
POETRY PORTFOLIO / TWELVE SELECTED POEMS

THE QUESTION IS THE QUESTION

A MENTAL HEALTH CONCEPT ALBUM IN POEMS

Survival, family, identity, and art in a voice
that keeps asking what comes next.

INSIDE THE SAMPLE

01 THE ROOM AND WEATHER

Survival, parenting, medication, and recovery

02 THE MONSTER AND THE SIGNAL

Horror, punk music, fiction, and the writing life

03 THE NAME AND THE QUESTION

Filipino American identity and an open ending

Status Check: Still Here

Perspective. Status check.
I am not fixed.
I am operational.
There is a difference
between a broken machine
and a strange machine
that keeps inventing new buttons.
Today I pressed one labeled breathe.
It hissed like an old arcade cabinet
waking up in a room
where everybody forgot to plug in the moon.
I have mistaken survival
for a waiting room.
I have sat with grief
like it owned the lease.
But the question is the question:
who benefits when I stay small?
Not the sky.
Not my daughters.
Not the page.
Not the version of me
still knocking from inside the wall,
holding a flashlight,
saying,
Frank,
we are not done being impossible.

The Question Is the Question

At the center
there is no throne.
There is a question
sitting cross-legged
on the floor
with paint on its hands.
It does not demand worship.
It asks for motion.
What now?
What next?
What hurts?
What helps?
What song unlocks the room?
What movie teaches the monster
to become a mirror?
What grief still needs a chair?
What joy is illegal
under the old regime?
I answer by living.
Badly some days.
Beautifully by accident.
Strangely on purpose.
The question is the question.
The answer
is the life
that keeps forming
around it.
II. Weather Inside the Body

Blue Kingdom Rebuilt With Crayons

I have lived
in the Blue Kingdom.
Deep blue.
Storm blue.
Hospital-light blue.
The blue of trying to explain
a mind that keeps changing passwords.
But give a child
a blue crayon
and suddenly blue
is ocean,
dragon,
spaceship,
window,
planet,
shirt,
sky,
and one very confident circle
declared to be a portal.
So I rebuild the kingdom.
Less throne.
More sidewalk chalk.
Less crown.
More refrigerator art.
Let the scholars note:
blue was never only sadness.
Blue was also distance
calling us forward.
Blue was the proof
the sky had room.

Dad as a Weather Station

I used to think
I had to become sunshine
before I could guide anyone.
Impossible.
Some days I am barometric pressure
with shoes.
But love does not require
perfect weather.
It requires returning.
It requires saying,
I am here,
even if the clouds
are doing experimental theater
behind my eyes.
My children do not need
a flawless sky.
They need the lighthouse
to admit the storm exists
and still turn on.
So I turn on.
Small beam.
Real beam.
Enough beam.

Medication Moonwalk

Some mornings
my pills line up
like tiny astronauts
waiting for launch clearance.
I do not romanticize the chemistry.
I respect the cockpit.
There is no shame
in needing instruments
when the weather inside
starts inventing new planets.
I take the dose.
I drink the water.
I log the day.
I moonwalk away
from the old disaster
with as much dignity
as socks on tile allow.
If the mind is a galaxy,
maintenance is holy.
If stability is boring,
then bless boring.
Boring lets me make art.
Boring lets me call back.
Boring lets me stay.

Final Boy With a First Aid Kit

I do not want
to be the final boy
holding a weapon
in the red hallway.
I want the sequel
where he gets
a first aid kit,
a therapist,
a quiet apartment,
and a neighbor
who does not ask
why he hates
loud knocks.
Survival is not
the credits.
Survival is
what happens
after the audience
goes home
and the body
still expects
the next attack.
Roll camera
on repair.
That is the braver movie.

Movie Therapy at 2:13 A.M.

At 2:13 A.M.
the television becomes a church
with better monsters.
The hero bleeds in act two.
The soundtrack admits the wound.
The camera finds the face
before the face knows
how much it can survive.
I sit there,
remote in hand,
half patient,
half projectionist,
watching old fear
wear new costumes.
Some people call it escapism.
Fine.
Let me escape
into a place
where the final scene
remembers to arrive.
Let me borrow structure
from the silver screen.
Beginning:
I am not okay.
Middle:
I am still here.
End:
Roll credits on the lie
that pain gets
the last line.

Punk Rock Parenting of the Self

I parent myself
like a punk show
with snacks.
Firm door policy.
Plenty of noise.
Hydration encouraged.
No fascists.
No self-hate
near the stage.
The younger me
shows up
with bruised eyes
and impossible hair.
He expects judgment.
I hand him earplugs
and a sandwich.
We watch the band.
He says:
are we okay?
I say:
not always.
But we are here,
and here
has a backbeat.
VIII. Writing as Survival System

The Fictional Lie That Tells the Truth

Fiction is a lie
that tells the truth
without getting arrested
by literal-minded people.
A made-up town
can confess
what a real town
hides.
A fake monster
can point
at a real wound.
A character
who never existed
can save a reader
who absolutely does.
This is the trick.
This is the ministry.
This is the con
with a clean heart:
invent the door
so somebody else
can walk through.

Writing While Medicated, Writing While Human

Writing while medicated
is still writing.

Writing while tired
is still writing.

Writing while human,
annoyingly,
is the only kind
available to me.

The myth says
madness makes art.

The truth says
stability lets me finish.

The myth wants
an unpaid fire.

The truth wants
a desk,
a dose,
a walk,
and a file
that opens tomorrow.

I choose tomorrow.

Art can be wild
without requiring
my destruction
as proof.

Not Filipino Enough

Not Filipino enough
is a small blade
with family handwriting.
It cuts differently.
Not white enough
comes from outside.
Not Filipino enough
comes through the screen door
carrying food
and expectation.
Do you speak?
No.
Do you understand?
Some.
Do you know?
I know the ache.
I know the jokes
I missed by half a second.
I know the auntie look
that measures distance
without a ruler.
I know belonging
can smell like garlic,
soap,
and disappointment.
I know I still reach
for the plate.

The Purple Question

The purple question
does not ask
who crowned you?
It asks:
why did you wait
for permission?
It does not ask
are you healed?
It asks:
can you create
from the place
that still trembles?
It does not ask
are you spiritual enough?
It asks:
did you notice
the sacred
wearing ordinary shoes?
I answer slowly.
Purple approves
without clapping.