakali” at “pero”
ay napalitan ng paano,
Naging magulo ang takbo, naging malabo
Paano kung sumugal ako kahit matalo?
Paano kung sinubukan ko kahit di sigurado?

Siguro huli na para sabihin kong gusto kita,
Huli na dahil ang mga kamay mo'y may tangan ng iba
Masaya na akong nakikita kang masaya,
Pero aaminin kong may kirot sa tuwing kasama mo siya

Ngayon tila ka na isang buwan na kay hirap abutin,
Maaaring pagmasdan ngunit di pwedeng angkinin
Kasabay ng kislap at liwanag ng mga bituin
Ibululong na lang sa hangin lihim na pagtingin.

Karen Fortín





Step-by-Step



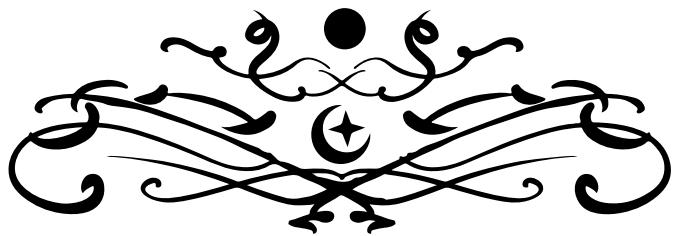
Jeeyah Gail Asis



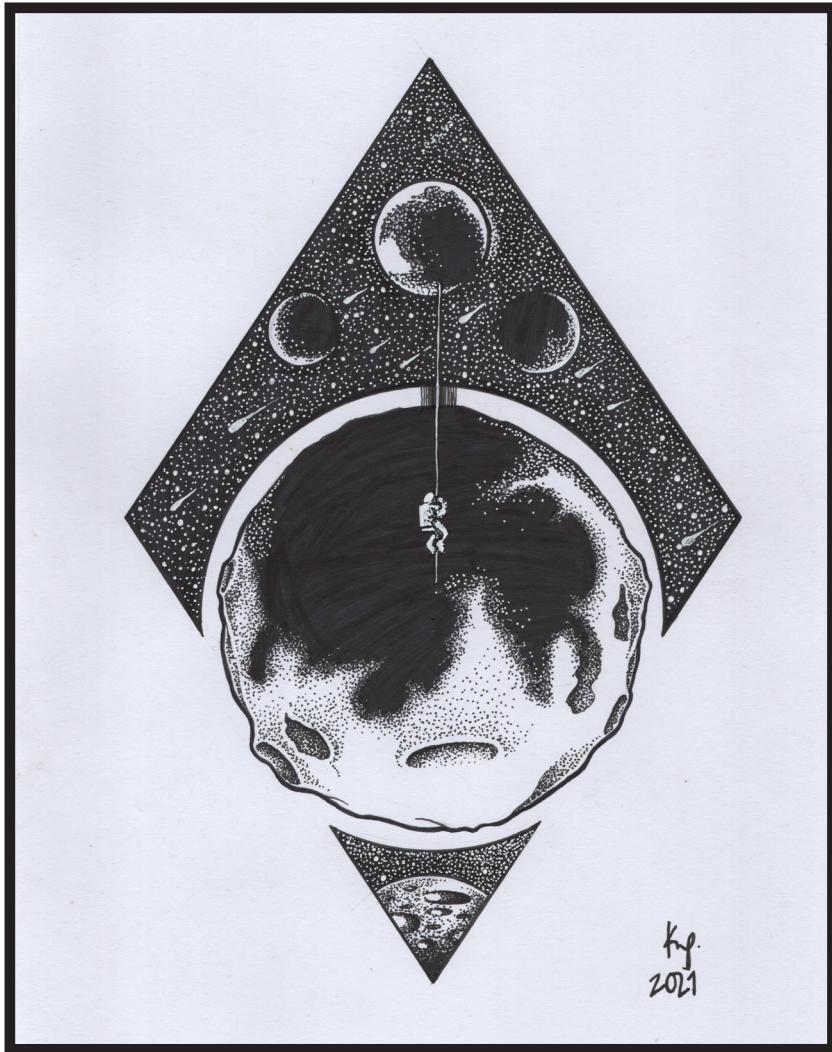
III

Little Milestones

However small
contributes to a larger
as I continued

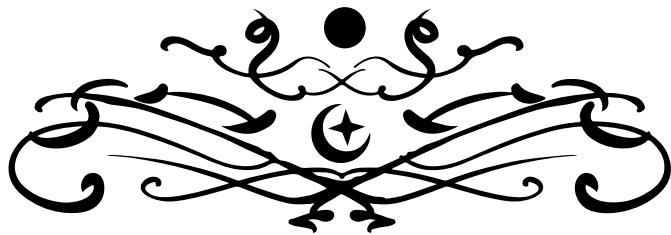


Climbing Up



Kenken Patacsil





Natural Selection

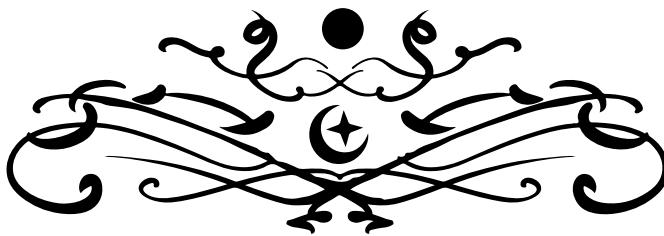
Dire warning in the realm of life unceasingly rises
As ominous red clouds enshroud,
Hunting season commences;
Silent lamentation and mourning echo by the crowd,
Those who fail to strive will vanish,
While the victors will begin to dominate and flourish.

The predator's eyes target the weak;
Slowly lurking and observing,
Prey seeks solace by striding for summit's peak;
Scrupulously hiding and persisting,
Their coexistence is inevitable,
And chances for survival depend on being strategic and
adaptable.

“The world will not halt its operations for you.”

Claire Ann C. Jimenez





Hintay lang, kaya ko kasi!

Simula pa lang, hindi talaga ako makapaniwala,
Na nagawa ko nga sya ng hindi sinasadya,
Na nagawa ko sya ng hindi man lang nasasaktan,
At nagawa ko sya ng hindi ka titingnan.

Malamang sa alamang, pag ika'y tiningnan,
Ako'y masasaktan dahil ako'y nasugatan,
'Pag nangyari naman iyon ay wala ka namang pakialam,
Dahil ang atensyon mo ay sa kanya lang nakalaan.

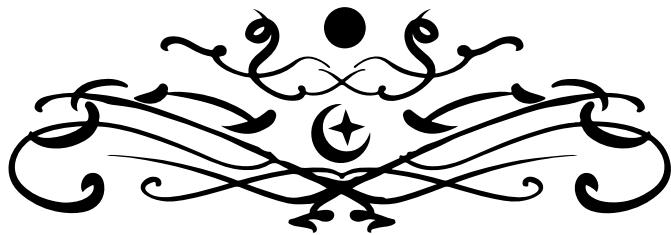
Wala na akong pake basta gusto kong matuto,
Matuto sa bagay na ito kahit hindi na ikaw ang nagtuturo,
Masakit mang isipin ngunit kailangan kong tanggapin,
Na kailangan ko nang umusad at ika'y 'wag ng hagilapin.

Sa road trip na ito, huwag sanang sumemplang,
Gaya ng nakakabingding kalembang ng simbahan,
Sa motor na ito, huwag kayong makipag-unahan,
Marunong na din ako, huwag kayong ano dyan!

Carpe diem!
It's time to seize the day.

Ana Lea Villaluz





The Many-Faced Persona

Let me define you.

You are pretentious. You say things you don't mean. You act far from who you REALLY are. You pretend you have the money for cozy coffee shops or branded shirts. You move from one lover to the next because you have an unquenchable thirst for men's validation. You post songs and shows you never liked. You're an unhealthy competitor. You pretend your grades are proof of your pseudo-intelligence. That's what your haters said.

You are unique, different from the rest. You have this addicting oddity. You have weird food combinations. You are strong-willed. That's what your lovers like most about you. Some of them ended up thinking you were too intimidating, some thought of you as a fraud, and others saw you as something that couldn't be held, so they let go. That's what your lovers said.

You are an introvert. You never made the first move to connect. That's why you always seemed aloof, which makes you open to many interpretations. You're either perceived as docile, passive, and uninteresting, or smart, deep-thinking, and observant. That's who you are to strangers.





You are always jolly, although you are irritable sometimes. Within that “sometimes,” no one dares to bother you. You must be given space when you need it. Unlike other parents’ kids, you are modest. You have always done an excellent job being their child, although sometimes you had to raise your own self. That’s what your parents think of you.

You are an idiot. You never clean the sink or leave the bathroom clean. You talk on your phone for hours, and when you don’t, you are cramming your studies. You are a sparring buddy (during fights), a sensible person (during deep conversations), and a competition for many things. However, more importantly, you are a life partner they can’t live without. That’s what your siblings think of you.

You are hardworking, toxic, beautiful, ugly, lazy, fake, genuine, money-conscious, wasteful, generous, thoughtful, stupid, sexy, lousy, timid, assertive, organized, chaotic, and many more. You are a lot of things, You realized. What a waste to feel bad for being a human, continuously evolving.

Oh! What am I thinking?

You and these people have a concept of who you are, but none of them is ultimately true and final. Even your parents see you differently. Even an individual’s perception of you can change within a split second. You are this and that all at once, all the time. You are a universe compressed within a body, projecting ‘identities’ to eyes with filters made of prior interactions with you, personal beliefs, values, biases, and prejudices.





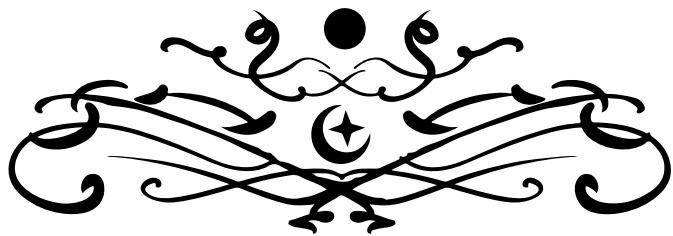
Pardon me for assuming I can give you a definition of who you are. I apologize for trying to shrink you into a piece of paper and a series of adjectives. Although I am honored, part of me is sad that you have sat through this, making me believe that I could, in any way, give you a plausible definition of your entire identity. Never give that power to anyone else ever again.

No other person can know you better than you unless they climb into your skin and see life from there; sharpen your judgment, make it as honest as possible, and make sure it is working for you, not against you. Your identities that exist inside people's minds are never meant to tie you down. Evolve as much as you want. This life afterall afterall.

Have a good day.

Monica Macale





Epeolatry



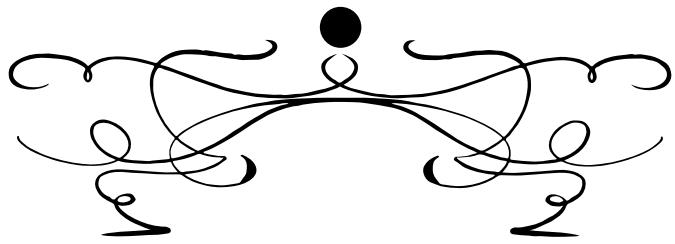
Mark Christian Abasolo



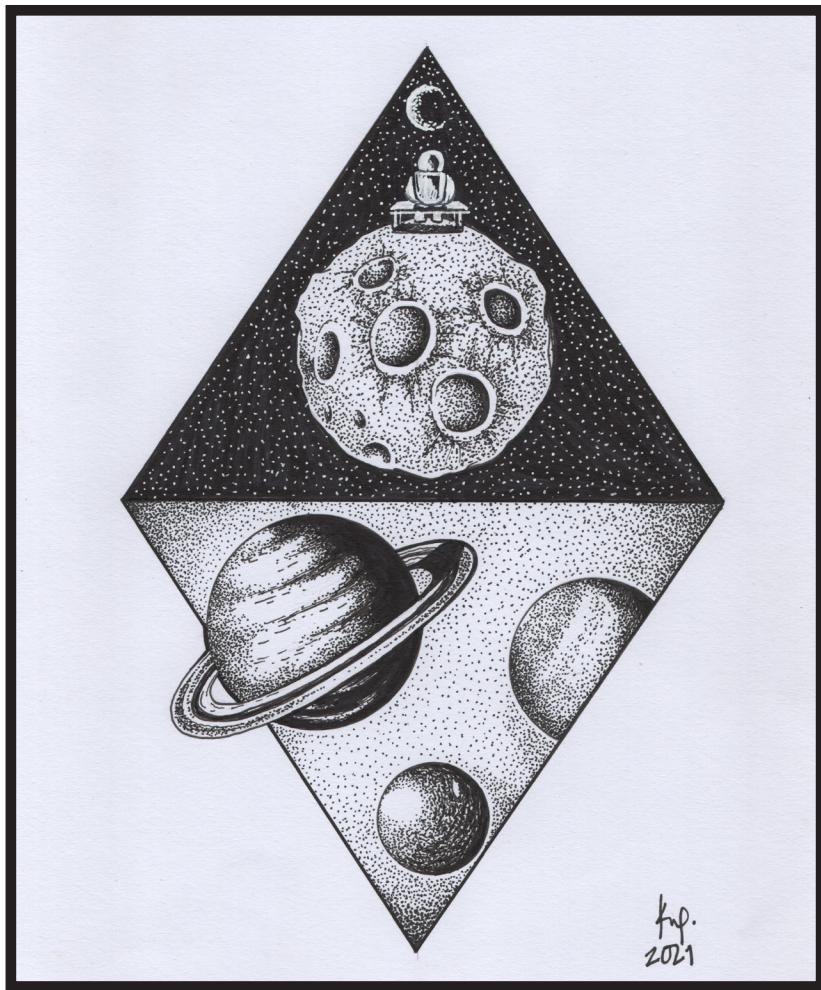
IV

Meeting Companions

In diverging paths
We're holding each other's hands
Tightly, we believe



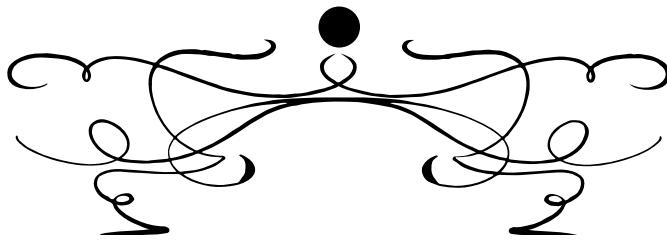
Not Alone Anymore



k.p.
2021

Kenken Patacsil





Blaming the Universe

Maybe I'm meant to only experience the darkest corners
of this round big world.

