



# Flame

The Literary Folio of Review \* Northwestern University \* Laoag City \* 2015

*Flame*  
LITERARY FOLD-OUT REVIEW

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## About the cover



We can never appreciate the beauty of the light when we've never seen darkness. We can never know what beauty lies in the dark without a bit of light. The light and the dark go together to form an extraordinary beauty. Just like each sunset of every day. The sun slowly buries itself in the horizon and borrows the dimness of the dusk, and that's when we witness magnificence beyond description – the splendor of the sunset.

This is also how life works. We can never understand how beautiful our lives are unless we have been through countless sorrows. We can never know what real happiness is unless we feel atrocious sadness. We can never know what's best for us unless we experience the worst.

Life is bittersweet and that's okay. It's the way it should be. Sadness is the key to happiness. Let your heart be shattered into pieces. Only then that we will realize how meaningful our lives can be.

One great thing about seeing the sun set is that it gives us assurance that another day will come to us. There might not be assurance on what tomorrow brings-of whether it will bring joy or sorrow – but what is important is, tomorrow will surely come and it will help us discover more about life. So enjoy every day, no matter how bright or how dark it may seem. Welcome every day with grace, flip your hair into the air and tell the world you are ready to face its challenges. *Carpe Diem!*

Cover Photo and Text:  
**KATHRINE JESSICA CALANO**



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## *Dedication*

*To the eyes soaked in tears  
yet conquered all fears,  
To the mouths shut by pain  
but did not let sorrow to forever reign,  
To the heads bowed down by lack of self-esteem  
yet gained courage to pursue a dream  
To the minds full of "what ifs,"  
but still learned to jump over cliffs  
To the once hopeless broken hearts  
who found people to stitch the missing parts  
We dedicate the Flame to you,  
so keep it burning in life's longest queue  
Do not be afraid to choose what your heart desires  
And live a life full of spice.*

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Photo by: Katherine Jessica Collins



# Preface

**W**e laugh. We cry. We forgive. We avenge. We hope. We quit.

Sometimes we destroy ourselves for doing these too much. But only after we destroy ourselves that we realize who we really were. Only in the process of fixing ourselves, did we discover how far we go in the journey of life.

We dream. We focus. We hasten. We forget.

And in the journey of life, we often forget what real happiness is. There are infinite reasons to be happy like when you hear your favorite song over the radio, when you bath under the first rain after summer, when you read a quote that exactly describes what you feel and what you believe, when you go to a road trip with your friends and you breathe fresh air from the trees along the way, when you get the highest score on a game, when you enjoy every sip of your tea or coffee while reading your favorite book, and even the fact that you are taking in oxygen right now. These and many more are the simple joys of life. We dream too much of material things, we hasten as much as we can to get them and we tend to for-

get what we have and focus on those we don't.

We learn. We reflect. We change.

But we will never stay on the state of not knowing what real happiness is because there will come a time when life takes its turn and it will teach us lessons we will ponder on forever. It will teach us the value of contentment, giving and kindness. These values will help us change for the better. So we should stop spending most of our time thinking how to improve our lives instead of actually doing it. Step outside, be good, be kind, be an inspiration, give and provide.

We love. We live.

Afterall, what we have acquired—success, wealth, and fame—will soon not matter. There will come a time when our hearts will stop beating and all our material possessions will turn into ash and won't matter anymore. What will matter is how we lived and loved.

We read.

"Reading gives us some place to go when we have to stay where we are." The journey to life is an unending road and sometimes, we need to stop, take a break, rest and have a good read. Enjoy reading and enjoy life. (Kathrine Jessica Calana)



Κιόβητας ΠΑΑ Γιάννης  
Φωτ. by: Φωτ. Jessica Geras

A black and white photograph of a rugged coastline. In the foreground, there are dark, jagged rocks. In the middle ground, a large, light-colored rock formation with a prominent overhang dominates the right side. To the left, several sea stacks rise from the water. The background shows a hazy, distant coastline under a bright sky.

*I just want to hug you  
Kiss your beautiful face  
Look you in the eye  
and tell you I love you.*

*Love...*


# *Rhyming Thoughts*

WDGV

Only the sound of river's cry  
Shall wipe the tear in my eye  
The leap of faith, my heart's inside  
Where my future holds and collide

Wind blows, singing onto me  
Far beyond my senses that I could only see  
The stars on the sky is out of my reach  
That I can only leave my pain through my speech

You have the world and it's yours to keep  
I have only you and it's more than I need  
I always remember you before I sleep  
The reason I always smile in my morning sweet.



