

Behind *The Hurricane Wars*

Here in the Philippines, we are no strangers to disaster. Approximately twenty tropical cyclones pass through every year and we average twenty recorded earthquakes per day. Our volcanoes are angry things, as befits a country situated within the Pacific Ring of Fire. Everyone has a typhoon story, like the time howling winds sent my friends' evacuation center collapsing over their heads. Everyone has a flood story, like the time my parents woke me and my siblings in the middle of the night because everything in the house that wasn't nailed down was floating.

My country's history is as volatile as its weather and as unforgiving as the earth on which it was shaped. The Philippines was subject to foreign rule for roughly 385 years. It's a history irrevocably intertwined with that of my family's. My great-great-grandfather and his father were freedom fighters, leading their hometown's revolt against two successive colonial governments. Half a century later, my grandfather took up the cause at fifteen years of age, once walking thirty-seven miles' worth of mountain trails to fetch ammunitions from a waiting submarine. Meanwhile, my grandmother's family had to flee into the swamps when invaders burned their home for

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supplying food to the guerillas. Her infant sister fell ill too far from a hospital and died.

These are the tales and experiences that inspired my debut novel, *The Hurricane Wars*. For the people in my story, the weather holds ancient magic and power—it provides light, heat, and energy that fuels their extraordinary technology. However, it is also a weapon, a tool to subjugate. A decade of war has given rise to gargantuan stormships, machines that harness lightning and gales to devastate the land. Magic is also the catalyst of a natural disaster that threatens to wipe an entire civilization from the map—a Dead Season. (This term comes from my home province; *tiempo muerto* refers to the time between planting and harvest, when there is no work, no income, only hunger.)

When I first began writing *The Hurricane Wars*, I thought I would create a fantasy world untouched by these issues, where Filipino culture could flourish without shame or shackles. But I eventually had to be honest; even without a colonial past, we would still have to contend with other fractures in our society and the natural calamities that routinely befall our corner of the globe. I began to wonder: how do we survive the hard times, and what does it mean to make a better world?

And so, I wrote a love story—a fiery, fiendishly complicated one between two young people shaped by war, deeply divided between their allegiances, who must now join hands to establish peace. Their love has seemingly insurmountable odds stacked against it, but it manages to blaze amid the darkness in the same way that our stories, our ancestral memory, our *hope* can survive three waves of conquerors. Love can make us do impossible, beautiful, terrible things. Love can bloom like revolution.

While this is a fantasy world, I have done my best to make the soul recognizable. This is a story about stopping the stormships, about working together to survive Dead Season. It's

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about the cost of war and the price of freedom, and what it takes to make a nation. It's about love, love where there once was hatred, love that is stronger than any cage that seeks to contain it. It's about my homeland and what unites us, and all that we have overcome and what lies ahead of us still.

This story carries my heart. I hope you enjoy it.

Thea Guanzon