Maybe I'm meant to believe that love is for those who
only deserve it.

Maybe I'm meant to suffer a little longer than anyone,
or maybe I'm just made to suffer and survive without
anyone's warmth and comfort.

Maybe I'm born to be alone.

I blamed the universe too much for not being capable
of loving and to be loved, but now I can see the truth
written in front of me.

MIRROR ON THE WALL,
TELL ME WHY I HAVEN'T
LOVED MYSELF ENOUGH?

I envy those people who seek flowers that grow above
their heads while here I am watching myself growing
roots with thorns I'm afraid of. I keep on looking around
to only see people wrapped with their healthy gardens—
welcoming the cherry blossoms from time to time, yet
here I am stuck in autumn,
there's nothing to look forward to.
Just so I thought.





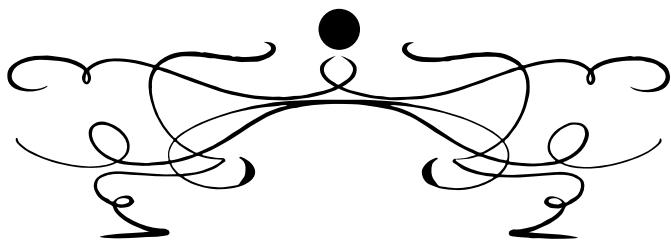
MIRROR ON THE WALL,
WILL I BE ABLE TO LOVE
MYSELF DURING THESE
AUTUMN NIGHTS?

patience. healing. certainty. growth.

take a vow, autumn can be lovely too.

Teresa Andrea Cabanela





Kampay

Masaya ako...

Kapag may alak sa lamesa,
Mamahalin o hindi — walang kokontra!

Malungkot ako...

Pagtagay ang sagot sa problema;
Kuhain ang bote at nang mainom na.

Kinakabahan ako...

Pero napapawi ng isang higop;
Isa pa! Nais ko pang sumalop!

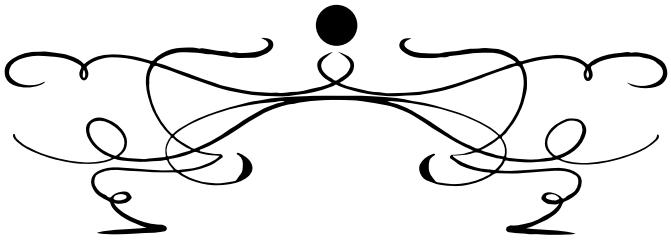
Nasasaktan ako...

Inuming nakalalasing ang sagot;
Tutulo-tulo sa damit na suot.

Sari-saring emosyon ang nararamdamian,
Ngunit isa lang ang kasagutan;
Tagay, kapatid!

April Jane Paquita





Safe Haven

I was a lost soul.

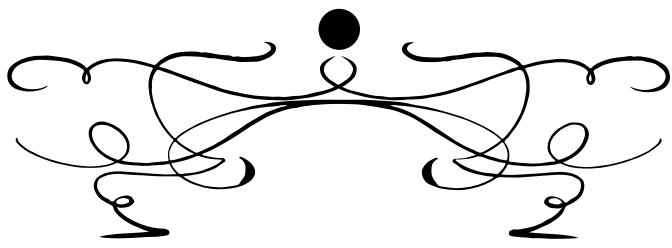
Uncertain.

Luckily, I found my safe haven,

I found home in your arms.

Ana Lea Villaluz



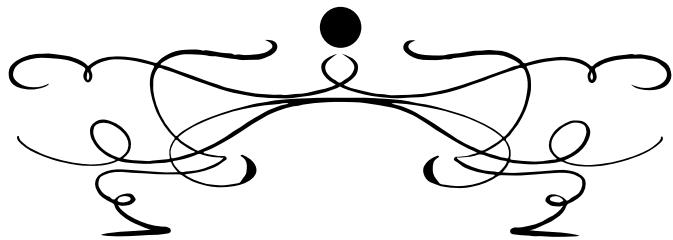


Cup Overflows

It's like I want to be emptied
But I want to be filled.

Mary Joy De Leon





Ikalabing-apat na araw

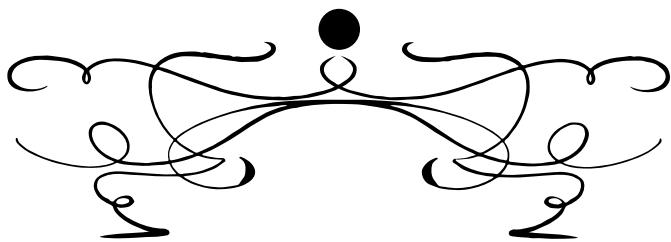
Labing apat na araw bago ang paglitaw
Mistulang malaking bumbilya ang matatanaw
Halika't humandusay, maupo at pagmasdan
Ganda ng buwan at nagbabagsakang bulalakaw sa
kalangitan

Sa ilalim ng liwanag ng mistulang malaking ilaw
Atensyon ko'y walang sinumang makakapukaw
Samahan mo akong sulitin ang gabi sa marahang
pagsayaw
Damhin ang bawat paghakbang at galaw

At sa pagtama ng liwanag sa aking katawan ay makikita
Ang pagtama ng ating mga mata sa isa't isa
Sa sandaling ito ay tila nabigyan ako ng kasagutan
Tila ba natupad lahat ng aking kahilingan

Sa pagsapit ng ikalabing-apat na araw
Maisasakatuparan lahat ng aking pananaw
Sa pagsapit ng ikalabing-apat na araw
Walang magbabago, mananatili pa ring ikaw

Julius Cereno



Reto

Apat na kwadrado ng kuarto
Iniisip kung paano lilipas ang araw na ito
Aking napagtanto bisitahin ang isang aplikasyon
Na nagsilbing daan sa isang magandang relasyon.

Sa hindi inaasahang pagkakataon
Dulot na din ng mahabang pananatili sa tahanan
Isang mensahe ang di inaasahan
Mula sa aking kaibigan

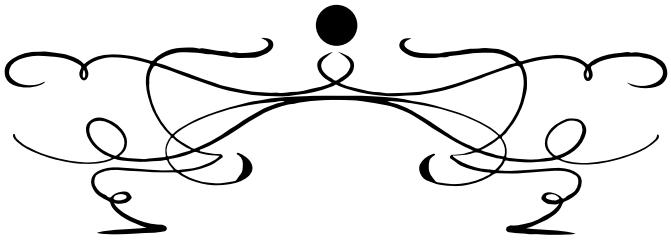
Na makapagpapabago sa malumbay at walang kulay na mundo
Isang salita, apat na letra “reto”
Hi! iyong unang sinambit
At ako'y walang intensyong manambit

Ngunit anong mahika ang iyong ginamit
At aking wisyo'y biglang nawaglit
Lumipas ang araw at buwan
Hindi ko inaasahang tayo'y magkakamabutihan

Dahil alam kong pareho lang tayong walang mapagkaabalahan
Ngunit iyong pinatunayan ang iyong tunay na nararamdamian
Hangad ko na ito'y walang katapusan, gaya ng bituin sa kalangitan
Sa salitang “reto”, heto ako ngayon at muling nabuo.

Cherry-lyn M. Avellana



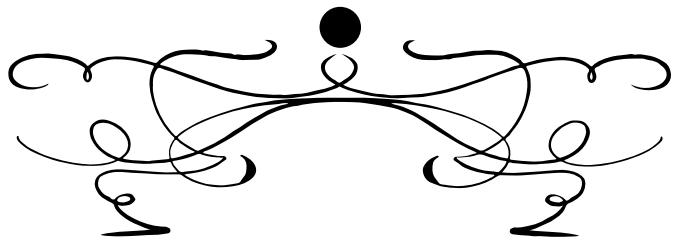


Silent Love

To translate herself
She's having a hard time, so
I learned her language.

Kuramu





Hustle and Bustle



Claire Ann C. Jimenez



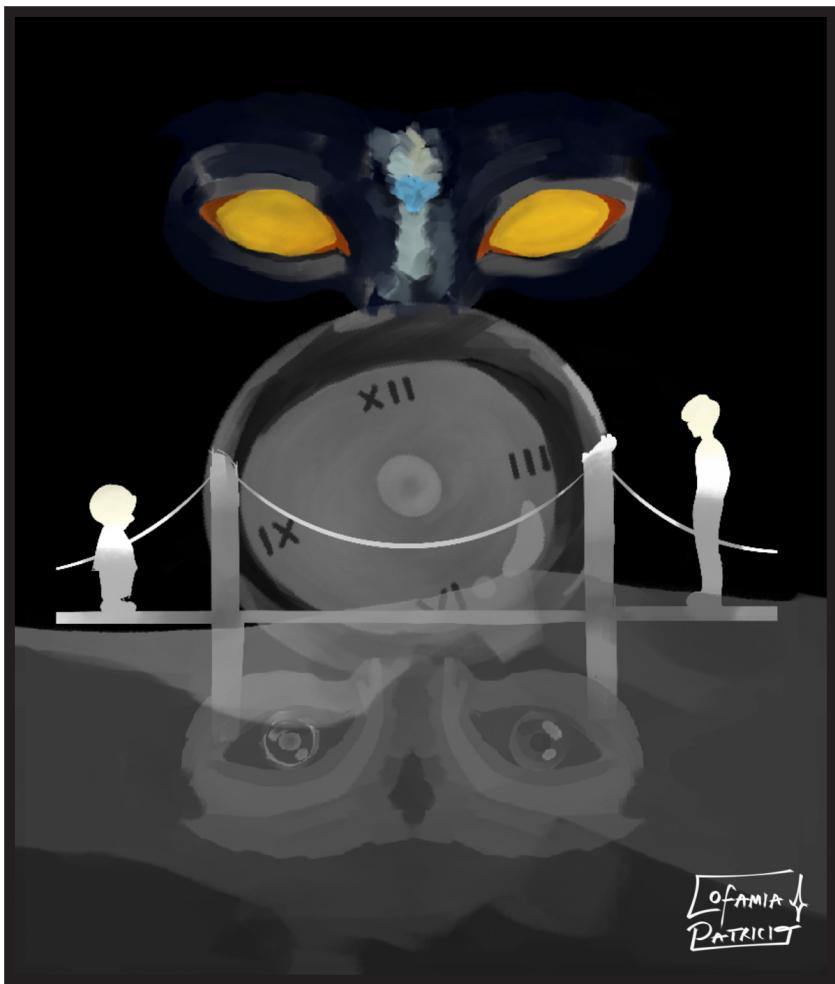
V

Comparing

You're going farther
And faster, I can't keep up!
It looks I'm stuck.



Flashbacks



Patricia Lofamia





“give up on your dream and die.”

You're in a fast-paced crowd with your turtle toes, watching people you used to play with when you were five. Thoughts linger at your empty pockets where your willpower dried up— comparing yourself like a stuck domino, your eyes twitched at the glimpse of footsteps ahead of you. You succumb beneath your shell, not looking forward to moving along until you notice a petal of cherry blossom floating. In the middle of falling apart, there's hope— the anchor of your lost soul.

And you stared at that one petal leaping down the air until it landed on the dried grass. You tried to memorize its complexity like the back of your hand yet you were enthralled by its beauty. You inhaled every deafening silence that was lingering inside you for years, and because of that hope you've seen before your sight— tiny little specks of light started to await at the end of your dark tunnels. You chose to sprint towards the borderline this time and neglect every goddamn thing your mind tells you.

you didn't fall back this time. you lived.

Teresa Andrea Cabanela





Iniwan Na Naman Ako

I. Sabi ni Nanay

Hindi ako nararapat sa kaniya,
Mababahiran ng putik ang dalaga,
Pagkakamaling pinagsisihan gawin,
Sana 'di na siya bibili ng lampin.

II. Sabi ni Tatay

Palamunin raw at patabaing baboy,
Tungkulin niyang pakaini't 'di itaboy,
Pasa sa katawan ay tinatamasa,
Halaga ko ay kailan makikita?

III. Sabi ni Kapatid

Hindi ko maibigay ang kaniyang gusto,
Kapalit ay paghampas sa aking ulo,
Kung nasa akin lang ang lahat ng bagay,
Buong puso ko pa itong iaalay.





Stamina

We met then we fell.

Respiration halts as our eyes roll.

Timid glimpse like a statue in the eminent stall.

Beneath the rain and its splitting rumble.

The moment we step forward, the place itself is replete in
shame.

Insane throb occurred subsequently by just hearing your
name.

Boom, the resonance of your heart, loud and in flame.

I am a dodo, placing myself in a premise that is lame.

Standing there, holding the glass with its own kind of
lime.

Staring intently makes me tumble in slime.

Voice is trembling, it felt like a scheme.

My heart has been melting ever since you came.

Un, deux, trois, a French numerical alphabet.

Mary Joy De Leon





“Nagbago na nga ba talaga ako?”

Isang taon na ang nakalipas matapos akong makauwi dito sa probinsya galing sa Maynila. At isang taon ko na ring naririnig ng paulit-ulit ang mga katagang “Nagbago ka na”. Alam nyo, nakakaumay na eh, araw-araw na lang, paulit-ulit na lang.

