

I LAUGH AT THE THOUGHT OF THE WORLD

Poems by John Alexis B. Balaguer

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I LAUGH AT THE THOUGHT OF THE WORLD

Overture

I seek for you
on the bridge between

dreaming and waking,
your voice calling from the other side.

Another hypnagogia, my entrance
to purgatory. I'll take you with me

until we both wake up. Somewhere
without day or night.

But always I live before you.
Wait for me then.

Outside, streetlamps buzz seeking
rest, the sun to take over.

I'll diffuse with them at dawn
and bring you daylight

at day's end. Our rendezvous,
an undying

search for mystery or reality—
a fall or an ascension?

Purification

A long grey walk
in the evening seeking rest,
my shoes, the pavement, puddles, dust— I
make out no difference.

As I prepare to sleep,
vision becomes blurry,
darkness seems too familiar.

At six a.m., with no longer
much to see, I rest my eyes,
outside the window, sunrise?

Who knows what hues arise?
It's not important.
Just a blind man waking
after a long slumber under his blanket.

I've known this darkness so long
now. Let me dissolve it in tap water.

Postscript

The gentle breeze pushed
a paper boat.

Where you had no breath, the sea
hummed for you

words rocking in a cradle:
I'll wait for you.

I'll take you home.
My lungs

take in the immensity of water,
compressed

by the pressure of your parting.
Then I was not afraid,

remembering your dissolved letter
from the other side.

In this fine line we neither
drowned nor floated.

The stars watched over as
we drifted, dispersed.

Quenched

I need to find my mother.

Can you take me to her?

The words echoed home

back to my ears.

So I waited with the little boy

where his mother meets him every day,

comforting—

She'll be here soon.

When the streetlamps lit up

she came for him

and I walked the long pavements,

taking myself home

to a glass of water.

After Icarus

Into the wind, my spirit
will become smoke, my body, ash,
with fiery yearning for home.

To you the world is funny. I
now think so too.
So I hope the world listens:

*Forgive me
for dying young.*

Breaking the evening my limbs,
though weary, will soar
free.

This is my farewell my tragic
dream, your
fall

and soon mine. For
after Icarus, was
still
the world, laughing.

The Necromancer

pasting together
dried leaves to wings, I
come back to life

Angels

It didn't surprise me when you wanted to die: perhaps under a blanket of leaves rustling, covering your crushed bones, or drifting in the sea, the doubts of the world mute under. Maybe an unknown disappearance, just a memory without a corpse, a silent moment by your photograph instead of a lavish funeral where the mourning is louder than the thought of you. We have already fallen—our feet and heads on the ground. I lost a wing during the fall and you, your compassion, your mind. But remember you moving on, dragging a hollow chest, breathing, still static, but breathing. After your ultimate fall, with your last push for strength, you broke your own wing so I could fly. Do you remember our feet and heads on the ground, how we lived despite already dying, how we became one and escaped this?

Maagang Gabi

The earliest memory I have
is skipping on the sidewalk, line by line,
my tiny feet in grey shoes.

I am drinking coca-cola,
and careful not to land on the grass
that conquered the cement.

Today you couldn't finish your lecture.
You ran out of time
after saying translation is a change
from one state of being to another,
'Maagang Gabi' becoming 'Early Evening'.

I didn't pay much attention, however,
thinking only of an old man's fleeting memory,
your repetitive asking why we want to write as
if the reasons we've said have lost meaning like
saying a word

a thousand times. I write, Sir,
to survive. As you said,
poetry should not mean but be. *Poetry should not mean but be.*
Poetry should not mean. Poetry should be.
Poetry should not. Poetry should.
Poetry should. Poetry be.
Poetry not. Poetry.
Poetry. Be.

The reason to not be afraid of time.

On the sidewalk going home, I thought of breathing again
and see grass emerging from cracks,
taste sharp sweetness,
hear heartbeats in footsteps,
and feel warm sweat falling down my cheeks
as my feet meet another line.

Near evening,
after you ran out of time
I hoped it was sweat on your cheeks.

