

APOLOGY TO OUR FATHERS



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ABSTRACT. This poem validates the expectations set forth by conventional and conservative Filipino cultures, and honors the queer men who rejected these expectations in favor of living a radical and beautiful truth.

Good boys smile and mano
Stand up neatly, stiff as a board
And respond clearly when spoken to
Good boys are every class officer at once
They laugh during the homily, cry at Easter
And grow into soldiers of Christ
Good boys excel in all subjects
Get sent off to top-tier colleges
Eagerly learn the laws of the land
And graduate into magnetic young bachelors
Ever so handsome, clean, and most importantly - virile
Good boys grow and give back constantly
To the family, to the community, to the country
Pouring the tears they can't cry back into the soil
And before the generosity expires
Good boys choose love and give birth to good boys
Good boys who limp-wrist and bend their knees
Good boys who dabble in lipstick and Regine imitations
Who learn to use concealer to hide the bruises from
Teachers who wish they could just be good boys
Good boys who fail calculus tests
And would rather suck dick than sleep through church
Good boys who give up on med school dreams
After one week of physics and one month of literary theory
Good boys who sneak out on Saturdays to meet good boys
Who sit in circles to discuss Foucault and trade saliva
Paint rainbows on their cheeks and march
For liberty for freedom for sex and justice
For the good boys lost along the way
Good boys who graduate cum laude with degrees in communism

And enter jobs they hate to fund their whims
Blow their sweldo on paintbrushes, whiskey, and therapy
Growing and giving into their demons
Good boys who hook up with good boys in alleys
Leaving traces from nightclub to parlor to condo
And grow into unapologetic sex warriors, bathroom stall legends
Living for the moment before tomorrow's stolen away
Good boys who, before the chaos completely subsides
And everyone washes away their last regrets
Ask quietly with what breath remains,
"Wasn't I good?"
Good boys who grow and give in constantly
To demons, to awful lovers, to broken systems
Pouring all their tears into the world
And because their bravery endures
In times of stormy death and rebirth
Good boys choose love
Now, tomorrow, always.