“Good morning sa mga halaman kong nag stay”, bati ko sa mga halaman ko dahil simula nang umuwi ako dito sa probinsya ay ang pag-aalaga na ng halaman ang nabigyan ko ng pansin. Ito na rin kasi ang naging “stress-reliever” ko sa paulit-ulit na sinasabi sa akin ng mga tao na ako raw ay nagbago na. Hindi ko naman maintindihan sapagkat sa pagkakaalam ko, ako pa rin naman ito.

Tiningnan ko ang kalendaryo, ika-14 na ng Pebrero, araw ng mga puso, at araw rin ng reunion namin ng mga college batch mates ko. Ayoko sana pumunta, ngunit makulit rin itong nag-iisa kong kaibigan eh, si Cara. Sa lahat ng mga kaibigan ko noong college, siya na lang ang natira. Ayoko talaga sumama sapagkat ayokong muling maging sariwa ang lahat, ang lahat ng alaala, ang lahat ng sakit.

Parang ang bilis ng oras, kung kailan gusto kong pigilan na tumakbo ang oras, dun naman ito pabilis nang pabilis na tulad ng tibok ng aking puso. Papasok na kami ng venue, nanlalamig ako pero kailangan kong maging





matapang. Bumungad agad sa akin ang malakas na tugtog, ang maraming ilaw, at ang mga naggagandahang palamuti, ngunit bakit mukhang ang tamlay? Bakit parang hindi ako masaya? Agad kong nakita ang dati kong mga kaibigan, mga kaibigan na walang sawang siniraan at tinira ako patalikod. Nakita ko rin ang mga dati kong kaklase na walang sawang nilait at pinagtawanan ako dahil mahirap lamang kami. At sa huli, nakita ko ang ngiti ng isang walang kwentang lalaki, si Kray, ang dati kong nobyo na niloko lamang ako.

Muntik nang tumulo ang mga luha ko nang maalala ko lahat ng nangyari noon, ngunit napagtanto ko na tama pala ang mga sinasabi ng mga tao, nagbago na nga ako. Nagbago ako hindi dahil sa kanila. Lahat ng aking karanasan ay nagsilbi lamang na sandata upang matutunan kong makita ang aking halaga. Nagbago na nga ako. Ngunit nagbago ako para sa sarili ko.

Mary Joy De Leon





Tamang Oras

Sa gabing tahimik at madilim
Waring tala'y nagniningning
Di maiwasang sumagi sa isipan
Mga pangarap na siyang nais makamtan.

Pitik ng orasan sakin tila ba ay kay bagal.
Karera ng buhay ko'y napakatagal
Ito na ba talaga ang aking kapalaran?
O sadyang tadhana ko'y di pa sumasang-ayon.

Subalit, pipilitin kong magpatuloy sa masalimuot na daan
Mabagal man ang pag-usad ko patungo sa unahan
Magpapatuloy lamang ako sa guhit ng kapalaran
Upang lahat ng kasawian sa aking daan ay
mapagttagumpayan.

Cherry-lyn M. Avellana





Curiosity

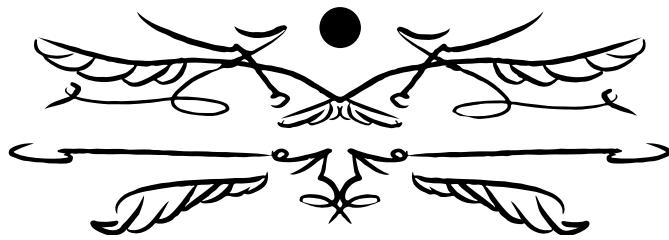


Kimberly Esquivel

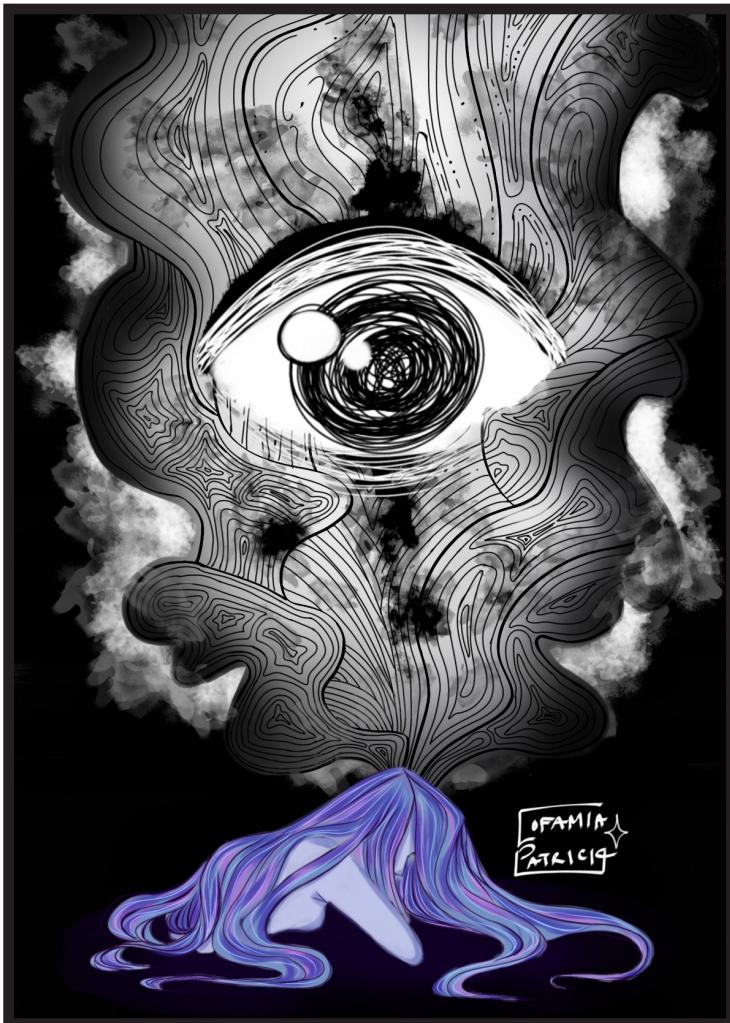
VI

Thinking as an Outcast

So I don't belong
Nothing happens, still here
I tried to run fast!

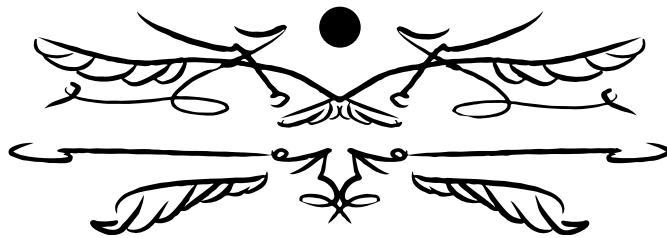


Turning A Blind Eye



Patrícia Lofamília





Almost on Top

At 19, I believe I am few leaps ahead of others,
As I have accomplished most of the goals I listed.

I crossed them out on my notepad,
And looked for the next to achieve.

People around always jump in triumphant,
Curve their lips and clap their hands,
Deliver words of gratefulness,
Then I hope I give them more than what is expected.

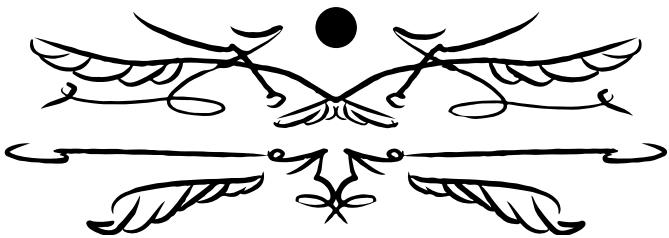
One day, while I was studying near the window,
I saw group of my age— smiling, beaming;
Something unknown pierced my heart,
But I shrugged it off, minding my checklist.

I memorized everything so I will not forget
That the society wants me to be like this.
It is not me who listed my goals,
I am only smitten by their expectations.

The same unknown thing poked my chest,
Am I really happy?
Am I the person soaring up high?
Or Am I the one being left behind?

April Jane Paquita





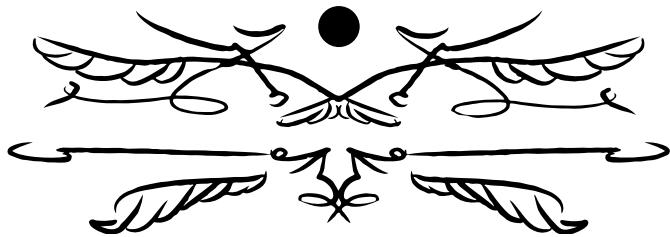
Ample, Ample

Every window I look through
Every single thing I do
There is always a missing piece
With all the illusion and mistakes.

I am alone in my head.
Every single light tells me that I will never advent.
Lowest and highest points.
Have awakened me that I am also sufficient.

Mary Joy De Leon





“Bakit?”

Bakit ganito?

Sa loob ng isang maliit na espasyo,

Sa loob ng madilim na kwarto

Mag-isa lamang ako.

Bakit ganito?

Mukha akong nalulunod

Ngunit wala namang tubig na nakasunod

Imahinasyon lang ba o nalulunod talaga ako?

Bakit ganito?

Kailangan ko ng saklolo

Ngunit walang handang sumaklolo

Pagod na ako sa ganito.

Bakit ganito?

Nakakapagod na

Ngunit wala naman akong ginagawa

Hindi ko na maintindihan kung anong nadarama

Bakit ganito?

Sa tingin ko, kalaban ko lahat ng tao

Pero ang totoo, sarili ko ang kalaban ko

Nagpapatalo ako sa sarili ko mismo.

Lahat ng bakit

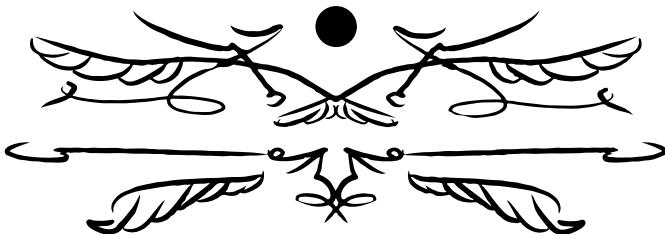
Hindi masasagot ng isa pang bakit

Dahil makakaalis lamang tayo sa madilim na kwartong ito

Kung magpapatuloy tayo sa kapalarang inukit ng mundo.

Mariel Garcia





Angst

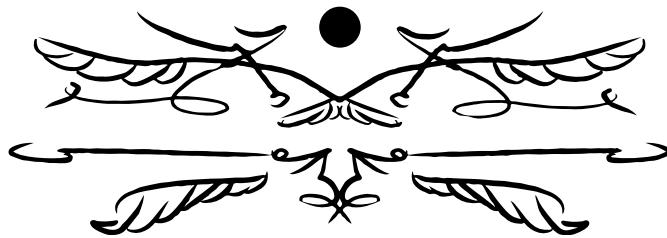
Too many questions were written all over our cr's walls and scattered lipstick messages on our glass mirror. We find it hard to believe when we see our reflection looking back at us tracing the tip of our soul, saying things we sometimes believe. We are fragile and kids who only learn from our tv, children who draw a tattoo of cartoons on our skin. We are innocent and still a child who needs to learn what loving ourselves means and i find it hard sometimes:

It's hard when I'll see those scratches from my knees, open wounds on my stomach and pimple marks on my face. It's hard to believe I'm beautiful when all the TVs in my 17th year told me that our face and body are the standard of beauty. Yet, whenever mama says that I am flawlessly gorgeous when I wake up at the morning, whenever my friends compliment my fashion outfit for the day or whenever someone tells me that I have a good taste in music, it feels like those little things remind me that no matter how much I hate myself, I am beautiful in ways I wouldn't know. And I guess, that's what loving ourselves means — accepting what we are on days that we are like sun, and there are days we become hurricane.

And I know it's hard to love ourselves, but at least, I'm learning it everyday.

Teresa Andrea Cabanela





Ang Araw at Gabi

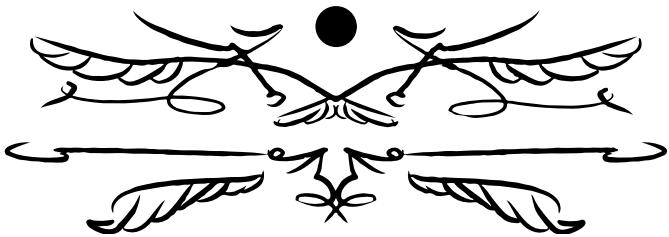
Ngayong gabi nangarap at lumapit
Sa ningning ng buwan na tila nang-aakit
Gustong sumayaw at hawakan ka ng mahigpit
Subalit maraming katanungan ang naglalaro sa isip

Sumikat ang araw na tila nagbabadya
Ng panibagong simula kahit na ikaw ay wala
Ninais kong maging araw sa buhay mong madilim
Kahit ako'y nalulunod ng malalim

Gigising, Babangon, Heto na ang umaga
Mauulit ang gabi, walang pinagkaiba
Kulang ang buhay ko, ngayong wala kana
Tatanggapin na ang totoo, na mayroon ka ng iba.

Jasper Caríño





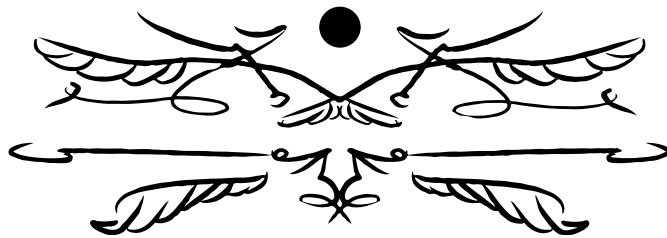
Let him go

I never thought we will fall apart
Because we love each other and I think it's enough.
Then one day I had a dream that we broke up.
What a big surprise, I noticed it was real.
I can't imagine you are not mine now
Then I knew it was all about freeing you
For I am not in the position to slave you
Though, I'll chain you with my love, I'll keep you with my
kiss.
Nevertheless,
Love wasn't for us
Love is not all about happy ending
Thank you for this learning
Love is all about growing
I'm sorry for my shortcomings.
I've been collecting my shits back then
To at least ease what is within
I am now standing, closed eyes.
Like a frozen murderer, lips are stacked
I am a corpse of your past
I'm sorry is all that I've got.

