

THROMBUS

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About the Author

Ben Aguilar graduated with a degree in Health Sciences and a Minor in Creative Writing from the Ateneo de Manila University, where he received the Loyola Schools Award for the Arts for poetry. He was a fellow for the Iligan National Writers Workshop. He is currently taking up a degree in medicine at Xavier University – Dr. Jose P. Rizal School of Medicine, Cagayan de Oro City. His poems have appeared in *Heights* and *Rambutan Literary*.

NEWS

We were born searching &
Found water on mars

Faced a heart
The rice boiled over while
my father stopped
wearing a turban

Cut his hair & beard

& at work we numb
Ourselves against

Fax machines spewing
Modafinil & existential

Questions
here & there

A model approach
non-invasive

Defense mechanism
Doubled down making

Action figures pirouette
Their plot devices

We drop paper napkins
On the faces of babies

Handpicking our rosaries
Out of ice cream

Boxes plastered with graffiti
Wisdom listed down

On old slippers
& scratch hallmark cards

While PCSO ambulances & multicabs
Playing campaign

Jingles define trickle down
Economics of scale

We swallow our recreational
Candle wax horoscopes

O patron saint of contact sports we
Tried to win at

We mostly cheered quietly
We weighed in titanic & our

Understanding of icebergs
Changed drastically

ANATOMY

We close our eyes and begin: a syncytium without the benefit
of unison or force. Word for word, then, the incision: just below
the jugular. We run our fingers along the throat. Our elbows dig into
each other's sides, holding us back. We find ashes and stones
among the man's veins, our gloves the only thing between us and
desperation. Mine are torn and I haven't even noticed. I wash the front
and back of my hands I don't know. Stick to the facts:
what did he say, what did I tell you you would find
Here. Spelled out between sinew and bone and nerves
harbouring something we have all refused asylum along the
borders of our skin, riding on the backs of words we were told to speak
before trying to bleed, right here, do you see it—
Do you see all of who this was unfolding in your hands.

DISCOURSE

is X times Y.

His helmet was on his elbow,

quite clearly. Forgetting is a necessary evil;

everything that follows

is speculation. Pass by with the windows rolled down,

and tell me what you see.

I swear it will all hit you like a brick.

The blank screen, you say,

is not new, why wait. I will not say anything to the likes of you

I will not I will

not there is nothing I must say,

not for us. What is as much

a construct of the imagination as my face is cupped in my hands—

the explanation sifting through— coming out

garbled— Meant to be a prayer

not for us— Over the years.

Still the smell of gasoline follows me like a ghost.

I have lived in myself for too long that I have forgotten

what I sound like,

speculation: the numbers speak

more than all I can say.

What must I sound like, I refuse

to talk about myself but

I refuse to talk about anything but. No you cannot hear

anything else, don't call out to

anyone,

don't dial me, you will hear yourself

listening for radio static. Tell me there is no one outside the windows

bullet-proofed not for us—

The front wheel in the air, still turning—

—for what is on the other side.

You have a way with words and

the windows are not word-proof. Like a bomb

wipes ideas from the walls. Lacerations breaking the surface of the paint. If I were to guess,

I would look

check his temple

look at his head. Your face pressed in your hands—

Check his wrists

In speculation— Your fingers the only bars you ever really felt.

Do you see that?—

—what is that?—

Nothing follows. I keep writing on top of old words I cannot
be bothered

to erase. This is telling.— Over the rest of the afternoons,
how much. The numbers to you a refusal.
—a string of hearsays daily: X people Y times
shows how much we must still rely
on numbers to fill our pages and hands, both sides—
—I cannot erase.

Channel X, news at Y.

A rhyme

never found anyone on the right side.
He was nowhere to be found, and I have looked in every
word X times,

Y ways.

speeches were never fast enough,

and what is left. The drinking glass,
still spilt on the table, the ink blotting on the page

I cannot be bothered—

That smell again—this time from
Tip scraping against the grain of the wooden desk—
the paper running out
and then I will find my lighter as I

write again. What is there to tell. Everything that follows is speculation.

is exactly what you need, let me get that for you. certainly you cannot
understand a.) being
b.) scale c.) try/wait
any other way. any other way is wrong, you are not wrong,
but what you say—
my words have already
risen on me, and I have nothing else with me right now. I have seen his
hands—no, the other one—
at that time
there was not much else to see except skin and veins,
and the artery sticking out of his arm
like a noodle a power line loose rope.

like I rehearsed it:

please face what you feel like crossing out
from 1 to 10, four hurts a little more right now.
we were told to lean forward and speak slowly, our ignorant
hands in front of us. open and aimless.
yes, what seems to be 1. Superficial 2. Background 3. Variable 4. Stable
5. Normal—
what can we all do with ourselves
except hold our own breath in our hands and wait in line, excuse me.