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Tourist

When we enter the new house, I can't see my mother's face. I follow the folds of her orange dress, follow her feet in soft sandals.

Look, she says to the shadows in a mirror. Hello there, I wave. I don't want to be lost.

Blue means kitchen, white means bedroom. I memorize the colors of floors.

The glass doors lead to the terrace, the terrace leads to the backyard. In the backyard, there are trees. *There will be trees*, she corrects herself.

There is a lady dancing on a cracked blue plate. A withered spider on the carpet. A piano with a full set of yellowed teeth.

Of course, there are rules. No hiding in the closet. No pounding of doors in the middle of the night.

Once you enter the new house, you aren't anywhere else. The noise from outside stays there. My mother must be smiling to herself.

I can't really tell. I tiptoe behind her, stare at the buttons scaling her back.

MA. ASSUNTA C. CUYEGKENG

Si Maria, sa Paanan ng Krus

Nangingintab ang banát mong laman.

Tumatahip ang iyong dibdib.

Bakat na ang iyong tadyang
sa paghigop ng hangin.

At wala akong magawa kundi tumingin.

Wala na ang sanggol na aking kinumutan,

Wala na ang batang pinagsabihan,

Wala na ang binatang hinihintay-hintay sa gabi.
Wala nang naiwan kundi isang Katotohanan.

Kaya, dito sa iyong paanan
hayaan mong gawin ko ito
kahit sa isip man lamang:

Tatakpan ko ng balabal
ang nanginginig mong balikat
na hinahatak ng mga brasong waring lilipad
kahit nakapiit.

Pupunasan ko
ang naghalong dugo pawis luha
mula sa mga mata mong
nagpapaalam.

Sa paulit-ulit kong paghaplos sa iyo
dito sa sulok ng aking isip
pangitain lang ba na hindi ka na nanginginig?
Ngayong nakatingala ka sa abuhing langit
nakabukas ang iyong mga palad
sa gitna ng sakit,
papailanlang ka na
sa hindi ko pa mararating.

Muli,
maghihintay ako.

JUN DE LA ROSA

Sa Paghihintay

iniisip ko kung nangyayari rin sa iyo ito:
matagal na nakasadlak
sa harap ng patung-patong na papel,
naghihintay na mahulog ang liwanag