I'll die for you today
You'll be happy for her tomorrow.

Cristine Joy M. Avellana





Silence

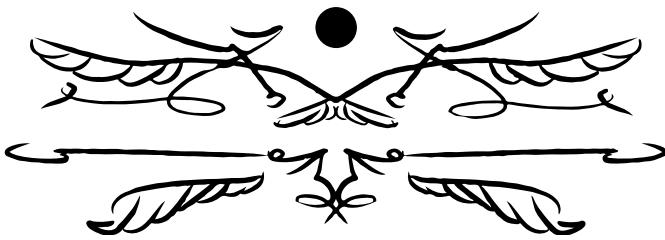
You heard them
screaming again last night,
followed the trail of broken pieces of glass that you held in the
past — hovering to be your constant reminder

You hear their outcries
— things you cannot even speak of

I saw you bridled your tongue
Making the words won't escape,
Silently wishing that it's only a nightmare

Raniella Tarnate





Silid ng Kalungkutan

Sa gabing tahimik at tanging kuliglig ang naririrnig.

Nagiisa, nilalamig, nalulungkot at naliligalig
Hindi nakakulong nginit parang sa leeg may tanikala
may busal sa bibig at hindi makapagsalita.

Araw-araw akong sinasaksak ng nakaraan.

Ang bawat pagbaon ay ramdam hanggang sa aking
kalamnan.

Walang dugong lumuluwas ngunit parang nasugatan
Na patuloy dumadaloy sa aking buong katawan

Sandali, sandali ano itong naririnig?

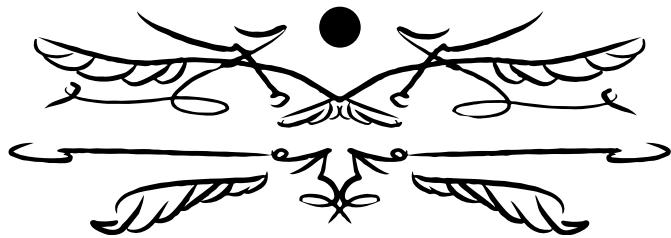
“wala kang kwenta, wala kang silbi, buti pa mawala ka
na!”

Mga katagang paulit ulit na sa isip ko'y gumagambala.
Nakakabingi, nakakalito, para na akong sasabog

Saklolo, saklolo! Sigaw ng puso ko.

Nais humingi ng tulong ngunit di alam kung paano
Sa tuwing may magtatanong, umiiwas at tumatago.
Tama ba na sarilinin ko? Nararapat bang manatili sa silid
na ito?





Afterglow



Mark Christian Abasolo



VII

Should be Almost There

It's within my grope
But come loosely washed away
To pursue: painful



Stars are Evil



MarkArt





Huli

Umukit ang pekeng ngiti sa aking labi,
Ipinagdarasal na ito ay mananatili,
Hanggang sa matapos ang seremonyang walang pasubali,
Sapagkat lahat ng narito ay nagbubunyi
Sa pag-iisang dibdib ng pares na kawili-wili.

Hindi nawala ang 'di makatotohanang galak sa akin,
Gayon na rin sa mga bisitang nakatingin,
Sa pagsasalo ng ikinasal sa halik na bangin—
Ang lalim... Suko na ako, hindi na siya iibigin.
Mapupuno ng hinagpis ang puso kung patuloy kong
kakabigin.

Nilisan ko ang simbahan; tinalunton ang motor,
Pinaandar nang pagkabilis-bilis — tunog bapor!
Napakainit... ang init ng selenyador—
Ng mga luha kong hindi pumapabor,
Na nagawa kong isuko ang aking Amor.

Tila sinaluhan ako ng araw na tirik;
Butil mula sa langit, sa mukha ko ay sumiksik,
Dumadampi ang labi nitong hitik na hitik—
Sa pag-aaruga at pagpapanumbalik,
Ng ligayang aking winisik.

Umuulan na... pero ang panahon ay maalinsangan,
Ako ay umiiyak nang dahil sa kasiyahan,
Na ngayon ay nabigyang halaga ang sariling kalagayan.
Salamat, na kahit na mainit ay nagbuhos ka ng ulan
upang ang tulad ko ay damayan.

April Jane Paquita





Acceptance

Tranquility is when you hear the rustles of the leaves in a summer afternoon,

The commotion of demons running out with your emotion
And tranquility is when you finally embrace the pain that you gain
– rather than the fact that you're gone.

Raniella Tarnate





Trabaho

Bakit kayhirap ng mga gawaing ito?

Tila ako'y hindi sanay at nalilito

Pero dati nama'y alam na alam ko

Lahat ng pasikot-sikot sa mga gawaing ito

Bakit nawawalan ako ng gana sa mga bagay

Maging sa trabaho na matagal kong inintay

Sasayangin ko ba ang oportunidad na ito?

Mananatili na lamang ba ako sa ganitong estado?

Bakit tila naubos ang sigla na dati'y angkin

Nawala sa daloy ng buhay na para sa akin

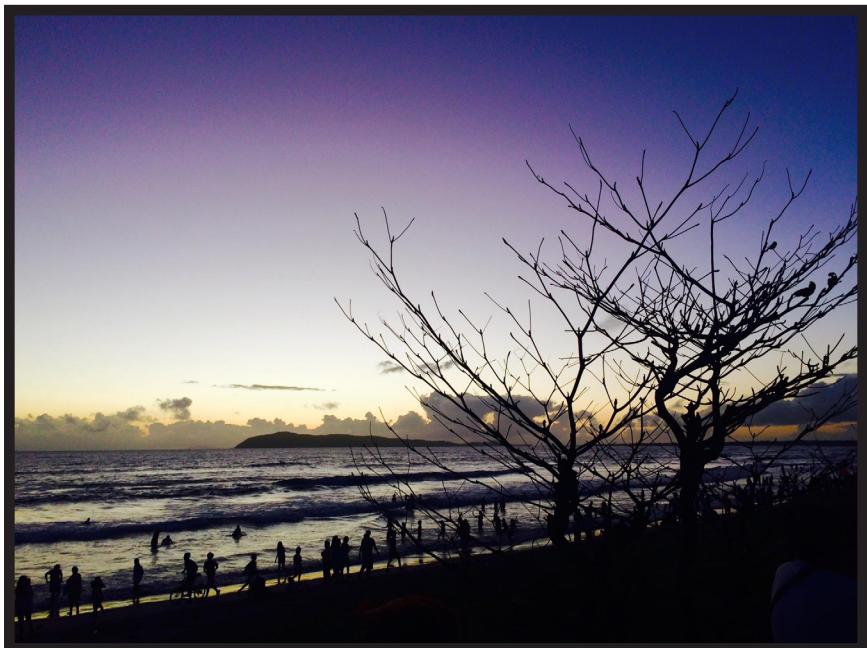
Maaari kayang hindi pa sapat ang lahat ng aking inilaan?

Upang makuha ang "promotion" sa aking pinapasukan

Thinker Belle



Banaag



Mark Christian D. Abasolo



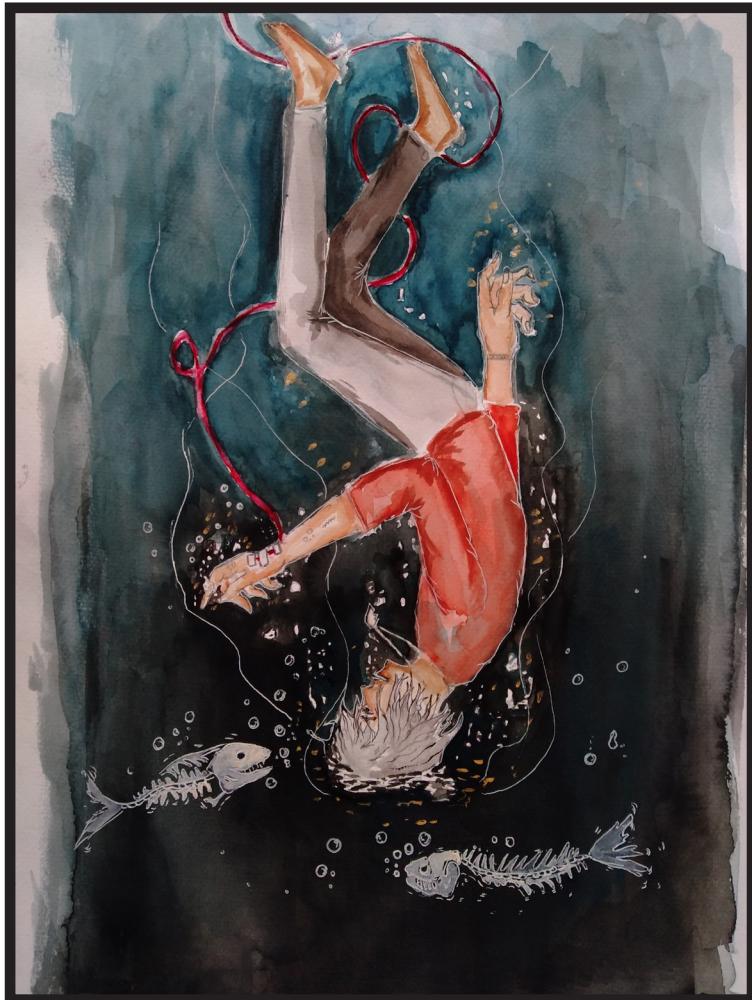
VIII

Glitching

My system is not
Responding to anyone,
Then white turns to gray



Expired



MarkArt





Suffering is Just the Beginning

I know how often we feel lost in the void of darkness and how we're still holding on through the edges of falling leaves while butterflies and bees rest their wings and cry with moondust in their eyes. We carve artless wounds in our body with our empty fingertips and stitch buttons to our scars. We jacket our fears and walk with an empty feeling only to go home with a bed waiting for you to mourn. We scream in silence and bleed with the stars at night. No matter how many colorful sunrises glance at your dusty window, bleachless souls are still thriving for something that cannot be filled with the light.

Yes, I know. We throw pebbles in the morning and die with our plants at noon. We sometimes swallow our fear when masquerade nightmares visit us on sleepless nights. and I know that you're scared when they are all laughing so you'll make the joke first and beat them through the punchline. Thoughts are powerful dark faeries when you don't know how to be a friend for yourself, they will cast dark spells and when you seek for help in crowded people's breath, you'll realize, you are just invisible.

Darling, I know it all. But, if there is something I want to tell you when suffering feels a little heavier in your heart, it's okay. it's okay to scream, to cry, to bleed, to be tired. because, even though Mr. Sunrise will never be enough for your actual freedom, please know that there are still chapters that are left unfinished from the book of your life. Pain is not the ending, suffering is just the beginning.

We will be lost and lonely. we will cry and kneel with our heavy eyes. people do feel like that sometimes...

and I hope when you do, please know it's valid.

Teresa Andrea Cabanela





Hushed

I used to have a happy and pansy childhood,
Not until Dad hit me using a huge brown wood;

I used to play all day with my friends,
Not until Mom tied me using metal chains.

Despite my young age, I learned how to quiet;
I covered my parents' wrong doings, I put them on my
plate;

I have a pair of expressive eyes which cannot see,
I also have a forbidden mouth to talk to anybody.

April Jane Paquita



Indefinite Steps

I don't want to die and fade away.

I don't want to hide without a trace.

I don't want to live with lies.

I don't want to keep myself in any way.

I don't want to lose all of my wint.

I don't want to put too much investment.

I don't want to feel indebted,

And let other people control me.

I just don't want to live with their expectations,

And agree in all their decisions.

I just don't wanna fail,

But how would I know what it is all?

I just want to build an unbreakable courage,

Make games without a challenge.

But how can I move forward?

With this untrusted indefinite step.

Marciano Gaza





Mud Box

I was passing by the thoroughfare.
Nonchalant wind brushed my well-done hair.
I am about to sit in my chair.
Suddenly, someone pulled me out of the room saying, “you are
not supposed to be here”.

I walked out of the door reflecting upon what happened before.
The rain has been pouring down, hard, windy, and regrettable,
In my mind, I was questioning my worth.
However, I kneeled, then the mud box saved me from it all.

I was wrong, and I admitted it
I made a mistake and I have looked for a wrench.
Sadly, I have not found it.
I was catching my breath, but I could not reach.

Mud box was there to save me when I fell on my knees,
I did not mind the filthy and messy case.
Because, the mud box caught me when I shed tears.
It dripped apart and kissed everything longways”.

Mary Joy De Leon





Janus

I chose to swim in the vast and deep ocean of uncertainty
that is my mind.

There are many forgotten treasures I hope to find
but cannot yet see nor touch---am I eternally
banned?

I do not wish to drown!
Most unwilling to die!
But I chose this, didn't I?

After all, who can truly identify or even honestly know...?
Why do we choose to suffer?