# *Ssssh! Quiet!*

*Jason Bunnao*

Looking a place to be alone.  
Everywhere I go, still  
Loud noises are to be heard  
Sometimes, I think about killing myself  
To have a peace of mind and soul  
And suddenly, I look at your eyes  
And found a place  
Where peace reigns  
I followed you  
And everything gone so quiet.

# *Utopia*

*Sarah Synteche Lucas*

I'm dreaming in colors  
Of getting the chance  
To be your Juliet  
In the perfect romance.

Before you came  
My life was a moonless night  
Now that you're here  
My life is filled with light.

The wind whispers the way to Atlantis  
But my heart says I belong in your Utopia of seas  
Let me get lost in your brown orbs forever  
I will never find my way out, not now, not ever.

A fragile heart inside my chest,  
I will give it all to you and love you with all my best  
Let me have you in my embrace  
And I will give you something you can never erase.

# *Bright Morning Star*

Jannahry Anni L. Campos

Love brought us here  
Through all these years  
With mistakes done  
Yet all are gone

Long dark roads  
Suffering unfolds  
To You I hold  
Though life has rolled

Days had come and go  
Life had much to do  
Love shall highly soar  
With us forevermore

People made us gray  
Giving pains everyday  
Too much hate  
Yet they are late

We found love  
For it's all we have  
Let the Morning Star  
Make this love go far



# *What's stranger than falling to a stranger?*

*The Cereal Killer*

When I first met you,  
I thought you were my ex's Doppelganger.  
But oh, it's a no  
'Coz you were just another stranger.

At the start, I had built my wall  
Didn't want you around 'coz you remind me of my past.  
But then the walls I've built just simply fell  
Everytime I see you, my heart beats loud and fast.

Years have passed  
And we became closer than before.  
I must admit: the feelings didn't fly  
It stayed and gave my life a more vibrant color.

Now, we are officially together -  
You and I just own the world.  
And I believe that this lasts forever -  
Make this work: out of acts of love and not just by word.

Words, indeed, aren't enough to express  
How happy I am to have you in my life.  
Thought I'd be forever alone and depressed  
But you were here and saved me from a lifetime strife.

# *Pusillanimous*

*Matipuno*

I really want to tell you how I feel,  
My deep longing for you  
The burning emotion inside

I really want to be with you,  
Be your defender, lover and slave  
To guard you, love you and serve you

I just want to hug you  
Kiss your beautiful face  
Look you in the eye and tell you I LOVE YOU

I really want to be romantic to you,  
Give you bouquet of flowers, teddy bears and chocolates  
Fill your bag with love letters

BUT, woe is me  
For I am too afraid, too cowardly to confess  
A wimp, too nervous to express myself  
even too scared to text or talk to you

Please wait for me  
Till I become brave  
Till I get out of this pusillanimous stage  
Till I become desirable for you.

# *Will You Stay?*

*Janmahry Ann L. Campos*


This is a poem I made just for you  
For many things that I want you to  
know  
Every moment I spent away from you  
It only makes me wanting you

You make me less lonely with those  
smiles  
You make me less lonely with those  
touches

I love you just the way you are  
In your arms, I know I found the one

Restless I am when you're mad  
Like wars engaged deep down inside  
Like the blue sky that sets a lovely day  
Asking myself, "Will you stay?"

I want to be there when you're  
sleeping  
Watch those eyes and your slowly  
breathing  
I want to be there when you're wide  
awake  
Tell you that there's nothing I couldn't  
take



Make me your hanky and crying shoulder  
Give you warmth when everything gets colder  
Carry you when your knees become weaker  
I want to be with you even when we get older

I may run of words to speak  
Time may cause me to become weak  
But I just want you to know,  
I'm so grateful and I love you so

*But the darkness came out  
You left me in the middle of nowhere  
I tried shouting your name  
Asking you to stay with me*



*Letting go...*

## *3 Things in Life*

*Jason P. Bunnao*

A day with you is like a paradise  
Happiness is a mysterious feeling we felt  
We enjoyed every moment we had  
Until the sun goes down, you stay by my side

But the darkness came out  
You left me in the middle of nowhere  
I tried shouting your name  
Asking you to stay with me

A day that I lost you  
I just don't know how to stand  
I continued to fight  
And finished my journey, alone.



