

AN EMPTY CHAIR IN THE CORNER
(POETRY FOR CHILDREN)

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EMPTY CHAIR

Who would dare leave
An empty chair in the corner?
What a waste of wood, of space!
Who left it there must be bonkers,
Wasting such a fine specimen,
Unattended and unwanted.
I bet that chair right now is lonely.
Fuming, actually,
To the insensitive,
Clueless person who left it
Awkwardly upright in the corner.
It must be mortifying for the chair.
All these wonderful people just passing by,
Neither stopping to say hello,
Or to sit down for a chat.
I would like to come over
But you see,
With such a fine chair,
It would be a pity
If I soil it with my slice
Of chocolate birthday cake
Mother so lovingly baked.

BIPOLAR ME

There are days when
My brain and I are like
Mismatched shoes,
Torn clothes,
An unfinished coloring book.

There are days
When I go right,
My brain goes left.
I wanted to dance jazz,
My brain wants to hip-hop.

There are days
When my brain's
A bullet train,
Travelling too fast
Without stopping
Leaving me behind.

There are days
I can touch the sky
Reach Jupiter.
Makes me smile.

There are days
I burrow tunnels
Curl up
Pretend to be a mole
Afraid to meet the sun.

There are days
The light's switched off
Everything goes dark
I can't see
Only feel.

Then there are days
When everything's calm
Quiet
I am floating
Like a lotus leaf.

DUBSMASH

I wish to file a complaint.
Someone's trying to steal my voice.
Someone found it lovely to hear
And decided to use it for her own.
I saw her use it on a show one day.
Even gave a name for it.
Now people hear my voice
And called it The Dubsmash.
I don't like it one bit.
It's my voice, you see.
But now everyone likes it, too.
Others might think it's theirs
And I just want it back
So I can say my own words,
And sing my own songs again.
Please tell the person who's trying to steal it,
That although my voice may be lovely,
It will be lonely without me.

MOON BREAK

The moon, one night,
Was thinking of having a break.
What if she became a clown?
Then she could beg off
From people posing
Selfies with her.
What if she became a waterfall?
Then she wouldn't be responsible
For people going crazy at night.
What if she became a fish?
Then she wouldn't have to tame the tides.
What if she became a ball?
Then the dogs' howling will stop.
What if she became someone else's muse?
Then she could see herself shine brightly
On a starry night
Then everything will be all right.

WHERE DID MY SMILE GO?

Where did my smile go?
I just put on my face mask
Then boom!
My smile left me.

It was a nice smile
If I may say so.
All teeth and gums,
With the twinkling of my eyes.
Too bad no one can see it.

Cause my smile's busy
Playing hide and seek with me.
One minute it was there
Then poof!
It suddenly vanished.

I bet it hid behind the folds
Of my face mask.
I shouldn't startle it
Or it would hide
Itself too well.

I can feel it
In the corner
Of my mouth.
Sshh!
I mustn't laugh
Or this fun game would be over.

I can feel it lurking
In the shadows.
I was about to shout "taya!"
When Nanay told me
To remove my mask.

Then there it was,
My smile smiling smugly
Knowing I had just lost
In our game
Of hide and go seek.

AY, BUTIKI!

To all OTHER pests in the house,
We *butikis* are tired.
We've had enough of the name calling,
The bullying!
Stop calling us *byutikis*
If to you we look pretty
Stuck on the ceiling.
Stop harassing us.
We MAY NOT be scary,
We may not be tough,
But it is not our kind
That the owners of this house
Wish to get rid of.
To the *butikis* in every household,
Unite! Be vigilant!
We have nothing to lose but our tails!

NANAY READS THE TAROT

Nanay reads cards
Full of brave knights,
Noble kings and queens,
And a delightful Fool.

Whenever she shuffles them,
The pictures appear
And disappear.
It moves from one hand
To another.

She speaks to her cards.
They tell her tales
Of how one can
Slay the dragon,
Catch a fish,
And how swords come into play.

It makes me wonder,
How one card can carry
The weight
Of so many stories.