Audrey Livette Badillo





Engkuwentro

Sa hagdanan nitong gusali ay syang nagtago
Ni hindi matanggap ang bagsak na grado
Mga luha'y nagsimulang pumatak
Mga pinagpaguran pala ay hindi pa rin sapat

Isa-isang binuklat mga gawang plano
Karamihan may bilog maging ang pangalan ko
Nakaramdam na naman ng kahihyan
Pangatlong ultur na, hindi pa rin pumapasa

Isang estranghero ang tumahan
Nakarolyong kartolina; binuklat, tiningnan
Maya-maya pa'y may biglang tumawag
“Engr. Morales, mayroon pong naghahanap”

Kartolina'y ibinalik na sa pagkaka-rolyo
Isa pala siyang inhenyero at kami pala'y magka-apelyido
“Ang pangit pala ng mga gawa ko dati”
Nakakapagtakang sambit niya sa sarili

Hunyo



“Sikat ng araw sa umaga”

Tuluyan nang nilamon ng isang libong dahilan para
sumuko

Ayaw nang gumaraw o kumilos upang tumayo
Galaw ng mundo ay nagpatuloy ngunit sa aki'y nakahinto
Umaalingawngaw ang sakit ng aking pagkabigo

Manhid na ang puso at isipan sa rami ng nangyari
Pilitin mang makabangon ngunit sarili ay sinisisi
Ako ay naliligaw sa kawalan dulot ng pighati
Yaong pag-asaya na magtagumpay ay tuluyang iwinaksi

Akala ay hindi na masisilayan pa ang umaga
Tanglaw ng sikat ng araw sa akin ay nagpakita
Paraan upang sa akin ay ipaalala
Ang pagkakataon upang muling magsimula

Guhit ng kaparalan ng bawat isa ay sadyang mapaglaro
Ang dikta ng puso at isip ang siyang magiging
instrumento
Sa paglalakbay na haharapin ng mga tao
Asahang madadapa ngunit sikapin pa ring bumangon at
tumayo

dsupremo



Pagsapit

Tila nakakulong sa rehas ng kalungkutan
Pinipilit makaalis ngunit sadyang di malabanan,
Paulit-ulit tinitigan kariktan ng buwan
Nagbabakasaling bukas makalawa, makalaya na sa
kinalalagyan

Gabi-gabing inaabangan ang 'yong pagsilip
Kasabay ng mga bagay na gumugulo sa isip,
Ikaw ang pansamantalang pahinga sa mundo kong
masikip
Lungkot ay napapawi mistulang parang ihip

Tagu-taguan maliwanag ang buwan
Ang unang sumuko ay siyang talunan
Sa mundong karera ang pakikipaglaban
Ang pahina-hina ay karaniwang naiiiwan

At sa muling pagsapit ng kanyang liwanag
hayaang tangayin nito ang sayo'y bumabagabag,
Gaya ng unti-unti nitong pagiging perpetko
Halina't sumabay sa agos ng mundo.

Karen Fortín



Flowing Drops



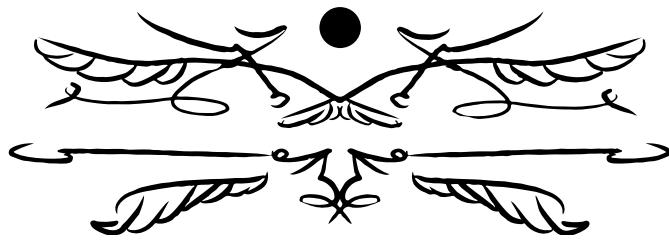
Mark Anton Eco



IX

Blacking Out

The once ivory
I better just stayed there
Ebony again

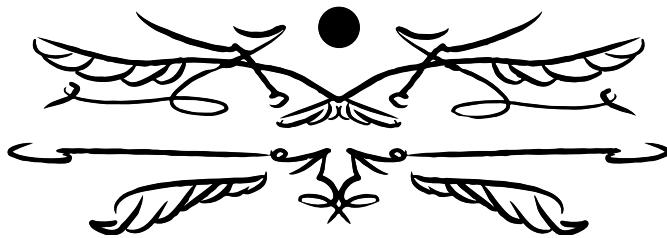


Surface Pressure



Patricia Lofamia





“My D”

I always wonder how D would come for me
Would it hit me in a snap—quickly?
Or exciting enough to penetrate slowly?
It's thrilling because I desire to see
How my D would come for me

No, boxes would not make me quit
I desperately want D—I admit
I would like to taste you bit by bit
So tell me if I should wait and sit
Or is it something I should hunt and commit?

Why is it taking so long?
I'm old enough for you to come along.
And I know it was not so wrong
I want you—I am not that strong
And I've had enough of a sad song

I know it is bizarre
That to me, D is like a superstar
I want it—on the streets or inside a car
You can hit me hard and leave a scar
I couldn't care less if you will take it far

You may be thinking it is peculiar
That I want D like the strawberry jar
Yearning to get it no matter how far
No, I am not glum or teary as they are
But I always want to disappear like a small star.





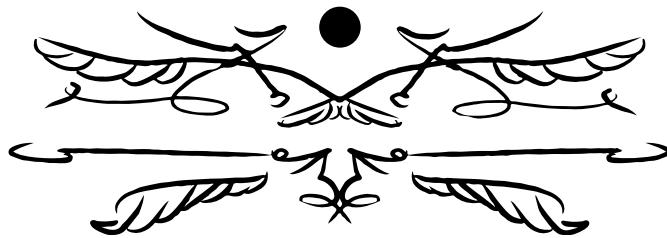
It's not that I want my D—my DEATH so much
It's just that I have no plans for my future or such
It always feels like I and reality are untouched
Like my brain and heart are crushed
To me, everything in my life does not match

Death is what I wanted since I was young
And yes, I have no plan to keep it at the tip of my tongue
But is it ethical to be this unstrung?
I think not, so these questions clung
Did I not once scream at the top of my lungs?
And kept the smile religiously though my heart was wrung?

Maybe D excites me most of the time
Because life has been brutal—like I did a crime
But if I am going to consider all the signs
I would not want death much like how I like the poem rhymes
And perhaps D is not for DEATH, but DELECTABLE limes

Raisah Kamilah Dayto





Na-Naman

Lugmok na naman sa yakap ng gabi.
Ni hindi makuntento sa iyak ng pighati.
Subalit lugmok pa ring masasabi
Na tila hindi kailanman maipaliwanag ng labi.

Higit na titingala ang patay na mga bituin
Kesa lawak ng asul na langit...bakit?
Na kung ang siyang magkasalungat lubusan ring pareho
Bakit patuloy ang paggii ng saliwaan?

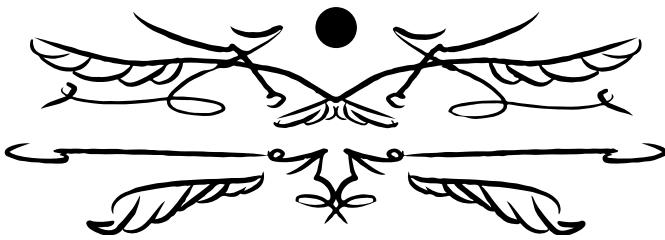
Kailangan nga bang pumili?
Bawal nga bang manatili?

Kung walang hanggan ang paggulong ng bilog,
Kailan sasapit ang katapusan na laging darating?

Hindi ba nga't nasabi na...
Lugmok na naman.

Audrey Livette Badillo





Red Light

Alive, happy, and free.

It was all me.

Just living life happily.

In-order to roam around freely.

However, that was a lie.

Red light signaled a while.

To stick under the ground.

Because the world is round.

Maybe it was meant to be.

Red light, the ground and me.

Weather might be cold.

But – at least, here, I was feeling good.

Rules of red lights,

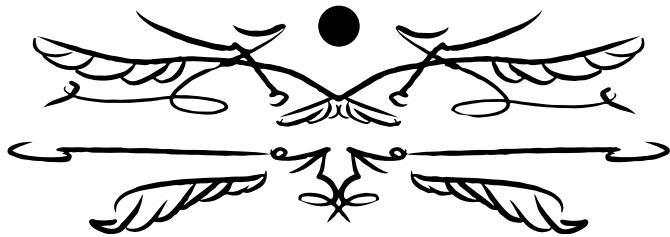
It did not stop me.

I can die breaking the rules.

To discover what is there for me.

Mary Joy De Leon





Unfriending Ana

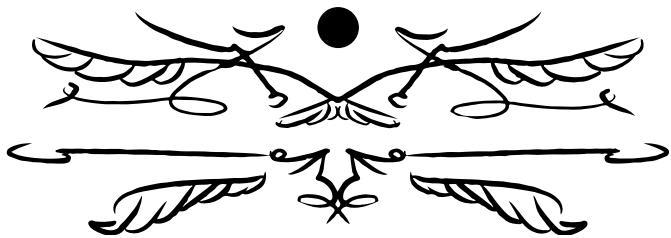
You've been my friend since I can remember
We've been buddies since I've been there
We've been good friends non-incidentally
Yet, you're killing me lopsidedly

I had been a puppet of your standard
I'm sick of trying to be fitted
Sick of your distorted perception
That I should be thin to fit in

Ana, I can't live like this forever
I'm not conforming to you anymore.
Ana, I don't want to be the girl with anorexia
We've been good friends but now it is the end

Ana Lea Villaluz



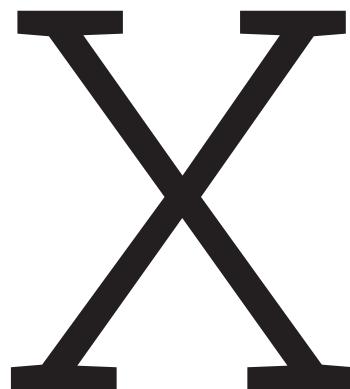


Takipsilim



Margielyn Umbao



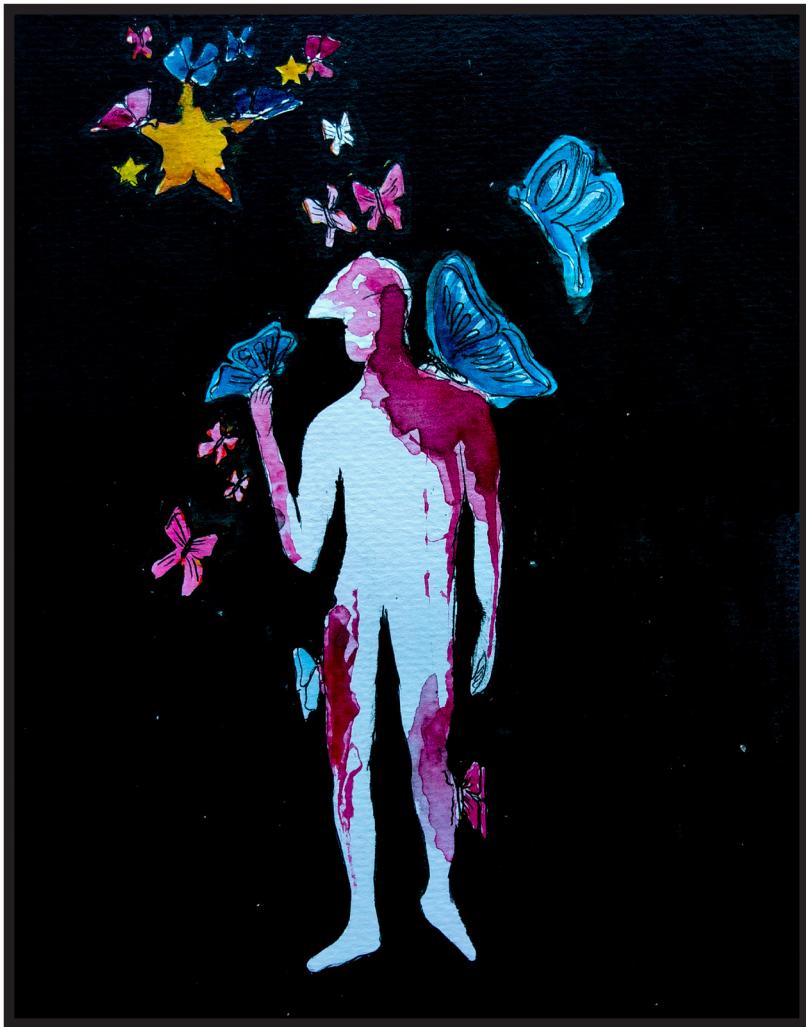


Realization

I can't do it or
I'm thinking I can't do it?
Reliving my drive



Gleam



MarkArt





Voice of Innocence

Through the vastness of the uproarious world, I
contribute nothing.
The deafening kick-up knocks at every corner,
whispering something;
Urging me to tell my deepest secrets, revealing the untold,
Express a thousand words of heap emotions that soon
unfold.

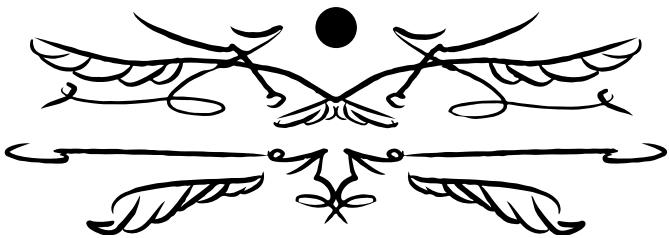
I'm living with no voice at all, not a single strength I hold.
I dream to sing in the glorious stars and sometimes, be a
gold;
A gem that showcases its beauty and worths a trillion
peso—
Oh, how I want to be a diamond but I can't: a stew.

Technology innovates while I remain constant—statue,
My mouth's out for moving, imitating yet can't find
sounds to sew.
How many more years to wait so I can lift my feet off the
ground?
Aren't their skeletons enough to drown crocodiles in
land?

Sun berefts its shine, and moon bereaves the comely night
alluring;
Like I totally forget how to be cunning, strong, and bold,
I lose the confidence to show who I am and what I can do,
Not until the judge says, "Put the mute in the witness
stand."

April Jane Paquita





Highway

Age passes to the challenge of time,
Days define who we truly are.
The questions what, why and how,
Slowly got answers somehow.

Some people rush the ran,
Some take it just for fun.
Some have a purpose,
Some do it by force.

It doesn't matter how much golds we achieved,
Or how many titles we attained.
It is the gratefulness that we feel each time
We fail or win.

PurplePen





Happy Ending

Once upon a time, in a faraway land,
There lived a damsel all smiles without elegance,
In a palace full of rainbow and wonder,
No evil armies and dragons living under.

Every rise of the sun until stars glitter at night,
Radiating the marbled floor and painted brick walls, her
eyes shine bright.

She lived perfectly with cotton and flowers,
Not until she learned about life outside the borders.

Every step is getting harder
Every minute is getting darker,
Every person she meets is getting faker, and the pressure
is getting heavier,
This troubled world is all new to her, and she thinks it
will never be better.

A war is on the way, and she came unprepared,
Nothing but her ball gown and crown as a shield.
Facing the unknown, she walks alone,
There is no turning back, keep moving on.

As the way gets rougher, she is becoming miserable,
Her mind is the poison of her own apple
She, herself is the witch who holds the dagger,
She is the beauty and the beast, and the tale's writer.