# *Double-minded*

*Mara Klara*

First you say yes  
And then say no,  
I tried to understand  
Perhaps you just forgot,  
Yet for many times  
You stay the same.  
Of all that happened  
I simply got tired.  
My trust gone astray  
Now I doubt you.  
Hope you'd be stable  
Walk in one path.  
'Cos isn't it greater  
To have one heart?  
'Cos isn't it better  
To have one mind?

## Two Tangles of Love

*Interludly*

Make me o, sweet love, hurt no more and bid yes goodbye; taking away pain and sadness

Love! Oh! Where are the sweet days? All are gone! Lost and crushed in pieces.

I remember the memories shared, both of longing and of missing

How could I forget all those bittersweet lies?

For good, I am bidding farewell oh love!

For I will not hold again!

It shouldn't be

You and me!

Oh!

Little hearts,

Fear not of moving apart.

For I will come back with a smile

To you, I will say, I love you across all miles

Oh! Don't cry with this poem, for after you read, remember

Cry not! For I will love you always, which proves more than the time: forever

Don't be afraid that I may move too far, for I will not break our promises sealed with a kiss

Remember! And forget not! The love shared, those we learned, and all those times full of ecstatic bliss!

# ADIEU

magPerXAN

Not knowing what I've done  
Can't believe that you're gone...  
We were once the youngest toddlers  
And we were sharing laughters,  
Playing recklessly without concern  
Thinking positively and learn.  
You held my hand so tight,  
We watched the stars all night,  
Hoped this moment to extend,  
And we were best of friends.  
We did things simultaneously  
Couple-like, not obviously.  
One night I realized,  
There was something in your eyes,  
The way you say you love me  
And we are meant to be.  
The time has come,  
The sweetest gum  
Doesn't tastes the same  
Didn't know why it become.  
The tastiest chewed,  
Tasteless to chew.  
And then when you packed away,  
I felt sadness and lil' care.  
Tears came out in my eyes  
Never wanted to say goodbye.

# *Devastated and Virulent*

*Sarah Syntheche Lucas*

Shattered and bitter, we were under  
the rain  
I looked in your eyes, but you only  
pierced me with pain,  
Your eyes that were as gorgeous as  
marigolds in a field,  
Seemed to remind me of my heart  
that you emptied.

The drops of rain upon my face  
Caressed my heart as I waited for  
your embrace  
Your sweet embrace I know I'd never  
feel again  
Had just clutched my heart as another  
tear had fallen.

You let go of my hands as you bid me  
goodbye  
And I cry back "Please tell me this is  
a lie."  
Your farewell was one thing I couldn't  
believe.  
The pain that I felt could not be re-  
lieved.

Now, the rain sang no song for me  
The world around me has turned as black  
as ebony  
Why? Why did you just let your love for  
me fade?  
I would just yearn for you more and your  
sweet serenade.

Tears rolled down my cheek as I watched  
you walk away  
The day you first kissed me felt as if it was  
only yesterday.  
Your memories of me, you can easily re-  
place  
But my memories of you will forever stay  
as painful as your last gaze.

# *Intoxicated*

*Jannahry Ann Campos*

Sitting on a wall while wiping away my tears  
Remembering all the fond memories of cheers  
It was a moment of excruciating silence  
Watching every corner, waiting for his presence

With pleasant memoirs that were indeed heart warming  
Allured and intensified in the beginning  
Exceptional joy that brought me into high skies  
Broken, shattered and thinking this love will arise

Through the heart of the sun fell into the ground  
Intoxicated into this bitter sweet love  
In the ocean of fire, our love together drowned  
Loud plea breaks the wall and sounded above

Tears rippled as I calmly take the hurt and pain  
The wind blows as I close my eyes with no more vain  
As the leaves rustled in the wind as he disappeared  
Still looking around, waiting for him to appear

# *Despair*

*Ms. Aiz*

And there you go again  
Striking my heart full of pain  
When will you going to end up  
Until my heartbeats finally stop?

I just can't accept the truth  
That we are not totally meant through  
Im just someone for you  
While my only one is you,


My only wish is for you to love me too.  
Give your all like I used to  
I didn't mean to take you for granted  
But I'll do my best, cause you're all I need.

Accept my love, please hate me not  
Be with me, I care for you alot.  
I know you're the only one who can repair  
My heart that is full of despair.





