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ALON: A CYPHER WITH KIMMORTAL

Kenzie Ozoa

ARTIST STATEMENT. Rooted in the renaissance and re-centering of queer Filipino narratives throughout history, in the present, and in the future, *Alon: A Cypher with Kimmortal* is both a retelling of the artist's experiences as a queer, femme Filipinx in the illegally occupied Kingdom of Hawai'i and a letter to various audiences. In some parts of the piece, it is imagined to be a letter to the artist's past, present, and future self. In others, it is a tribute to their lola – their nan (grandmother), grandma, mother, and the countless women and femme folks who have come before them and are them as they are part of the artist. With the lyrics of Kimmortal – a queer Filipinx artist and musician – and the words of the artist comes the creation of a piece that speaks to realities that Filipinos, especially in Hawai'i, are subject to as a result of imperialism, colonialism, and white supremacy. Through the undulation of stories and history found in *Alon*, the artist composes a raw ode to their future bata (children) and to Filipino ancestors, elders, youth, and generations to come.

Soft ripples cascade my body
As I float on cool water

Calmness washes over me
Not someone to bother

Sudden stir in the swell
Can't get up fast enough
I'm pulled under, fighting
Down with the rough

I open my eyes
Ancestors amongst the sea
Arms elongated tried to reach me

I reach out when suddenly
I am hit

Alon 1
Alon 2
I scream can you quit

They ask me, "What are you?"
I'm Boricua, Filipino

though"
They grimace and say,
"Least you got that curly hair

Same hair that they always reach and touch
I'd sit there and take it, eyes watered cheeks
flushed

Alon 3
Alon 4

Running out of breath

Suddenly I'm 13
"I'm not tired yet"
Was not tired then

now
But exhausted

And I know I shouldn't be
Tried to break free from Pinay identity

A voice in my head saying, "Why aren't you PROUD?"

They call me BLACK DOG,
Said I BARK TOO LOUD

Alon 5
Alon 6

lungs
Water fills my

Indoctrination, self-hatred
Really gets the job done

Scrubbing my arms till raw and red
Brown won't wash off, I'm filled with dread

the sun
Grandma says that's what happens when exposed to
System makes me hate myself

I just want to run

Alon 7

Alon 8

Still underwater

 Feel a hand touch me

 It's my future daughter

I look back

 See my lola

 Then her mom, her lola

 Our line's on a roll-a

 Racist system that keeps powers in place

 Fails to acknowledge the root of your pain

 Look back my heart grows bigger than the swell

 'Cuz even though I repeatedly fell

 I'm from the islands that won't be silenced

 Ancestor pilots, shoulders of giants

Alon 9

Alon 10

 Back to a standstill

 Holding back tears against my own will

 Constellations course through my veins

 Even when they tried to erase our face

 Better say their names

 We won't leave this space

 I'm queer like the water, resilient through trauma

 That's on my mama

 Foundations, Filipinx

 No limits on my queerness

 Way I choose to express

 You can't hold me back

Alon 1

Alon 2

The system won't win
'Cuz I got a crew

On this plane? I could never go wrong
Don't forget my ancestors
1521
'98 and beyond

Proud to be Pinay
Till the day that I die

Bata on my shoulders
Standing sky high

Sent back to the water my essence will lie
Hand on their shoulder and then we will rise