The edge of the pavement comes to light,
The end is getting nearer so as her fight,
She felt better knowing she crossed the path,
Step by step, and did not give up.

She does not need a kiss from a knight and shining armor,
Nor a flicker of magic from a fairy godmother,
She handled herself like a true soldier,
She finds that the curse and cure is within her.

A point in her stories chapter has reached
And from it, another one will be created
The battle she fought will never be the end,
But a journey to a happy ending she deserved





Fifteen-Year-Old Me

It's 2 o'clock in the morning and here I am still longing for something I wish I could've done. I want to go back in time and find myself at fifteen, for a reason that there's a particular moment when I was in the middle of a fight with unknown demons screaming inside my head. A battle with a sharp blade as a weapon: attempting, deciding and thinking "would it be worth it? And if I won, will I gain the validation I want as a prize?". Sitting in the corner of a darkroom hoping for someone to hold and stop me, and be saved.

I want to find that little broken girl. I want to go back and be the one to comfort her, fold her against my chest and tell her "it's okay". I want to make her feel that she's never alone, and tell her what is really on the road. I want to kiss her on the forehead saying "flaws are just flaws. You see, the most beautiful people are beautifully broken. You'll find the truth about the path and find that everyone else is wrong".

I want to show her my writings, the stories and poetry I made and then read hers. I want to tell her that there are people who will always put your notebooks down before they even finished reading the stories, but never stop writing. Life is strange with its twists and turns and the sharp blade won't help you cut the thorns. I want to

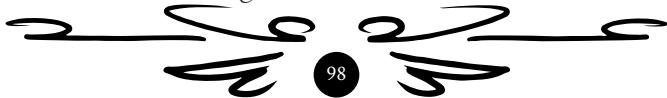




hold her hand, spoil her what is to be at twenty, and give her the advice that I've been carrying since then, "never trust the mirror for it only shows your skin, and if you think it dictates your worth, it's time to look within."

It's 2 o'clock in the morning and here I am still somehow grateful. It's been six years, I know there's still a lot on the road, and people may pave this path through my dreams, but I am well-prepared and being ME will serve as my weapon as I walk to this journey, and tomorrow surely it begins.

Mary Grace C. De Vera





Remember when....

Remember the time...
When you doubted yourself?
When you hesitated?
When you thought you can't?

Remember the time ...
When you feel that you're not good enough?
When you cried yourself to sleep?
When did you think of giving up?

Remember the time...
When did you think of taking your life?
Lucky you did not.
Because there are so many reasons for that.

Thankfully,
You gave yourself another chance,
Cause if you do that, in an instance
You wouldn't be writing this story.

Ana Lea Villaluz





Hot Coffee

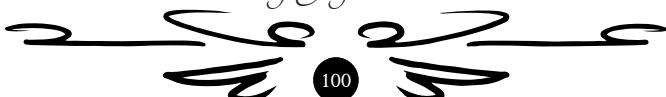
Cold night taunts and hunts.
Like the thoughts in my mind.
I tried so hard to grow.
But – it will not just let me go.

Walking does not matter.
Running does not make it better.
Even moving your feet for a half meter.
Because, you always looked back – feeling bitter.

Good thing, there is a coffee.
It is all I ever see.
Hot coffee for a mind full of undefined
Hot coffee for a heart that is puzzled and turbid.

Coffee encourages me.
To go on and foresee,
The things that messed me
In-order to lift the hand that holds me

Mary Joy De Leon





Laban!

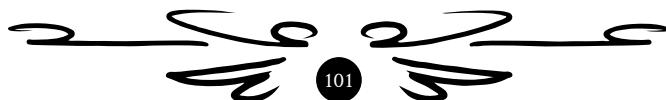
Isang simpleng makata na nag iiwan ng mga kataga
Naghihilom ng mga sugat gamit ang katha
Nag-iiwan ng mga bakas sa pamamagitan ng tinta
Nakikipagdigma na letra ang sandata

Patuloy na magsusulat sa mga blankong pahina
Patuloy na magbabasa kahit sarado ang mata
Patuloy na maglalakbay kahit hindi alam ang ruta
Patuloy lang sa buhay hanggat makita ang pag-asaya

Babangon kahit ilang beses man madapa
Lalangoy sakali mang lumubog ang bangka
At sa pagtatapos ng aking tula
Iwangan ko kayo ng isang kataga

Kung nabubulag kana at wala ka ng makitang pag-asaya
Pilitin mong imulat ang iyong mga mata at tumingala
Tingnan ang ganda ng kalangitan, buwan at mga tala
At malalamang mong lahat ay isang magandang nilikha

Julius Cereno

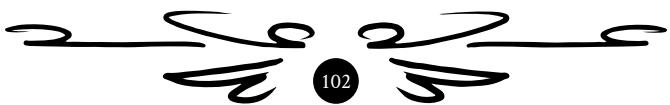




Rise! New Beginning



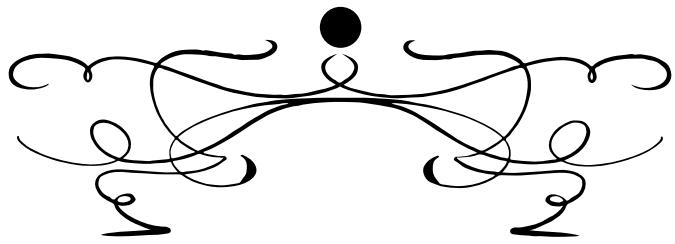
Mark Anton Eco



XI

*Consistent and
More Determined*

Focused on my goal
Don't mind people dragging me
Look ahead, target

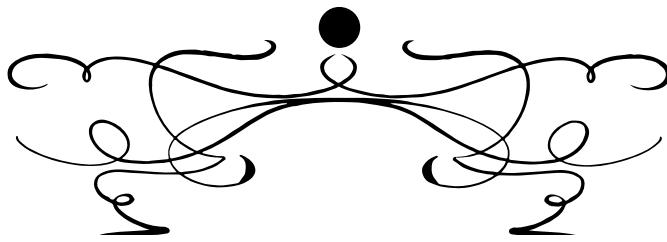


Clouds



MarkArt





Just Like Luna, You Will be Full Again

you— of all people who wanted to skate on a midnight-summer-day. you used to spend your nights tearing tick-tocks— pausing time as you breathe the mist of your red inked angst, but tonight darling let me tell you this.



cut your hair along with the burdens you have been carrying around your ribcage. let go of your mask and paint your nails red. and in the dark, you will see yourself in the mirror— a body filled with galaxies, not just a black hole.



plaster that curve lips you've been hiding in your attic for a long time now. it's time to water the flowers and feel alive between the deserts, do it over and over again until it becomes a garden of dreams— careful not to get slipped.





in the process of actually taking the train instead of just waiting for it to come from the dark rails, darling believe me- it will be a hell of a ride but who gives a fuck? we're all born and be out of breath at the end anyway.



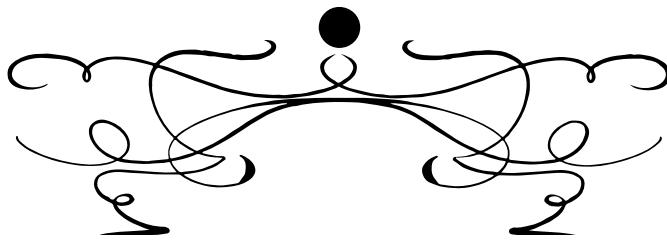
now, stop your head from growing poisonous thorns that are not supposed to be there. roar like a wild wolf, not looking for the little prince but looking for the petals you have once thrown away for people to like you. get it all back and collect your tiny pieces until you feel like living again. for once, it's you over the world.



and at last, just like Luna- YOU WILL BE FULL AGAIN.

Teresa Andrea Cabanela





One Hopeful Night

How many times did I wake up feeling empty?
I lost count.

How many times do I cry at night until I fall asleep?
I lost count.

How many times have I felt alone, restless and exhausted?
I lost count.

For countless times...I have no reason to get up, but I have thousands of reasons to cry at night. For countless times...I have no reason to fight, but I have millions of reasons to finish what I have borrowed to God, my life.

People see me wearing a facade of a happy face, but deep down I know anytime soon I'll be gone, and I am nowhere to be found. I am a social butterfly for them, but for me? I am no butterfly... I don't know who I am. I don't know why I am still here, breathing. It's scary to think that a girl like me has this kind of inner battle that no one knows, not even my own parents.

Scared with my own shadow, I escaped.
Holding a knife, I ran as fast as I could and so I can end
my agony tonight.

But instead, I found myself walking in a silent aisle,
letting go of my fear, crying for forgiveness as I kneeled
with both hands intertwined with each other, Praying for
hope and praying for reason to live more.





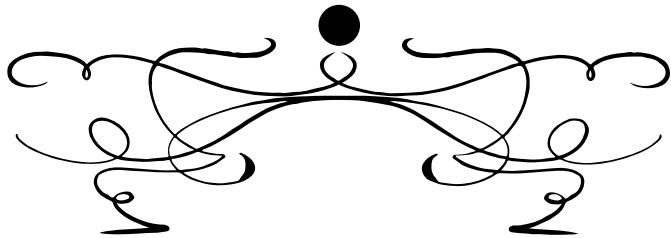
And thankfully I didn't give up and you found me.
You heard the excruciating pain I am fighting for. You never leave my side even before, Even I can't see your worth because I am blinded with my own pain. I know you were the one who knocked me in times of killing myself, literally. You were selfless, you even sacrificed your own, but I always choose to end mine. You were brave and I am weak, But now it changes, you changed me. You give me companionship through faith. I thank God for finding me.

Depression is not a joke,
Anyone can experience this with no apparent reason.
It maybe difficult to escape the world of loneliness if it hits you,
You may sometimes feel alone in darkness and no one will understand what you feel. But trust me, it will end soon...

Yet ending your life will not solve the situation.
Courage instead of fear, Leave your door open for healing,
Find reason to get up every morning, and reflect for positivity.
Create steps for new hope, for new life.
Just like me, YOU CAN DO IT!

Pauline Ann Moral



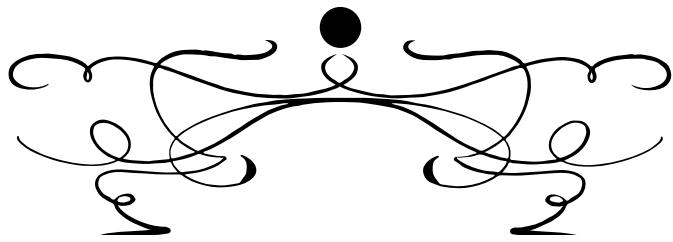


Worth it!

To all the failures,
To all the difficulties I endured,
To all the people who talked behind my back,
To all the bad treatments I got,
To all the hatred I heard,
To all the people who kept on calling me nerd,
To all the moments of almost giving up,
To all the disappointments I thought I'll be stuck,
To all the papers I crumpled,
To all the coffees that turned cold,
To all the inks I've wasted,
To all the escapes and get busted,
To all the sleepless nights I spent,
To all the schedules I had to suspend,
To all the trial and errors,
To all the below average scores,
To all the countless revision,
To all the refinement and reformation,
I'm about to get my diploma this year,
Thank you, Lord.
You answered my prayer.

Mary Grace C. De Vera





Rebuilding Ruins

Obscured by the dark shades
With the crawling doubt of reaching out.
Having once within a burning faith
But now it has turned into a wicked dust.

As I stare above the ceiling wide awake
It's past 2am and my mind's still a mess.
Wanting to shove off those distraught thoughts away
Eyes are heavy with tears and distress.

The storm of regrets came flooding
Almost drown the value of my existence.
I should've been the person they kept wanting
And not this person unappreciated with own presence.

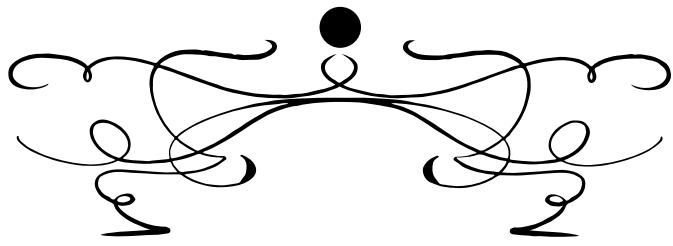
But one day, upon pondering at the wide-open sky
Staring between those empty spaces
I realized to look at life like stars up high
To be just fine and bright even without getting praises.

Diffusing dim lights turned into its full bright
Igniting the few hopes I have kept silent.
Now knowing how to step out to find my light
That every morning is a second chance.

Life is like a train, always gets derailed
One way or another it crumbles down in vain.
But though I will be left with the ruins the world made
I will be still here, existing and rebuilding my own new world again.

Mary Grace C. De Vera





Chasing Sunsets



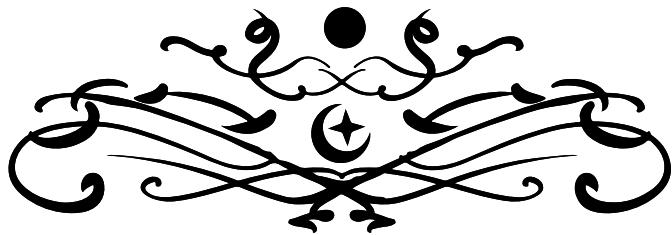
Claire Ann C. Jimenez



XII

Embracing Own Pace

This is not about
How fast I achieve something
This is me, fighting

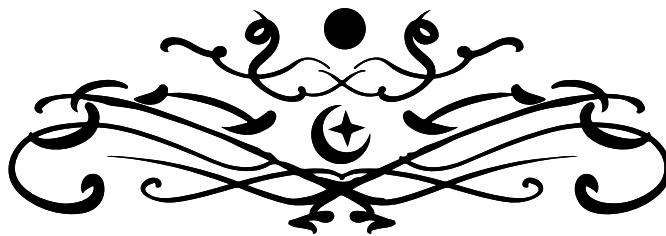


Silent Sea



Kenken Patacsil





When the life begins

They say life begins at 20 and the past 19 years of your life is just a practice. Are you on the same page? Because I'm not.