ME. P. J. J. J.  
George Irwin



*How vast is the love You have for me  
That marked my place  
in the best part of the world  
You gave me all your creations  
known and untold  
I can search all through  
great land and seas*

*Life...*

# Blind Item

## *The Cereal Killer*

Do you know Martin?  
He's the professor who's really good in teaching.  
He's a genius – he's good in everything  
No wonder why students admired him.

Do you know what happened last 2013?  
It is when Martin entered a class and met young Kevin.  
Kevin's tall, handsome and so masculine  
"A true son of Adonis!" says the old maxim.

Do you know a thing about them?  
Martin and Kevin were good friends back then.  
But the friendship turned to "something" all of a sudden,  
When one starry night, they made something  
forbidden.

Do you know what has happened?  
Twas Valentines when the two went to Martin's haven.  
They talked, had dinner, and got drunk at the kitchen,  
Went to bed after – not to sleep but to make the room a new-  
found sex den.

Do you know what went on since then?  
Martin became so possessive and obsessed over Kevin  
That he even fails and gets rid of those who get involve with  
his "darling"  
Indeed, he's fallen hard but the other says they're just totally  
mistaken.

Do you know how to get their story ended?  
I don't know but know that dirty rumors about 'em have al-  
ready spread:  
They say Kevin still clings to Martin to be financially and aca-  
demically exempted,  
Now, students adjudge Martin – even no longer  
respected.

# Rooms of Happiness

Jannahry Ann Campos

One cold night, in my peaceful and wonderful room,  
I searched an unending happiness  
Wearing a perfect smile  
    and existing in a worry-free life is my earnestness  
Living in the courts of love and joy, I'm completely enlightened  
Leaning on the walls of success, I'm totally awakened  
Love, peace and cheerfulness in the four sides of my room  
    are my enjoyment  
Soaring and jumping up high with this gladness  
    is my greatest achievement

But when darkness comes and pierces me all around,  
I search for joy to join me and let love abound  
In times of sadness, it seems that the songs of my life have ended  
Thinking that my day looks over and my life has descended  
As I sit in the corner of my room, I lose the strength to boldly  
    keep on trying  
And on the bed, I can't take my heart that is crying

One thing I can clear up my mind, is to kneel down on the floor,  
Depend on the source of all happiness to wipe my tears away  
    and let Him open His door  
To God above, I can smile and I believe He is the best  
With Him I can always find the sweetest rest  
To let go my pride and let God sit with me as I share my load  
And in every tear and anxiety of my room, this is just a part  
    of my road

# *A Battle Within*

*Beatrix Domingo*

Glance at the mirror, take a look  
Stranger's image, a figure of anonymity  
Someone I can't escape from  
Imprisoned inside for eternity,

Witness her dip fingers in my blood  
Where no place to breath, no place to unwind  
Watch her write a very dark law  
Upon the fleshy tables of my mind

Every piece I have: bottled and locked  
Buried, unable to move, unable to break free  
Can't let go, I'm her marionette  
Under her full control, denied of liberty

Suddenly, I felt the need to break free  
Awaken from slumber, started a lethal fight  
Fought, struggled, endured, augmented  
Destroyed her, Captured the light

Now the dark cloud is lifted  
The mirror cracked, the rainbow appears  
Lightens the whole place, Realization sinks in  
Acceptance replaced envy and fears

As I again look in the mirror  
I am no longer bound  
My heart is filled with freedom  
Love for myself, I finally found



# *Indescribable*

*Kat*

How vast is the love You have for me  
That marked my place in the best part of the world  
You gave me all your creations known and untold  
I can search all through great land and seas  
All for you cared for me  
I have much to ask, you have more to give  
Though I serve you less, bountifully I receive.

How rich is the love you have for me  
That you saved me from my debts, my sins  
And paid an immeasurable cost  
Though I gain the whole world, I cannot repay you  
Your love which is the only thing cannot bring you  
back from a lifetime and beyond

How great is the love You have for me  
How vast is the love You have for me  
How rich is the love You have for me



# *Exit with Secret Lies*

*Marinella Sizson*

It was a surprise. You were confused.  
You felt mad, you felt abused.  
But hey it's not your professor's fault.  
To study hard, that was your oath.

So you take your pen and paper,  
Write down your name, no! Not your number.  
Focus, concentrate and then remember  
Yesterday's lessons not your hunger!

