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“An emotional issue”¹

... a Placer Dome Technical Services official commented that the 1996 spillage had only become an emotional issue. Now, he said, there is no more danger of any kind in the Boac River and that it can be tapped again for agricultural and domestic purposes.

– Zelda Soriano, “Revisiting the Boac Waters: Clear Waters Now, More Dangers Ahead.” *Bulatlat.com*.

The resurrected river creeps beyond the nerves of its waterways. It dives into the blood of generations, infiltrating systems to the point of explosion. It is not an emotional issue but imagine seeing snow for the first time. How non-toxic we used to touch the first flake with your tongue—expecting the sensation of cold to dance on your tongue-tip. How these flakes of white fell onto your eyelids and stayed there heavy like a first splash of raindrops after a long drought.

You expect the river to rejoice, to howl loudly at the skies when the monsoon arrives. You expect life to continue flowing, like the river, for the first time in years, there is light in the island. For the first time in years, there are signs of living beyond fishing. You expect this country in America to save this island, like they teach this to you in school—while you are hot, sweaty, and eager to jump into the river to cool off in your white polo shirt (dirty at the collar). They say they will save this island.

Your blood tingles. This blood pulses, craving to jump out of the body. You thought Canadian snow will save the island but the blood inside of you says otherwise. Every day people move further and further away to find fish. What was once so familiar—the river—has become a monster crawling out of the ocean. And into your palms.

Non-toxic. They say the river is non-toxic, now. But your blood still tingles when the full moon arrives and you wonder when it will be your turn to run away from the island, frantically, to ask what else can be done to save your life. To save the river. To save the blood that has kept the island pulsing beyond the death of its veins, the sepsis of its blood.

¹ C., David P. “Heavy Metal Concentrations in Marine Sediments Impacted by a Mine-Tailings Spill, Marinduque Island, Philippines.” *Environmental Geology*, vol. 42, no. 8, 2002, pp. 955-965., <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00254-002-0601-4>.