

death and his strangely moist
and sandpaper tongue
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ectoplasmic* elegy

you died on your bed
two hours ago.
nobody knows you're dead yet
only a couple of friends
maybe three if it's a good day
would ask themselves why is it
that your daily morning text greeting
is two hours late.
by noon, your mother would've found
your cold body, on a bed equally cold.
she'll be thinking about a lot of things;
the cost of flowers, the cremation fee,
how many cans of party biscuits to buy.
the dream you last dreamt
however, is not among them.

**Ectoplasm* is a term coined by Charles Richet, in an attempt to explain spiritual energy forming into tangible substance.

your friends, your sisters and brothers,
your last living grandparent,
everybody you ever knew
would think of you
in probably the next six months.
and no more, after that.
occasionally, though, they might.
on the day of your death,
your birthday, on all souls' day,
their fingers curled around a white candlestick
their neurons busy fishing out your name
from a pool reserved for people lost
and things left behind.
but you'll be thinking about all of them,
each one, for every ghostly second
of your ghostly afterlife,
your ectoplasmic head aching with the fact
that no one loves a ghost too long.

staying in a public hospital

is not a very pleasant experience
just as having antibiotics injected in your iv
the feeling of something that shouldn't be there
creeping in your veins in a quiet, steady march.
it could be the broken toilets
that make the stay unpleasant.

or the toilets' broken septic pipes
its contents spilling into the courtyard.
or the occasional breeze that carries the stench
to ward rooms that lost their doors and windows,
the smell clinging to walls stripped of paint
that could have been once white.
someone who never stayed in a public hospital
on his quick and only visit to one
would assume more people die here than recover.
on some days, he is probably right.
those cured would walk to the exit
the silent hope to never come back
stuffed deep in their pockets.
and those who die stay on their assigned beds,
their feet dangling from the edge,
waiting for someone to come and tell them
what to do next.

on the morning that old mrs. tecson woke up

to the strangely moist and sandpapery tongue of death licking the back of her knees, she started counting how much money she has sleeping under her bed, the paper bills sticky with molds of memories, the coins heavy with dreams of the pockets they once have been in, by noon she knew she has enough to cover the burial and funeral expenses, enough that her children's lethargic wallets would not be bothered in their daylong siestas, her tomb has been paid for years ago, on the afternoon she wore her favorite white dress and matching white shoes, she looked so pretty it was as if she were a newly-married girl out to buy her first set of furniture instead of going to the funeral parlor that provided her husband's services, she picked an equally white coffin with carved flowers on its edges, carved roses and lilies that were so small but so detailed that they looked real they reminded her to call the only flowershop in town that isn't too tight with baby's breaths, when the evening came, she turned all the lights in the house on, opened every window, every door, put her favorite carpenters album on the player and turned the volume high, it was as if she were gently waking the house up to welcome tomorrow's visitors,

still in her favorite white dress and matching white shoes, old mrs. tecson slow-danced in the living room, karen carpenter blares out of the stereo, the portrait of her husband pressed tight to her withered bosom, her eyes closed, her lips forming a half-smile that almost seemed to say that though death's tongue was slightly rough, his lips were rather sweet.

a funeral and a sermon

and there we were
at the church
promptly at one
the entire family wore white
except for one or two
who thought that it's more
fashionable to go to a service
wearing black
as if the color
would discourage the departed
from following them home
the priest was talking
about how the rh bill
(now a law)
is an abomination to the lord
and we were half-laughing
at the back
because he was given testicles
and he wasn't using them
in fear of holy fire
and half-wondering
what kind of cosmic connection
condoms have with a coffin
"it's probably because
just like a condom
coffins prevent our rotting flesh
from mixing where it should mix with,"
noah said in a tone
i could almost believe in

“so, we should practically
be stoning morticians to death?”
asked aki
and we broke into a giggle
all the while hoping
that our squinted eyes wouldn't betray
our crumbling hearts.

someone dies ...

and she's secretly hoping
you weren't done in
by a speeding truck
because that would mean
extra effort
on washing off the blood
on the sheets of the hospital bed

and he yawns
his fingers tapping
to a song
most people and their fingers
wouldn't tap to
he is late
for his youngest son's birthday
but so is the jeepney
bearing the body
he's expected to have cleaned,
dressed, and put makeup on
by six thirty

and your grandmother
opens the plastic bucket
of party cookies
to serve to those
who knew you enough
to drop by your funeral

with her fragile hands
and its fragile fingers
her fragile heart
tucked under years
and years of loss

and there they were
on the last pew
on the left
afraid to come
any nearer
lest they see
how your makeup
did not do justice
to your face
and most
so that
they won't remember you
as the cold body you are now
"you always had a really bright smile, you know"

and so you
silently watch
the mourners go home
some are stoic
some are crying
and some have one of their feet
over the threshold of forgetting
and you have both of yours
floating above the ground
as you silently go
to that lonely place in the sky
where there are no telephones
or computers or the internet
or any way to tell
everybody that you are okay
and everyone soon moves on