You look at your left then to your right,  
You think of the answer with all your might.  
You hear their whisper around you  
"Oh dear mathematics I don't have a clue!"

So you take your phone and scribble your text  
Write down the answers and what is next  
You feel good and worry-free  
"I cheated before, nobody will see!"

After your quiz, you get perfect score  
"I will cheat and get higher than before"  
Until you graduated with honors  
Expecting to exit with flying colors

Oh no my dear, this will end  
When you choose to play pretend  
When you climb up to that ladder  
You will fall down, broken further

Because it will come flashing back  
The secrets you kept locked  
Of how you cheated during exams  
To your friends, family and to your sir and ma'am.

# *The Ballad of the Unborn*

*Beatrix Domingo*

In the darkness of your womb  
My fate to die, already succumbed  
Here am I, silently groaning, fully tormented  
Waiting 'till you end this life, oh! So wretched

Hear me elicit an echoing condemnation  
Of your treacherous act, yearning for salvation  
My wails, unheard, just rise and fall  
Like the voiceless undying desert wind's call

Here am I, lying in a pit of sordid patch  
Scorched by the darkness of your forsaken touch  
Let me live, the hollows of your conscience toll  
Buried in the chasm of darkest end of your soul

Here am I, aware that all my sufferings  
Will shrink into nothing compare to the bleak eternity  
Waiting for the silent judgment of a wrathful God  
To beckon light and erase my intensified agony



# Mask

magPenXAN

What a glitterous one  
Sparkling on our midst upon,  
A covering to a sudden face  
It hides burdens and hates.  
Discrimination is all around  
Can't stop their mouths to bound,  
Walking down the street way  
Hearing them shouting and say...  
"There he goes that crazy gay!"  
Then almost cried on that day,  
So closing eyes and dream  
Because laughs never what it seems.  
Thousands of tears, thousands of fears...  
Loneliness of heart hides too hard.  
But thanks to this mask  
Making my surroundings no task  
Everything is okay If I wear mask everyday.

# Magnum Opus

Mara Klara

Having worth far more than a dazzling diamond  
One-in-a-million, irreplaceable, exceptional,  
Purely beautiful in or out, brilliant, refined  
Yet insolently you used "it", thrashed "it"  
You let the sparkle of the creation dull  
But more unbreakable than diamonds  
In no way you can ever break "it"  
'Cos "its" purity, "its" strength  
"Its" shine may dull but stays  
"Its" value forever unfeigned  
"It" was designed from a man,  
"IT'S" A WOMAN. YES, "IT" IS.  
You treat her as an "it" relentlessly  
But a WOMAN is by no means an "it"  
Respect, love and treasure her life long  
As she's a magnum opus formed by God  
Purely beautiful in or out, brilliant, refined  
One-in-a-million, irreplaceable, exceptional  
Having worth far more than a dazzling diamond.

# *Maria, where's Clara?*

*The Cereal Killer*

Simple, meek, humble  
These define a Filipina before.  
Courteous, conservative, genteel  
Women like such, are they still here?

Liberated, aggressive, vulgar -  
Nowadays, these reflect a woman's moral.  
Tell me, where's our preserved culture then?  
Everything's been changed by the flow of new trend.

In the old times, women were so modest  
That no one can see their ankles in its fullest.  
They were simple in their clothing and hairstyles -  
Treated as treasures, both precious and fragile.

But now, my friend, look what has happened -  
Girls bare so much skin, short shorts even shortened,  
Hairs likened to the skyscrapers of New York City  
But for them, it is what makes them pretty.

Indeed, gone are those who resemble Maria Clara,  
What exist now are the kinds of Maria Ozawa.  
So, is it really a part of our colonial-mentality?  
To have Filipino women lost their individuality.

# Cycle

*matipuno*

this euphoric feeling, gushing through my veins  
making me tremble, making me weak  
yet giving warmth and hope

I WANT IT!

but, for shame since it is already taken  
stolen is my light  
now in filth.

trying hard to grasp reality  
grin now grim  
life now lost  
my path, astray.

into the abyss of nothingness  
into the depths of despair  
where time became irrelevant

.....

I've forgotten what was stolen  
the agony now erased  
the curse has lifted

emerged from this  
is me, now cleansed  
for I've found another light,  
another reason  
my compass  
my life

I WANT IT!



