

*The Hour of Daydreams*, by Renee Macalino Rutledge (Forest Avenue Press, 2016)

reviewed by Aimee Campos

*The Hour of Daydreams* is Renee Macalino Rutledge's debut novel. Rutledge's work has been published in *ColorLines*, *Oakland Magazine*, *Red Earth Review*, *Mutha Magazine*, *Ford City Anthology*, and the *2017 Women of Color Anthology*.

*The Hour of Daydreams* focuses on the story of Dr. Manolo Lualhati and his young wife Tala, a woman he met one day by the river of his small town, and whose past Manolo knows nothing about. He swears he saw her shed a pair of large wings before diving into the river that very first night, a detail that has haunted him ever since. Tala captivates Manolo completely, so much that he does not bother questioning her or her past, blindly accepting whatever she tells him. When Tala's past starts unveiling itself to Manolo, he has no other choice but to accept that were some facts about the woman he loved he much rather preferred to gloss over with fantasy.

Rutledge's diction is very dream-like. She weaves Filipino folklore into this tale of marriage in which partners must accept and want to be a part of each other's identity. Rutledge does a great job of molding together realistic situations with fantasy elements, blurring the lines between what is real and what we simply choose to believe. The characters have substance and the tensions of the story are subtle but effective, being able to take a short marital squabble and let it stew into the bigger problem of trust and identity that is the driving force of the story.

This novel was an intriguing and exciting read from start to finish. As the story advanced and the reader saw that not everything was so straightforward or as laid out as thought to be, more pieces of the story began to fit together. Rutledge takes the idea of centuries-old folklore and culture and fits it into a captivating story of love and

sacrifice. The identity of this book is strong, much like the identity of the people and the stories Rutledge brings together in her debut novel.