

2008

# Yo Yu, and Christopher Reeve's Filipino Nurse (Two Poems)

Luisa A. Igloria  
*Old Dominion University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/english\\_fac\\_pubs](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/english_fac_pubs)

 Part of the [Poetry Commons](#)

---

## Repository Citation

Igloria, Luisa A., "Yo Yu, and Christopher Reeve's Filipino Nurse (Two Poems)" (2008). *English Faculty Publications*. 62.  
[https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/english\\_fac\\_pubs/62](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/english_fac_pubs/62)

## Original Publication Citation

Igloria, L. A. (2008). Yo Yu, and Christopher Reeve's Filipino Nurse (two poems). *Sweet: A Literary Confection*, 1(1), 8-12.

*Luisa A. Igloria***Yo Yu**

*"Have fish."  
—Chinese saying*

Today, the streets flooded and ceilings leaked,  
mercurial. On TV, firemen waded through apartments

with small children in their arms. The lights  
went out and we swam to bed

after having made a feast of every  
frozen shape in the refrigerator.

The wind looked for something  
under all the eaves. The neighbor's roof

flew into the trees. All night the rain  
made loops of rope outside the window.

Lawnmowers and cars floated by.  
Sometimes shoes, a nightstand, a red

hot-water bottle. Tomorrow  
the sky could look like a field of helium.

There's a jar of salt in the kitchen,  
limes, a tin of sardines.

Why should I line up my cares in a row  
like die-cast toy soldiers

along the windowsill?  
Luck is bright as a soap-bubble.

Luck is a river. Luck  
is the fickle and ancient carp

a child could ride, his bright  
silk pantaloons improbably rippling.

sweet:

1.1

### **Christopher Reeve's Phillipino Nurse**

*“Never turn your wife into your nurse or your mother.” —  
Christopher Reeve*

#### 1. The Premonition

Did he listen when I handed him his glass  
of orange juice and vitamins  
the morning of that fateful ride?  
“That’s very interesting, Merlinda,  
but save your grandmother’s ghost  
stories for the kids at bedtime.”  
I tried to tell him of my dream,  
the death’s head a horse rearing up  
on its hind legs. A snake  
shedding its spandex, its spine  
a bleached carcanet.  
A handful of teeth, broken  
to rattle like amulets.

## 2. The Fallen Hero

He calls every attendant “Nurse”.

Twenty-four hours a day we lift  
and bathe, dress and feed, rotate, guide  
catheters, unburden into bedpans  
this man who flew across our screens,  
dark cowlick never once moving  
despite speeds to make time  
turn upon itself, dam waters fall  
back from point of breaking—

smile sweet as a charm  
or an “S” emblazoned on a field  
of blue and gold. And of course  
the lucky girl gets the bit, emerges  
from where she’s buried under  
shitloads of highway runoff.

No rags to riches story, but equally  
intriguing: a nothing, a brown speck  
set adrift from an unfamiliar  
planet or archipelago. It lands  
with barely any luggage in the middle  
of the night, adopts the wholesome  
speech of mid-America and goes to temp  
while waiting for the big time  
in the Big Manzanas: Gotham,  
New York, Amsterdam, Rome, Dubai—  
wherever it is, we’ve all been there.

(That’s shorthand for unarchived work.)

Cosmetics are key: I’ll apply a light  
foundation to the pallid, waxy skin,  
pencil in the brows that are  
no longer even there.

The photographs will want  
even a shadow of the myth,  
arranged by women’s hands.

### 3. The Current through Her Arms

The surgeons sliced a tendon  
of the fractured neck to better  
reattach head to body.

Every now and then he has  
a little spasm— he says it happens  
when the body tries to send  
messages to the brain.

I thought of coaches on midnight trains,  
of the vague destinations of refugees,  
the plaintive songs harmonicas breathed  
before bodies hurtled out of cars  
and into the hazy, unlit margins  
of sleeping towns.

One evening, he shook  
as he napped in the hermetic silence  
riddled only by the hum of digital  
instruments. I bent to straighten  
his head, wondering if he ever  
again dreamed of power, the mind  
shining its steady miner's light ahead  
before the explosive thrust  
into a core of basalt...

When I stepped away, my fingertips  
glowed coral— as if, beneath the surface  
of my labors, some molten self  
had stirred awake, remembering  
its own dreams of flying.

LUISA A. IGLORIA (previously published as Maria Luisa Aguilar-Cariño) adores dark chocolate with orange rind or crystallized ginger, ripe mangoes and leche flan— but also steamed oysters with black bean and garlic sauce, arguably another category of "sweet." Luisa is the author of *Juan Luna's Revolver* (forthcoming, the University of Notre Dame Press; winner, 2009 Ernest Sandeen Prize for Poetry <http://undpress.nd.edu/book/P01279>), *Trill & Mordent* (WordTech Editions 2005; co-winner, 2007 Global Filipino Literary Awards in poetry), and 8 other books. Originally from Baguio City in the Philippines, Luisa is Associate Professor in the MFA Creative Writing Program, Old Dominion University. Her work has appeared or will be forthcoming in numerous anthologies and journals including *Language for a New Century* (W. W. Norton, 2008), *Poetry*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *The Missouri Review*, *Indiana Review*, *Poetry East*, *Smartish Pace*, *Rattle*, *The North American Review*, *Bellingham Review*, *Shearsman (UK)*, *PRISM International (Canada)*, *The Asian Pacific American Journal*, and *TriQuarterly*.