## *Hearty Buddy*

*magPenXAN*

Autumn leaves are scattered everywhere,  
Like a fake friend that'll stole you even there.  
And diamonds are precious and rare,  
Like a true friend that'll stay with you forever.  
A friendship can never be perfect  
And I hope it'll never neglect.

# *So Called Friends*

*Jannahy Ann Campos*

Forsaken customs of relation  
A spate of friendship disconnection  
There are liars, posers and cheaters  
The world is full of tricksters

Their cruel actions cut me so deep  
And they leave me here again to weep  
All the hatred notions in their mind  
I am not moved, I'm one of a kind

These are all ruins of friendship  
These are the rubbles of partnership  
They all have reached extremities  
And they have paraded vanities

They're supposed to be real and not fake  
Being with you, every step you take  
They're supposed to be in your best years  
But "hey!" I was wrong, they brought me tears



*To God be the greatest honor*

*For He lets us see the world  
that is beautiful.*

*For He lets us open our eyes,*

*To the things that is beyond our  
knowledge.*



*Nature...*



# Creation of God

Sweetcel Tugala

The stars that shine up above the sky.  
Twinkling on the naked eye of mine.  
Wondering why does it shines so bright?  
Ah! To light up the dark that's it.

From the trees that are blown by the wind,  
How pleasant to hear the hum of the leaves.  
Wondering why does it calm my mind?  
Ah! To let me feel that way it is.

The air that fills my lung,  
Thankful I am for giving me life.  
Wondering why it freshens me up?  
Ah! To give me hope that is.

Truly, God is good.  
Grateful I am to be alive.  
To see and witness all,  
The things that are beyond my expectation.

To God be the greatest honor,  
For He lets us see the world that is beautiful.  
For He lets us open our eyes,  
To the things that is beyond our knowledge.

# "kith"

*blue feathers*

Multitude of stars, 'thy vast universe of your story  
Amiability bottled in 'ye heart, so lovely!

Rhythm to the sweetest songs, words spoken make sense  
Patience and simplicity, dressed with overflowing confidence

Fear nothing in this world; build up with a faith so strong  
Roses of love embroidering other people's wrong

Oceans of learning, enjoying this life on Earth  
Mingle with other people, have time for some mirth

Creatively make your own coupled with reality  
Ignite the light, be a big inspiration, humility!

In the hurricane of trials that may come, be still  
and He must be known  
He must prevail, ruling praises and prayers over a selfish throne

Indeed a great gift that you will contribute to his kingdom  
Make it now, make a sound self like it's a wham

Thank Him in everything that you gather, that's a matter  
Over and over, in my heart you will linger forever

# Stars

*Mysterious*

All the little lights glimmer on the evening sky  
Twinkling in an unceasingly endless night  
Cannot be chased, cannot be reach by bare hands  
Lustrous they were that reach only our sight.

And all a while covered by vast smoke  
Yet still finding their way to unfold  
They seek to gust the clouds that beseech them  
To scatter themselves like dust

There is self-contained quietness among the stars  
Farther than the peace we ever dreamed  
They seize to unfold all old long stories  
As they look over us like they live hundred more years

How they love to light the traces of our path  
They come when the moon hid its face on us  
All these little lights unfazed by the time  
Prove that they can't be extinct by wrath

Oh, what the night, it pushes me to write  
To hail the beauty of this awesome night  
The solemn dusk offers me its tranquility  
So I can love and be happy as what I used to be

