



## CHRISTIAN RYAN RAM MALLI

### Self-Portrait as an Underdeveloped Character

The first time I did “it” I didn’t know “it” was supposed to happen on a day made particular not only by “it” but also the plaid (ugly) polo shirt I refused to discard. It stayed on, I insisted, the only piece of ugly I allowed him to see. My dick was pretty cute. I didn’t feel anything when he kissed me. It was my first, and a surprise, so I suppose like all surprises, the only reaction was the journey to the reaction. Which was neither a non-reaction or a reaction. So, basically WTF, neither good or bad. 5 years later I was still unsure of its nature. The first time I did “it” raw was with (ironically) a doctor. What he and the first guy had in common was loud instinct, inviolable. I forgot necessities. Control was goo. It was easy to know pleasure without form, to extend in a darkness I will never go back to. Back at my dorm, I cried even though I enjoyed “it”. Or maybe I cried because I enjoyed “it” and I wasn’t supposed to. One of my friends told me I should stop. Only my 1-year old niece knew that I agreed. I told her everything. She was the only one who wouldn’t understand. The rest who can wouldn’t understand. Somebody said they raped me. Which was funny. I imagined myself writing down a report:  
*Two adult men, one professional in fingering, one just a boring professional. I kinda-enjoyed the encounters. When I told the first guy I’ve never done anything like “it” before, he told me I was cute. Fucked me like an obedient fruit. The second one slipped inside with as much warning as summer rain. So, you liked “it”? the paunchy cop would ask. Yes, isn’t “it” designed that way? I would say. But you liked “it”.*



*He would say, and he'll leave with the sheet of paper, my mouth still  
parted, waiting for the kiss that was already over years ago.*

It wasn't that I didn't love myself. On my 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, I was in a car  
and I pretended we weren't moving, and simply gravity on Earth  
was fucked up so the windows had to show sporadic swirls of  
everything in response to the general confusion. My sister  
and I watched *Die Beautiful*, and during the rape scene, I wondered  
if recalling memories of abuse rendered them mute; or if one  
or two of the senses were forever dislodged. Shipped somewhere,  
most probably beside the *Embarrassing Moments pt. 3* jar,  
where specificities were melted down to event, and you only remembered  
that "it" happened, "it" happened, "it" happened, "it" happened.



## Disturbances

By the time we realized it  
you were already kissing me.  
I cried for the man you love  
and we tasted my tears together.

We flailed to each other's panic.  
I was panicking because you only knew me  
by name but he was half of your memory.  
To be a disturbance was to be identified  
by activity; don't cry, you said, and one day

I want to dance  
barefoot on cobblestones, flick my wrists  
on the tiny freedom  
expressed by poles and hanging beams.  
There, even under  
the morning's searing afterthought,  
I will disappear  
into motion, defined by aches

coerced by the properties of music.  
I will prove to you that it's possible  
to disturb and not hurt anyone.  
By the time I'm done hours later,

I will have caused enough accidents  
to start a party. You said that when you  
fuck other men, you kiss every inch except for their  
foreheads. A reserved gesture I found myself  
receiving, and I saw shock stretch your face,

and I understood  
why it's a rarity. The kiss, a whisper  
to the brain  
and later, as I took the elevator up  
my unit, perturbed  
by the whirring contraption of semi-flight,  
I felt the distant  
memory: *don't cry, don't cry,*



## BIOGRAPHY

**Christian Ryan Ram Malli** is a copywriter and content writer currently based in Metro Manila, Philippines. His poems have been awarded multiple times in the annual Gawad Ustetika at the University of Santo Tomas. He has also won several poetry slams, including the Tanghal-Makata slam at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in 2019. His short suite, *Kween Among Men*, won at the Normal Awards for Gender-Inclusive Literature. He was a fellow during the 5th Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio Writers Workshop. His works have appeared in *Points of Contact*, *Dapitan*, [Cordite Poetry Review](#), [Dx Machina: Literature in the Time of COVID-19](#), among others.