

## Jonel Abellanosa – Five Poems



### Clouds

I look to the sky,  
seeing with clear eyes,  
eagerness shaped like cauliflower.  
Pondering, observing memory's cirri,  
hearing the fruit fall in the back  
of my mind.

Celestial castles, alluvial flows.  
The sun behind a horse brightens  
the sky, equine beauty in canter, palomino  
as laughter. Starsky my Japanese Spitz  
when I was a boy barks as he sails by.  
I remember papa who gave me the puppy.

I'm left  
with heart sounds like condensed vapors,  
heartache rolling down my cheeks  
I call water.

### Waiting for My Second Dose By Jonel Abellanosa

I believe I've had the viral infection  
that makes everybody here anxious.  
Unfinished stories and poems cried  
like babies, but I was adrift between  
mindfulness and dream sequences,  
tired bones tender to melancholia,  
losing muscle, bedsheet a sponge

to body fluids and smells. Exertion  
brought me face to face with myself.  
Seeing my face skeletal brought me  
peace, paracetamol disturbing it  
that I take the easy way. Even if my bed  
was a coffin, it wasn't closed, pushing  
me to stand. I jogged memory.

I jogged every day, but just a few steps  
in the year of uncertainty stirred my ribs  
to shimmer. My lungs cried *forgive me*,  
*forgive me*, my heart *do you hear, do you hear?*  
I wonder if I'll have painless feet again,  
Covid toes leaking blood to my nails.  
I never give up on hope.

## **Reader with His Rum**

His couch held papa  
like a bottle of intoxication.  
He scratched his toes  
as he read, peeling off skin,  
scabs. He stalked fictional  
characters with fish eyes.  
Pages smelled of cockroaches.

I was a fascinated  
eight-year-old. I bought him  
his nightly spirit from the carenderia  
a short walk from home, because  
he rewarded my obedience  
with packs of cornicks.

Watching him read,  
I saw past his silence.  
Behind him, the wall with books  
catching my eyes. I called them crazy -  
people he introduced to me  
like Poe, Ludlum, Henry James,  
Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Plato.  
I waited for the book

to drop from his hands,  
making the floor  
its sleeping place, the floor  
where its cold felt cool on my back.

In the company of words,  
I was all eyes and all ears,  
my other senses like stiff antennas  
of the occasional, still, insect  
that explored the floor.

## **Doormats**

I stock these weaveworks  
of cloths and colors, piles  
in the stock room still as my mind  
with the sense I still have months

of cleaning ease in a time  
when lockdowns make purchase  
hard. Lines crosshatch memory,  
easy to imagine mat-makers

holding vision like threads.  
Strips of fabric woven  
into rectangles, looms teaching  
patience. Because dusts gather.

Because water and earth  
find each other like lovers  
in mud, rain sounding pianissimo  
in inner spaces. Because Donna

and Yves my furbabies,  
and their puppy girl, Daisy  
make me happy, take my mindful  
measures off the pandemic,

and they love sniffing care's textiles,  
answer nature's call on the spot  
they find with their nose. Grounds  
outside belong to water this time.

Dung and urine sometimes stain  
my hands. I learn from them how  
to live on what I have. Be enough.

I don't need anything more.

## Shoreline

Papa paid for our Sunday parties  
at the beach. Our extended families  
of uncles, aunties and cousins sunburning  
joy's skin. Water lapping my feet,

wrinkling soles. I was curiosity's son,  
wanting to be alone. Among bivalves,  
no mollusks. Starfishes brittle to touch.  
Papa's call furrowed my forehead.

The deep lured loved ones.  
They taunted me to jump into the deep  
but I heeded the small voice I still hear,  
Exploration green as algae, wonder

oily as seaweed. I wandered, traced  
with my feet where water met sand,  
smells of brine still haunting decades later,  
papa's absence blue as the sea snake.

Jonel Abellanosa lives in Cebu City, The Philippines. Nominated for the Pushcart, Dwarf Stars and Best of the Net awards, his poetry and fiction has appeared in hundreds of magazines and anthologies, including *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Agape Review*, *The Lyric*, *Anglican Theological Review*, *Chiron Review*, *Invisible City*, *The Cape Rock* and *MUSE*. His poetry collections include, *Songs from My Mind's Tree* and *Multiverse* (Clare Songbirds Publishing House, New York), *50 Acrostic Poems*, (Cyberwit, India), *In the Donald's Time* (Poetic Justice Books and Art, Florida), and *Pan's Saxophone* (Weasel Press, Texas). He is a nature lover and an advocate for the environment and animal rights and comforts. He has three companion dogs."

