

# STRETCH

*Isabela Banzon*

## **I Loved You, Dear**

I loved you, dear, and now let go—  
mock me, abuse me, call me a fool. Has it been an age  
since we croaked at love? Surely, perhaps,  
does it matter which? The clearing  
of the head pumps words without blood.

This fierce night  
unclots to meet the self  
in repossession  
of itself. What does it take  
to free the heart of memory? Is it  
to mock  
our taking  
on the years of hush and roil,  
the rush of antiquated folly?  
What passes  
for the possible  
is cold infinity—  
why palpitate again  
against the real,  
swamp of stagnant sorrow?  
Is it in doubt, in fierceness shaken  
that the tranquil  
mind's  
leap into a sludge of words  
revive girl  
dreams of *ever after*? I fear, because  
my love is scalpeled, dear, you're a goner.

## Theme Song

There you go  
*beneath the blue suburban skies*

after inching  
toward a finish line  
you wished  
never to cross.

Five tortoise years of caring  
for the sick wiped out  
as suddenly  
as death  
when you took the roundabout  
back to *Penny Lane*.

Nothing out of place  
in memory,  
nothing changed.

But here  
where ashes settle, where  
cactus flowers bloom,  
it all begins

again. Those boys  
you fathered,  
now motherless,  
leave you emptied in a house  
full of presence. They're  
on the road  
revved up for the one ride  
of their lives.

Once you too sped across continents  
on a knapsack  
of dreams, your daring  
man size  
as your sons grown.

In albums, drawers, in the back  
seat of your rusted car, in  
near replication,  
they will sustain you.

## **Muse**

My congratulations to the woman  
readied up for a tryst, in a bare-  
all mood, on a king size bed, the red  
of her mouth opening like a bud.  
No doubt she's been imagined  
in a poem or two, snug between  
syllables or perfected in rhyming  
couplets, each act of exposure, each  
attempt at tenderness, at heat, her gift  
of meaning. No doubt she hasn't been  
taking the show-don't-tell lover role  
too much to heart, calling out  
to the poet to fluff up the pillows  
and hand her a change of sheets  
and the vacuum cleaner which only  
the other night, while watching him  
mumbling in sleep, she had thought  
to surprise him by having it fixed.

## Elastic

If you were to fly  
at giddy  
heights over ocean  
and bush and I  
above  
channels between  
7101 islands, we just  
might arrive  
at a point  
of connection. Between us  
the summer night  
heat and just  
enough starlight to see  
us through  
emotions  
that tense  
with distance, thicken  
with time. If we  
were to stretch  
like the moon on the wing  
of a plane  
crossing an invisible  
equator, we could give in  
to love's  
pull yet never  
land, our assent  
the point of destination.