

Tabi apo

by Denver Ejem Torres

He used his belt, pure leather,
with a gold buckle, to exorcise
his engkanto enemy
out of his little boy's body.

My father was certain
an engkanto was living inside my body.
The very same engkanto, who,
somewhere in Bulua, he upset once.
He confessed that he took a shit
on the doorsteps
of the engkanto's golden mansion
— a big sprawling balete
to those denied of the special eye.
He was certain it was not
what he ate from the fiesta table
that upset his stomach.
It was the malditong engkanto
who would not budge
even after reciting
tabi apo, tabi apo, tabi apo.
All his life, this was what he believed in
and I was caught in between their battle.
This upsetting truth was why our house
was filled with lotsa yelling.

Efficascent

by Denver Ejem Torres

I remember the cold nights in Camaman-an
inside the nets restless, annoyed no end
by my Mama's linimental ritual.
Out of repulsion of that menthol smell,
which made me mental all the time, one time
I kept on kicking my pillow — without intentions
for it of course to catch fire but it did
nevertheless from the mosquito coil
raging under our bed. But how funny,
and shameful to remember that self of mine
who never was camp for camphor, now that
I am in the league of ligaments and muscles
acting up during cold nights like this one.