PEACE

I

A comforting hug
During a strong thunderstorm
Makes me feel happy

II

Eating chocolates
Feels like I am in heaven
Angels are singing

III

Blossoming flower
Stretches like it has muscles
Petals say hello

IV

Fun time at the beach
Sand castles and playful waves
I am a mermaid

V

Nanay just kissed me
She smells of butter and fries
My stomach's growling

TROUBLE MAKER

Who wants trouble?
I'm selling it by the bottle.
If you want to annoy your sister,
Or pick a fight with your brother,
Simply choose from my selection.
It comes in all sizes.
I can even customize one for you.
It all depends on what you need:
 A small reprieve, perhaps?
 A warning glance from your mom?
 A heart-to-heart talk?
 A quick time out?
 A long time out?
 A go-to-your-room-you're-grounded type?
If you want trouble,
Just come look for me.
I should warn you, though.
Troubles are null and void immediately
With a heartfelt sorry.

WAR

War is fighting
Over the last slice of chocolate cake,
Bickering over a new doll,
Doing the silent treatment.
War is a horror story
Read in the evening
Full of Andudunos,¹
Berbalangs,²
Ebwas.³
War is a virus
Making us sick,
Leaving us weak.

¹ The Anduduno is a type of aswang found in Bicol. It can smell people who are terminally ill.

² Berbalangs have a human appearance with vampiric qualities. They are found in Sulu.

³ An Ebwa is an evil spirit from the Tinguians.

NANAY AND THE MOON

I think Nanay and the moon are the best of pals.
I saw them whisper to each other and laughing hysterically.
It makes me wonder
What kind of conversation they would have had.
I imagine it to be like this:
“I tried making a woohoo cake today,” Nanay would say.
“A woohoo cake?” Moon would ask.
“I’ve never seen nor tasted a woohoo cake,” said Moon.
“Oh, a woohoo cake makes your sight go kooky,” said Nanay.
“Really? How?” asked Moon.
“Why, it will turn all things upside down,
And all the colors go haywire, too.
Blue turns into green, yellow turns into purple.”
“What does a woohoo cake look like?” Moon would ask.
“A woohoo cake looks like it will topple over but it won’t,” Nanay would say.
“What are the ingredients to this wonderful cake?” asked Moon.
“Oohhh it’s a secret but I can tell you this much,
I added a few grizzly pears, crazy apples,
Senile mint leaves and rixhshibwab chocolates.”
“Woohoo!” said Moon.
“Woohoo indeed!” Nanay would say while laughing.
They will then give each other a high five.
That’s how I will imagine it to be.
Unless they were just whispering about
My being sly and naughty
For sneaking off into the night
Way past my bedtime.

ESCAPE ARTIST

I am the great escape artist.
No chains can hold me down.
No locks can bind me.
No swords can hurt me.
Watch me disappear.
Be quick like lightning,
My footsteps light as a feather,
I am quiet like a mouse.
Just say the magic words,
“Hugas na ng pinggan!”
Poof!
You can no longer see nor hear me.

NOT A PRINCESS

I don't want to be a princess
Who likes pretty things and do girly things:
Skirts with ruffles, necklaces, painted nails.
I would rather shoot hoops with Tatay,
Thumb wrestle with bunso,
Or be a gentleman
And open the door for Nanay.

I don't want to be a princess
But a prince
In shining red armor
Who would rescue my friends,
Who dream to be princesses,
From scary monsters
Wanting to wear their party dresses.

CLOUD KEEPER

Clouds come to me
Like bees to honey,
Rats to cheese,
Dogs to bone.

They come in droves
Like birds flying home,
School of fish,
Pack of dogs.

They come in different sizes
Big as my hand,
Tall as a tree,
Ginormous as a dinosaur.

In various shapes they drift by:
A cascading waterfall,
A scrumptious butterball,
Leaves beginning to fall.

Some are tasty like candy
Tart like vinegar,
Salty like the sea,
Sweet like nanay's kisses.

My friends can keep their secrets,
Hoard their books,
Cuddle their pets,
But they can never be like me,
A cloud keeper
Floating amongst the clouds
While laughing out loud.