

THREE POEMS

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About the Author

Ned Parfan is an instructor at the University of Santo Tomas. He obtained his MFA in Creative Writing from De La Salle University-Manila and was a finalist in the Maningning Miclat Awards for Poetry in 2009 and 2011. His first collection, *The Murrmur Asylum*, was published this year by the University of the Philippines Press.

Dry Season

1.

Take the heat and blow it
like a feather.

Enter the throttling
midnight thicket's
mindless feast.

Dream in fire.
Then wet your dreams.

Up and hurry to the burning bedrooms.

2.

Seek the shape
of the monster's head.

Have it leap across
the open tunnel of your face.

Look out for the web,
make peace
with the spider.

Let its heart
spin back to life
and the alcoves of mud
fill with rain.

3.

Glimpse everything
through the rainforest's teeth.

Do not say
"Unpleasantly I age."

Enter the frame.
Crouch or disappear.

You're the assassin in the sanctuary.
Crouch or disappear.

4.

Bear the burnt
halo of suspicion,

tense as the spine
of the dog barking to the night.

I wear my face
hell's bright blue.

Quezon City,
I blossom for the train.

5.

Look down at the bottom
of the great divide

and I'll show you how to eat the mercy of God.

6.

Dance like you're pregnant
with the Spanish Invasion.

Ignore the island's
rolling blackout
meandering into midnight.

Slave to the light,
your body keeps warm.

That's what you get
for seducing the sun.

Adore

Medley moving with ten fingers—all nine muses
plus your lover? Underneath the disco lights,
under the daddy longlegs and its eight
spying eyes. To him you serve

our barest instincts: all seven deadly sins. Miss
Toxic Tongue, you spark at the mouth!
Fingers spiked with scorpion stings, ever so cunning
into the quivering rabbit. No flinch

in the night as you guide his hand
to the slope of his worship. Make us all watch
in silence, beneath the spinning lights.
The point of the pedestal is to make him climb.

The Moth Keeper

I took it as an advertisement from the very beginning,
when I saw a jarful of moths between my professor's legs.

I never expected him to talk about this exhibit of his,
but I waited for him to stick a price tag to it. I'm not silly,
I knew he wouldn't do it. I was just imagining
it was for sale. He must have loved the insects enough
to spend the first quarter of the class
just blinking at them, whispering to them,
while caressing the glass like a sexy accomplice.

I felt like a child again, in kindergarten, gawking at a toy
a classmate wouldn't share. I stared helpless
at those wings, those little things that fluttered
or otherwise idle inside that jar. I wondered how it would feel
to put my fingers inside.

My professor walked to the aisle
holding the jar to his crotch, as if trying to hide
an open fly. He caught me staring at it,
and likely also saw my throat moving with the business
of a gulp. And maybe taking this
as a cue, he opened the jar,
took its lid against his mouth,
and sucked in the insects one by one.

Finally, he began the lesson
as the moths escaped his mouth as if they were bubbles
and he was underwater, his voice hurrying to the surface.

Nobody listened to him after that.
We were all staring at the air conditioning vents
where the moths had all flown into,
astonished as the moths and the machine
started buzzing as one.

Nobody cared about the jar anymore.
And my professor's hands were left fluttering about
in their own generous space.

