

Fang of Lightning

In Batangas, my father wears the pangil ng kidlat;
it gives him healing powers:
he chiropracts dislocated bones,
his songs make the hemiplegic run,
the dying dance.

In Wolverhampton, he works at a care home
where a resident chucks his blue pills
into a fish bowl and strikes my father in the chest;
my father's ribcage is a village
collapsed by a distant-yet-deafening-war,
a church bell ringing over houses on fire.

My father's own breath: a reading
of scar-silvered chest scans,
clusters of gypsophilas at West Park.
He walks ten miles to car boots on Sundays,
picks up pennies in the car parks,
and augurs the labyrinth of ice crystals
on the feet of Lady Wulfrun in town.

When he finds another resident on the floor
still as a dead salmon, he swoops like a hawk,
and finger-swipes the dislodged dentures
out of his mouth. *Ganyan talaga*, he tells me.
Some people choke not on objects,
but on something we cannot name.

On his break, he spreads a blanket
on the Stock Room floor, lies on a space
as wide as a grave, where he can sail
in his five-minute sleep, a thunderstorm
breaking out under his eyelids.

His silence, an incantation.
His altar, an aftermath.