For me, my life begins the moment I was born. Yes, I can't speak nor walk but as I heard the voices in my surroundings, I know I'm alive. I smile when they are playing with me. I cry when I am hungry. I may be too young but I guess the young mind of mine started to wonder how a certain thing works.

How come a doll can talk like me? and still I was amazed and fascinated as I continued to comb its hair.

How come my brother defeated me in this video game? Still, I enjoyed it a lot as I pinched his nose to make faces in front of my crumbled face.

How come my mom scolds me when all I did was study? Well, she's just not happy seeing me awake all night for the past two weeks.

How come my brother can have his own girlfriend while I am not even allowed to have a boyfriend? Okay, fine. They are just protecting me and avoiding me from getting hurt. So sweet!





And lastly, how come that they are all engineers, teachers and architects while I am here, still working on what path I would take.

I envy those people who are really sure of what they want to become in the future. Like that they have a clear picture in their minds that after a decade or two, they've already fulfilled their plans. There are some people who exactly know what they want to be and there are some who have no idea at all. It will always be you finding answers for your endless questions.

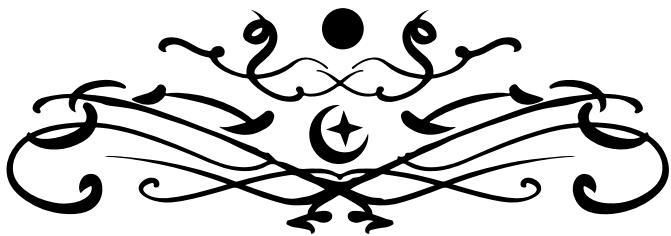
"Sam! The agency said that they love your designs. They want to set an interview with you next week. What should I reply?", my Mom said.

"Tell them I'll come, Mom".

I guess the most important progress is finding yourself and growing on your own without minding others of how far they've become. Don't worry if they are way too fast than you. You have your own time to bloom. You have all the time to live your life. Remember that no one is ready for what the real world is but earning experiences will make your living worthwhile.

Kaleidoscope



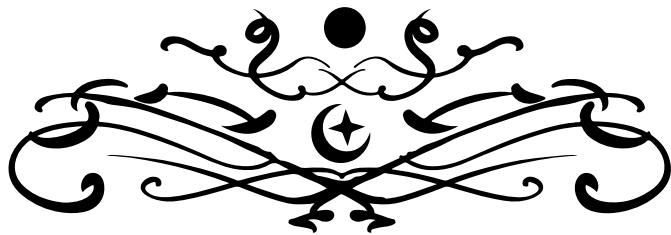


Real Conversation

The past is the past.
Distance is not the response.
Real conversation does.

Mary Joy De Leon





Whisper of Peace

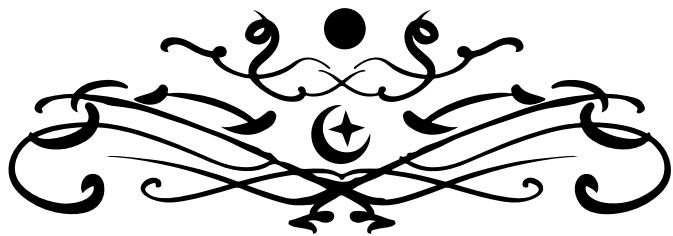
It's 3 am.
The cold breeze during dawn.
The empty streets of the town
It's calming.

I found peace
In this misery
As if telling me that everything will be alright
The feeling of suffocation is now gone.

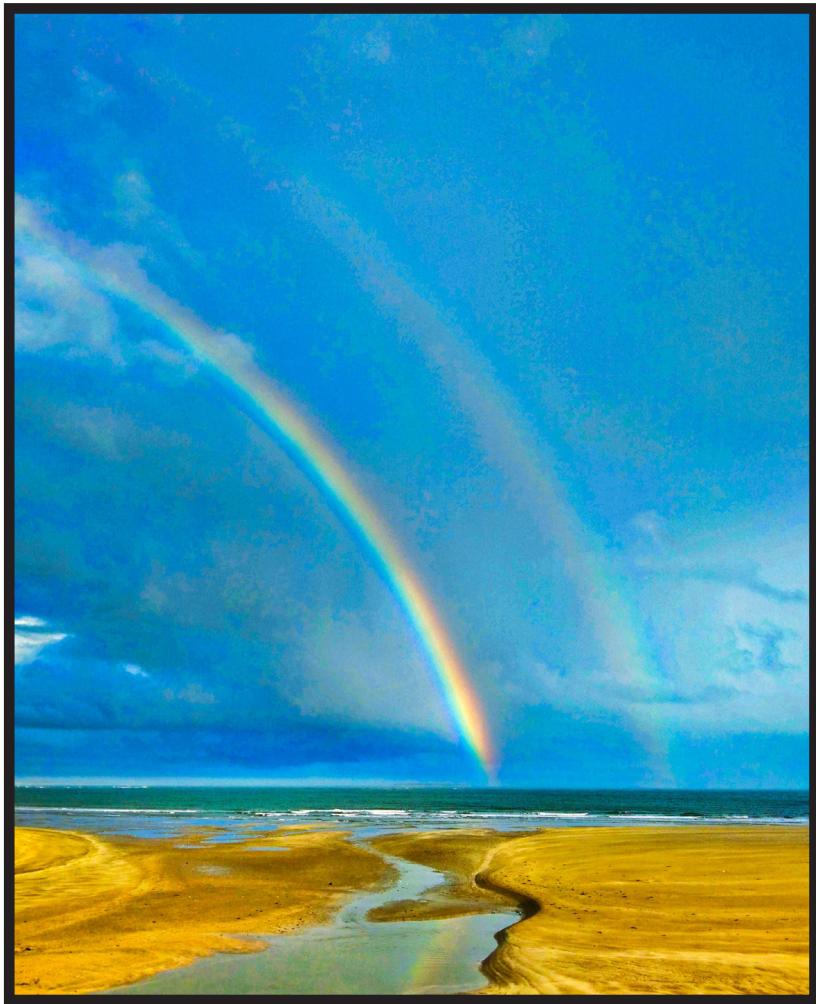
Finally, I can rest.
Finally, I can breathe.

Ana Lea Villaluz





Delicate



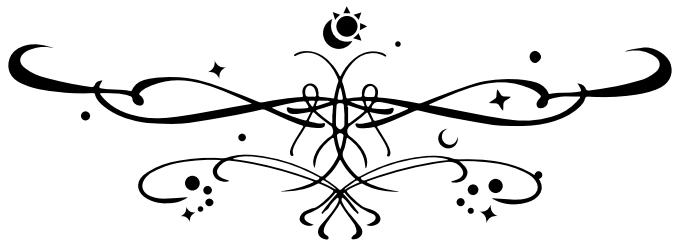
Nica Matsusaki



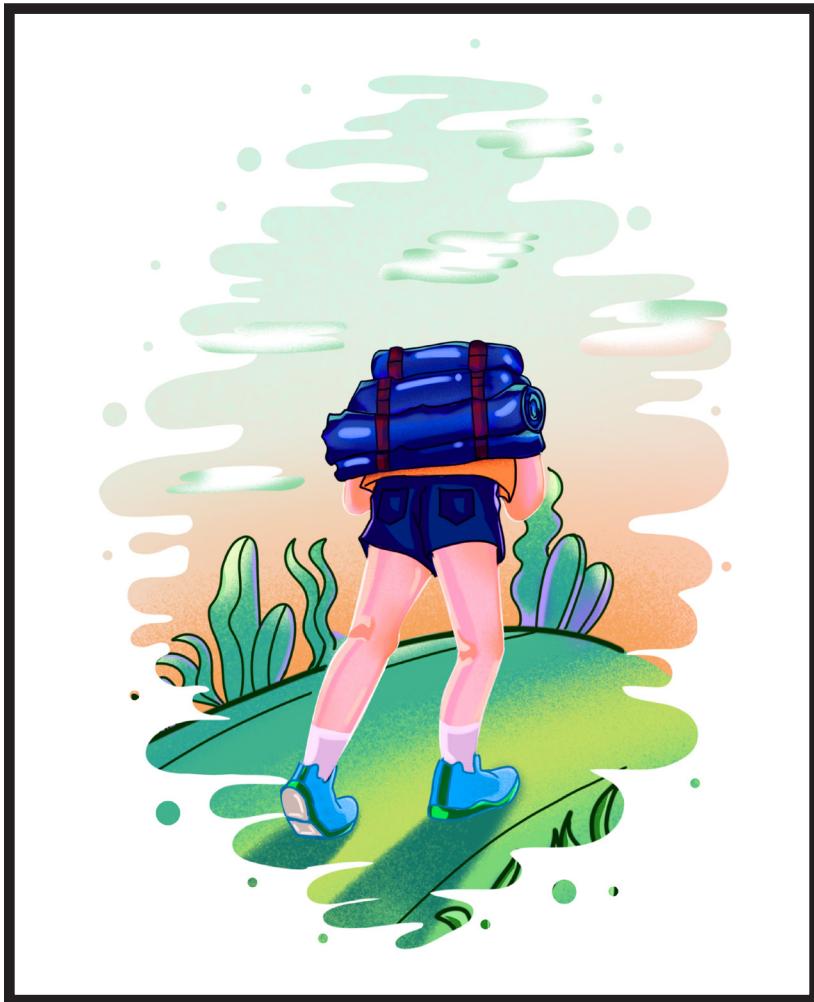
XIII

Finally on the Spotlight

No matter how long
I still make it— I won!
This is real, young self

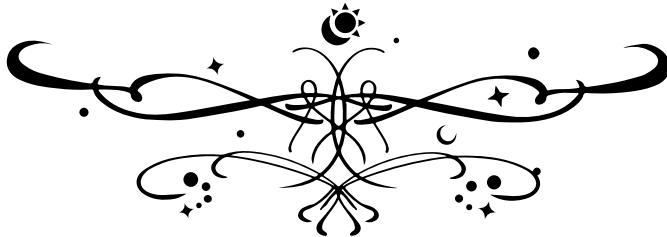


First Step



Patrícia Lofamía





Chessboard is my Battlefield

Life is a chessboard battle between heaven and hell, between the righteous and indecorous. I could've been a queen but I chose to be a knight. A queen could be powerful, feared by many. She could cross oceans of greater depth and range but she's vulnerable as a woman falling in love, a poet writing a poetry or a bird flying in a storm. She could be lost in a love with no label, with just arms wrapped around her that often let go but comes back when he needs her. She could be out of words to breathe, unable to write similes and metaphors of things she could likely overlook. She could be easily stripped off her command even during the early game once she forget others' worth. A queen is nothing without her subordinates to protect her and I wouldn't risk my intelligence for authority.

My movements could be suspended in one but my wisdom is beyond any compass' reach. It could go through distances you never imagine it may be. Through the countryside, amusement parks, near bay walks while watching the sunset or even in flower fields, writing its battle plan with sharp swords and metal armors. I've got a few eyes on me. Being famous is not something I want to be branded with, I want to be a lost bunny leaping in spring meadows. I want to be as free as a butterfly, as slick as a snake but as poisonous as the sweetly scented killer. I'd like to live in forest chalets, with the graceful morning sunlight seeping through my windows. Picnic basket and checkered blankets of red and white laid over green grass. I



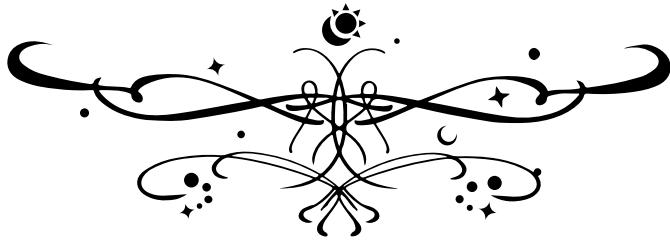


never wanted a grand palace with gold gadgets and gizmos, red carpets and huge gateway doors. I just want a simple life with just one goal in mind which is to guard the king—the love I have for myself. everything falls down with it like a domino being pushed with the slightest touch and i couldn't afford to lose it. no, not ever. I could never do it without pawns who believe in me, friends who would risk their time to be with me and that's something I'd like to keep for my whole life.

The chessboard is my battlefield and I'm the knight fighting life in its blacks and whites.

Teresa Andrea Cabanela





On The Top

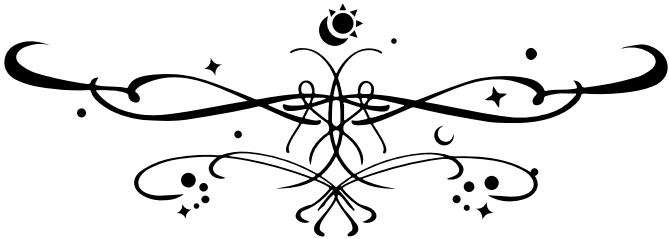
I notice every single motion
That brings me a lot of admonition
Living this life with so much attention
That will bring us pain and exhaustion.

But – I did climb the stairs.
Until I can grasp the door that shines
That can bring me to the top.
On the top of it all

Scapes are breathtaking.
It is indecisively mesmerizing.
Looks like a dream.
Being on the top of them

Mary Joy De Leon





Stand Up

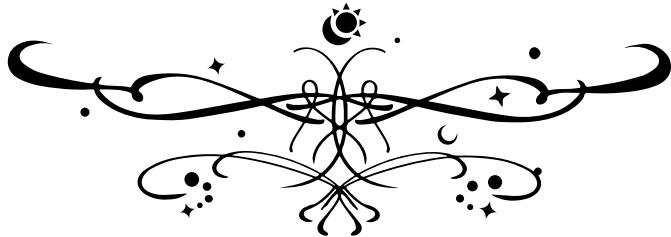
In a flick of a hand I would move like a doll,
Think as if I am in a play or musical;
Whisper of disguised angel paints an optical—
My vision coagulates, I'm instrumental.