# "Nature"

*Sweatcel Tagala*

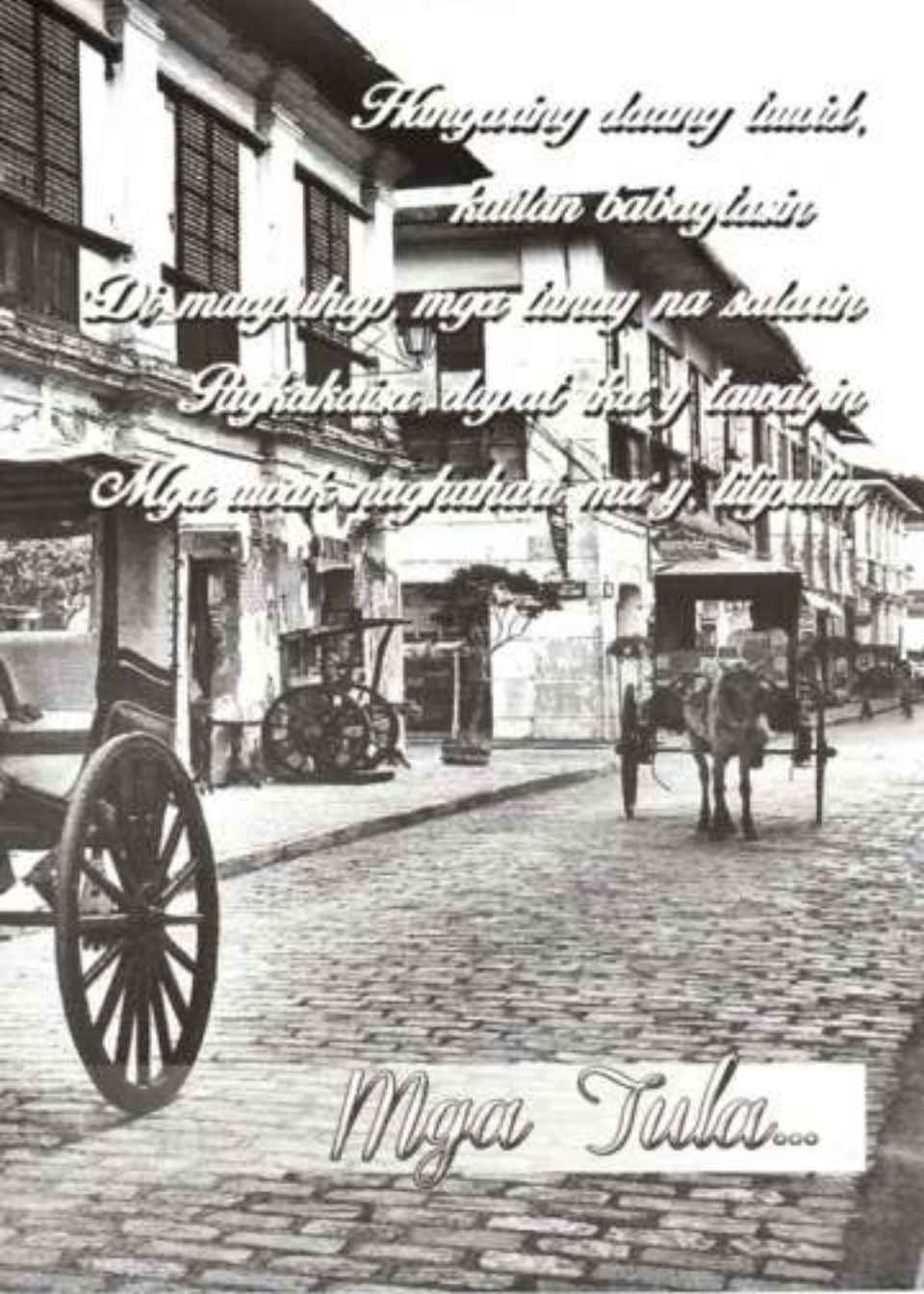
The polluted air that surrounds us,  
The withered leaves that fall.  
Seeing those makes me weep.  
Thinking how fast time flies

The Earth that's once perfect,  
Sadly how it is near to destruction.  
From sunny to to rainy days,  
How quickly the weather changes.

What to do in this changing world?  
If only I can make a stand.  
It's never too early or too late,  
To make the land as it used to be.

Praying that next generation would still see  
The beauty of Earth we are witnesses of.  
To see the land that is once magnificent.  
Only possible if we will make an act.





*Hangaring dawag lumbil,*

*kallan babaglaris*

*Di mag-ihiy mga lumbay na bularis*

*Pugkakalita, diyat' isat y' lumbayis*

*Mga unat' pugpakalita mat' y' lumbayis*

*Mga Tula...*

# Makakalaya ka pa

Mama Mia

Ika'y nanahimik  
Mata'y isinara  
Itiniklop ang tenga  
Para bang ika'y isang estatwa.  
Kaya sila'y nagpakasaya  
Ginawa, anumang gusto nila  
Kahit hindi pabor sa'yo  
Sabi mo, "maganda naman 'to."  
Dumating nga ang oras  
Na ika'y nasanay  
Kanilang kagustuhan, iyo nang sinusunod  
Natakot ang iba, dahil iba ka na.  
Kinabitan ka ng tali sa iyong katawan  
Lahat ng gusto nila'y iyong ginawa  
Kahit kapwa mo, nasasagasahan na  
Sabi mo, "ganito talaga, may nasasaktang iba."  
Ngunit nagulat ka  
Tumayo ang mga nasaktang iba  
Birbit nila'y katotohanan  
Na kaytagal mong itinago.  
Ipinamukha nila sayo  
Ang mga panahong sinayang mo  
Na sana'y ginamit mo  
Sa paglaban pabor sa katotohanan.  
Akala mo'y huli na  
Ngunit hindi pa  
Makakakilos ka pa  
Makakalaya ka pa...

