In the Doha International Airport, a forest

Paulina Bianca Ocampo

KU Leuven

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Recommended Citation

Ocampo, Paulina Bianca. "In the Doha International Airport, a forest." Green Humanities: A Journal of Ecological Thought in Literature, Philosophy & the Arts, vol. 4, 2024. DOI: 10.25779/7dny-ay77

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Cover Page Footnote
Note: The tikbalang and the tiktik are popular creatures from Filipino folklore. The tikbalang is a half-horse humanoid creature with a horse-like upperbody. The tiktik is a creature that harvests human organs while a victim sleeps. It is said that if you hear continuous tiktik sounds, a tiktik is nearby.

This poem is available in Green Humanities: A Journal of Ecological Thought in Literature, Philosophy & the Arts: https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/gh/vol4/iss1/10
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Our kind, my lola says, are born with a piece of forest, wild growths hidden under our tongues during inspections: of prodding canes, of bayonet Passed to you, she says, who knows not of war trees do not grow like this anymore. Ingat, she says Some try to enter if the tikbalang does scare them, if the beckoning of the tiktik escapes notice The signal breaks over the video call tik tik From a humid home in the hills of Antipolo tik...tik To a gas-heated dorm in a cobblestoned city Ingat, she says. Some may covet your forest Rich with hardy trunks and supple vines that nurse that build, that engineer, that care, that clean that serve your coffee in the Doha International Airport before you offer your own forest to whoever’ll take it –the tikbalang now works the fields, The tiktik trills, changing form – takes purchase of branches for its nest tiktiktiktik I learn in class that trees sometimes send caution through the same networks – sensing, sending messages of love and safety in between water and nutrients, over distance, and break ing signals to another piece of forest in a gas-heated dorm in a cobblestoned city, relayed to the forest behind the espresso machine in the Doha International Airport – ingat dew falls. A forest grows