With a little bravery with me,
Fire burns the lost fiery—I'm ready to be free!
From tiptoeing to slow pace then run freely,
I crumple the strings attached to my body.

I stand tall, having a smile of tropical;
It has come to an end—my silent enemy!
Tomorrow is a different peripheral,
Everyday joust is the best fundamental key.

April Jane Paquita





Antipara

“Ano nga ba ang gusto kong maging?”,

Bulong ko sa hangin

Isang oras na ang lumipas ngunit wala pa rin

Papel na hawak, malapit nang kolektahin

Lumabas na muna ng siliid para mag-isip

Ano nga ba talaga ang aking hilig?

Aaah! wala talagang pumapasok

Babalik na nga lang ako sa loob

Sa pagpasok, may nasagi, may nahulog

Antipara pala ni Ginoong Manaog

Buti na lang hindi nabasag at walang gasgas

Kung di lagot ako nito, mapagbabayad pa ng wala sa oras

Wala pa naman pala si Sir

Nasa katabing canteen daw at kumakain

Kung kaya’t naisipang isukat

Itong antiparang walang gasgas

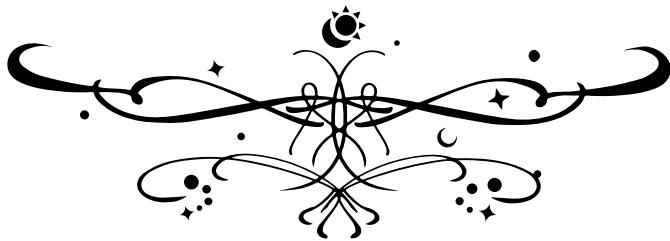




Sa malayo'y tanaw; malabo't malinaw
Pisarang nakasabit sa pader na dilaw
"Joaquin mukha kang teacher diyan"
Nakabibiglang sigaw ng kamag-aryl ko sa unahan

Hanggang ngayon napapangiti pa rin
Sa desisyong iyon ng batang si Joaquin
Nang dahil sa antipara, heto na ako ngayon
Isa na sa mga tagapagtuguyod ng edukasyon





Tala

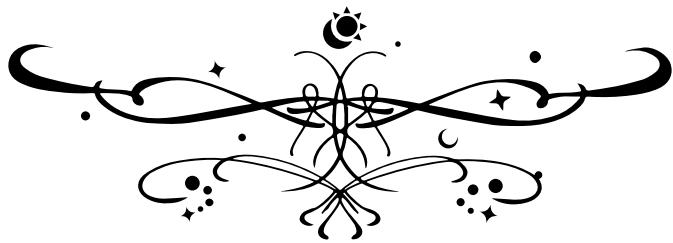
Kaibigan, ako'y namamangha
Sa aking mga natatanaw at nakikita
Hindi pa rin ako makapaniwala
Nagniningning ang aking mga mata

Naabot ko na ba talaga ang aking pangarap?
O baka ito'y isang huwad na panaginip
Pakipisil nga ang aking mukha at sa aki'y sambitin
Para ako'y malinawan at di na mag-alinlangan

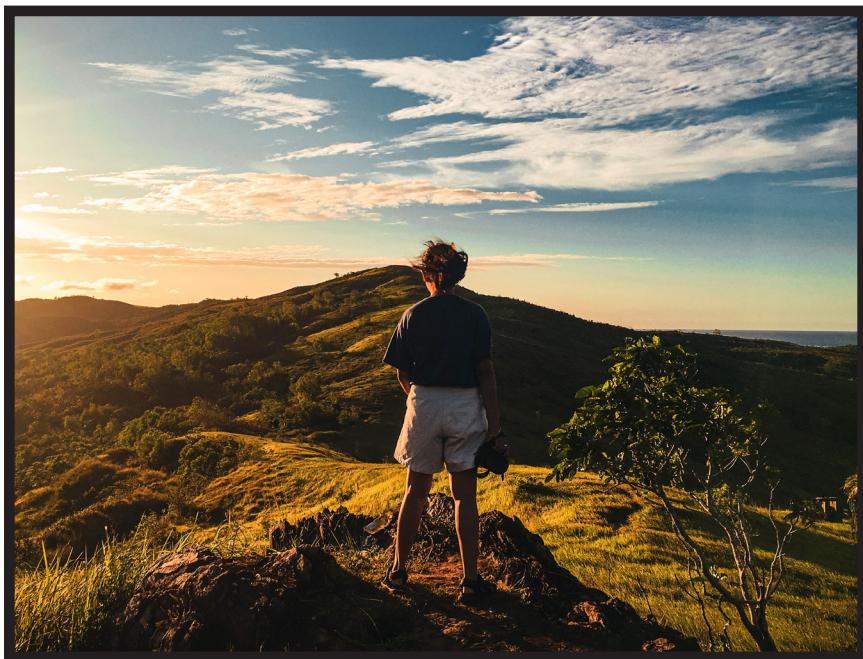
Hindi inaaahanan na mangyayari ang ganitong tagpo
Kaya't hindi makapaniwala agad ang aking puso
Ito na ba ang huling pahina ng aking kasaysayan?
Sapagkat mukhang nasungkit ko na ang mga tala sa
kalangitan

Mariel Garcia





Silent Sea



Rachell Ann Umbao

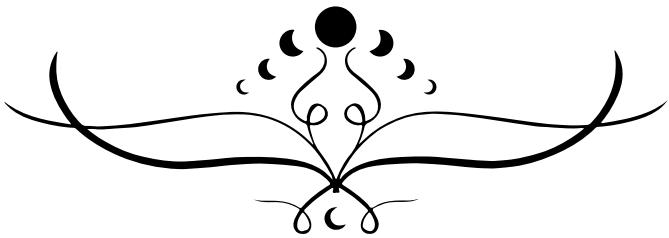


XIV

Giving Light, Giving Back

To those who battle

I will guide you; wish for your
brightest luminance!

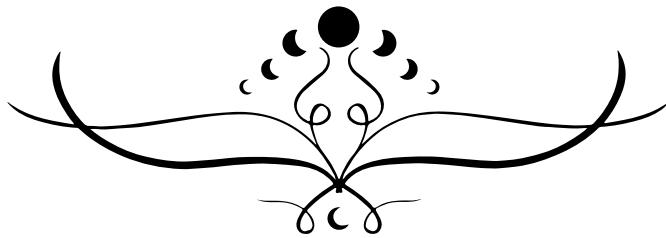


Espeditious



Jasper Carño





Presenting: The Unrhymed

I am like a poem which is free
I can play and weave my lines
My use of words is lowkey
Yet—I can make you cry... sometimes

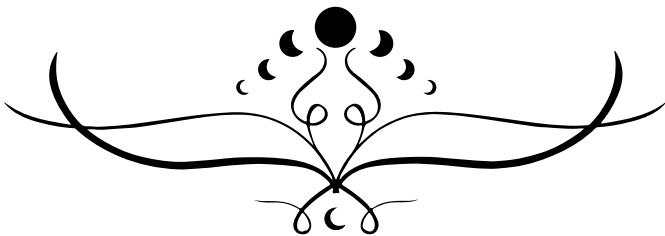
I used to pick the fitted word
Not minding what I have done was wrong
Now, I learned that I just needed a sword
The one that will stitch your heart along

Rhymes are just there to make it pretty
To sound well and look, of course, standard—
But we are we! We are lovely!
We don't have to be a bandwagon and try so hard

Here I am showing my true self
Out of place, different, and shy
But who cares? I am real while others are thief—
Uh oh! Did I just hit a bull's eye?

April Jane Paquita





Safe Haven

But what I have gotten was a perpetual heartache from my own ménage who kept on poking the tiny shards of glass that's placed in my heart in which they have caused it their own— breaking me slowly in undeniable ways. It emptied my words, and waved my ability to empathize ever since the day they forced me to open my eyes to reality.

If people would think they could hurt me even more, I couldn't help but just stifle a laugh since they never knew what I had been through inside my own home. I breathe numbness, and my own posture is nothing but apathy. Feeling safe from the world is what I've been longing for ever since, but I couldn't find it in my own premise.

Home is what I ache.

Refuge from the cruelty of the world.

That's why I ended up exploring the never-ending roads, trying to patch the nothingness that surrounds me. I was feeling lost for a long long time. However, during my wander, I stumbled upon you who contain a pair of soft hands which never fail to lift me up whenever I tripped along the way, and your soothing words started to build confidence in me. You were just simply there— mere listening — whenever I cry and scream all my unsaid words





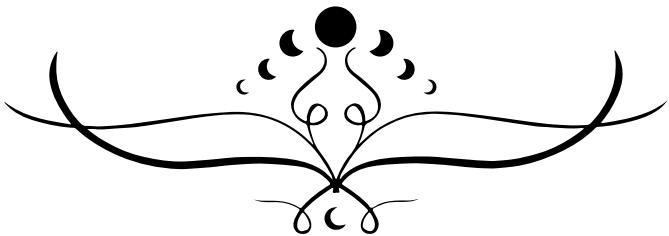
that were bugging in my chest to all the family members who caused me so much pain. After so many years of holding back, I felt relieved. . .with you, supporting me.

That's when it finally hit me. Instead of finding safety in my own house, I could just build a home inside people; inside you. I fell in love with your arrival and started seeing colors to my bland life. I finally exhale safety that was warped during my childhood.

That's why, thank you, for finding me.

Teresa Andrea Cabanela





Pieces of Pulchritude

I contemplated why my relationships were always ending up as a failure;
Memories that harrowed and lunged a knife on the once flattered heart.

My hands crafted the most propitious sculpture,
A souvenir for the deplorable part.

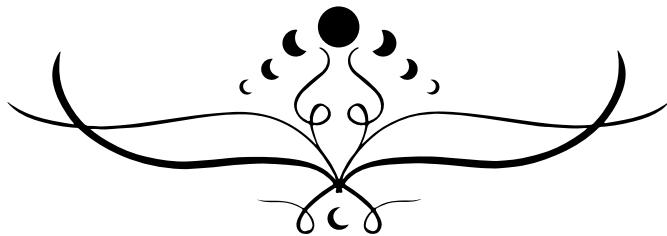
From brainstorming to humming my own made melody,
I found a new way to release the melancholy.

Cracked trust and honestly were the foundation;
Slowly loosening up and walking through elevation.

We may build a lot of sand castles along the coastal way,
But as waves appeared, it would crash and be swept away.
Experiences stay, just like us who stood despite the hurt and pain;
That makes us an exquisite art from ruptured clef—notes ain't sustain!

April Jane Paquita





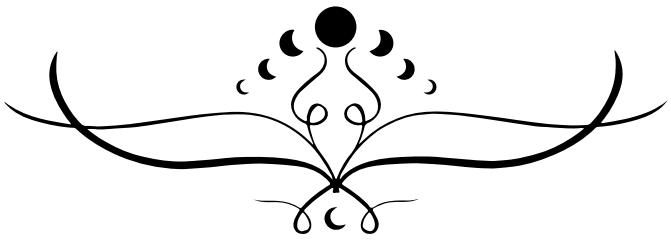
Pagbangon

Bubulong ang umaga sa iyong tenga at kakalabitin ng gatas ang iyong dila. Kakanta si Hanan ng pampagising na harmonya. magpaalam ka muna sa sapin na pinagluhaan. Sige na, hahanapin ka pa ng kalsada, upang ito'y iyong lakaran. 'wag kang pipikit, sasayaw pa ang hangin. Nakakabahala nga ang mabuhay bitbit ang unos sa iyong kalukuwa ngunit, humayo ka, hindi pa tapos ang paglalakbay. hinihintay ka pa ni Sol, sisinag pa ang pagasa sa kulay puti mong kurtina. 'wag ka munang mabahala, hindi pa naman naisusulat ang mga pahina.

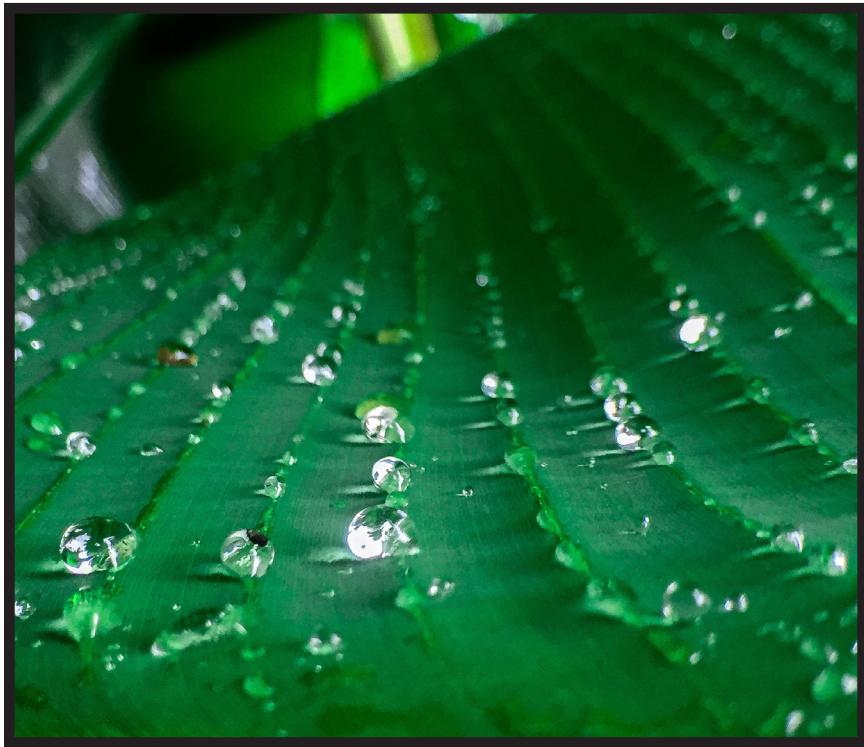
Gumising ka, mabuhay — marami ka pang hindi nalalaman, marami ka pang kailangang matuklasan.

Teresa Andrea Cabanela





The Mist



Mark Christian Abasolo





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