In the End

Leaves fall
dry, hitting
closed
windows.
Small blows
somewhere.
He fails to
give a damn.
This must be
the day he
does nothing
as nothing,
and that is
all.

Lamentation

The bed is my grave. This corpse—
coffined by sleep paralysis.

I see a caged shadow boy, one hand
clasped to the window, the other

towards me. Near the door, a naked woman bends.
She mutes my screams.

Beside me, a little girl kneels and starts to pray
Lacrimosa,

*dies illa, qua resurget ex favilla
judicandus homo reus.*

Huic ergo parce,
Deus. My nightmare dissolves

finally with Deus,
finally clearing,

waking, but still hearing
voices of the little girl

echoing: *Eternal
rest give unto him*

O Lord,
let perpetual light shine upon him.

The Break

This isn't any different from the many times I had looked down at the loam carelessly dug, the little flowers in the grass disturbed, floating. I see a blossom fall to what I deem is your mouth, you in a white sack un-coffined. Isn't this what you wanted? You spoke of freedom, an eternity in the comfort of roots of wild grass tickling your nose. You are the wild grass now.

Did you not believe that sleeping is like dying? Here comes your dream, and the grave digger. I tell him to leave your pit open, five more minutes. And you were not afraid of a little rain as you let it take you, trusting little drops to wash sad years away. You dissolve with it. Didn't you say you'd rather drown? It is raining. The storm clouds are here for their promise.

This isn't any different from the dead I myself know are buried—dead friends, loved ones, strangers... In this same soil, their bodies are a concoction now of heaven and earth. Crazy, but I heard you can't leave if the world still mourns whatever's left of you. The grave digger steps on a wild flower. The mourners' tears water another. All death's the same and this one—the same you know, the same you hear from the wails of loved ones loud in the air, even after this layer of white sack, this soil now shoveled over you, over us.

The one thing different— I am free, and you are just my body.

I Laugh at the Thought of the World

I laugh at the thought of the world laughing when I go to the infinite blue above or below me. I am young but I count the years slipping like any dream thirty seconds after waking. There's something wrong with the world. It doesn't notice one man's agony. There is something wrong with that man—he is laughing. Few recognize this, but walk by, thinking only of how all will be dust soon after knowing that crying does nothing, after locking himself from the world, after waiting for the sunset to die alone in a locked room. I've not only locked myself but made my grave from the clutter of this closed space outside and in me. When I die here and now all the ghosts in my nightmares may be more attractive. I hope they take me beyond the valley to reunite with the spirit who had abandoned me a long time ago. It has been a long time ... a very long time, and now that I am no longer counting the dust on my skin, I only wish someone would stop me.

Twist

My friend, darkness, why
scorn me, a change in
expression? Unsure if
the height of
my wish was a selfish thrill
an escape to the casket.

I only asked for
a romantic ending: in the sunset,
the orchestra playing my song,
requiem, the sound of angels,
mother's whispers,
ways to end it all.

Why the sharp eye now
when I've kissed
your feet, cold,
when I too craved
to be cold as you?

I turn on the lights.

Reflection

in the rain, if you wait
just long enough for the street
to be submerged,
eternity

The Second Horizon

From the shoreline he sees
the horizon:

sky
and sea reflecting sky,

worlds
divided by purgatory

in this water parted by boats
endlessly adrift. His mother

perhaps floats,
perhaps is still

floating. In a daydream,
he is washed away

towards the second horizon,
his body re-dividing

sky and sea reflecting sky,
the sea beneath. It

comes down to this, the water
taking him as son,

horizons blurring reflections becoming
clear—

sea winds
underwater.

John Alexis B. Balaguer received his bachelor's degree in Communication – Film and Media Studies, minor in Creative Writing - Poetry in Ateneo de Manila University, and master's degree in Art Studies – Curatorial Studies at University of the Philippines. He is a visual artist and poet, having creative works published in *Heights*, *Stache*, *U Magazine*, and *Voices for Peace*. His collection of poems *Lyrical Penalty* was published by Wordclay Publishing in 2008. This series was first published for his minor thesis in 2012.

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