# *Sa Iyong Pagbabalik*

*Anon*

Sa bawat araw na lumilipas,  
Ang tanging hangad ay muli kang masilayan  
Na minsa'y bumihag sa aking puso.

Sa bawat luhang pumapatak sa aking mata,  
Sa bawat ngiting aking pinapakita.  
Sa bawat sandali ay nais kang makita.

Ikaw ang patuloy na hinahangad ng aking puso.  
Ikaw ang siyang isinisigaw ng aking puso,  
Ikaw ang siyang nagbigay ng kahulugan sa aking buhay.

Ang tanging panalangin ko sa Maykapal,  
Ay muli kang masilayan,  
Muli kang makasama.

Aantayin kita,  
Dahil mahalaga ka sa akin.  
At minsan pa mahal kita higit sa kanino man.



# Panaginip

— M. Aiz

Sino ka o aking giliw  
na laging nagpapaaliw.  
Lagi kang nasa panaginip  
kapag ako'y naiidlip.

Ang paglubog ng araw  
lagi kong tinatanaw.  
Gabi'y inaabangan  
ikaw lamang ay masilayan.

Sa panaginip tayo ang bida  
ikaw ang prinsipe, ako'y prinsesa.  
Tayo'y magkasama  
sa palasyo nakatira.

O kay sarap mong maglambing  
para bang ayoko nang magising.  
Sana'y huwag nang matapos to  
at sana nama'y magkatotoo.

Ngunit sa pagdilal ng mga mata  
ika'y naglaho na parang bula.  
Ang lahat ng pantasya'y nawala  
hanggang panaginip ka lang pala.

# "Titik at Tinig"

*blue feathers*

Isang tinig mula sa ibong itinakwil ng kalayaan  
'Di maulinig, iginapos sa sulok na walang laban  
Dahong nanguluntoy, pawis at dugo'y isang basahan  
Ang awit mo'y hudyat ng isang katapusan.

Titik pangmulat, sa matang inalipin ng dilim  
Igawad ang hustisya, ng 'di lang sa mga sakim  
Itim na ipininta, kumakapit sa patalim  
Ihulog ang kasamaan sa balong malalim.

Hangaring daang tuwid, kailan babagtasin?  
'Di maapuhap, mga tunay na salarin  
Pagkakaisa, dapat ika'y tawagin  
Mga uwak naghahari ma'y, lilipulin.

Ipagtanggol ang karapatan, ika'y magpunyagi!  
Kumilos ka't itama ang mga mali  
Mga luha't pighati nitong bayang tinatangi  
Tayo, walang iba ang dapat magkandili.

Tayo'y magsama-sama, iisa ang ating kulay  
May ginto man o wala, tayo'y pantay-pantay  
Titik sa isip at puso'y iyong isabuhay  
Tinig mo'y may bahagi sa bawat buwang-liwayway.

# *Ang Natatanging Babae sa Buhay Ko*

*Darryl*

Sa bawat oras na lumilipas,  
Sa bawat araw na dumaraan,  
Sa bawat taon na dumadating.

Ipinakita mo sa akin ang kagandahan ng mundo,  
Ipinadama mo kung gaano ako kahalaga.  
At kung gaano mo ako ka-mahal.

Walang araw na dumaan na hindi mo ipinadama sa akin  
kung gaano mo ako kamahal.

Walang lumipas na oras na hindi mo ipinakita sa akin  
na hindi ako nag iisa

At walang pagkakataon na aking naramdaman  
na ako'y iyong pinabayaan.

Na kahit minsan matigas ang aking ulo,  
Minsan nasasagot kita,  
Minsan nagtatampo ako kahit sa simpleng bagay lang.

Salamat dahil kailan man hindi ka napagod  
na mahalín ako, alagaan ako  
Salamat dahil lagi kang nandyan.  
Salamat sa lahat.

Walang kayang itumbas na halaga ang iyong pagmamahal,  
Walang sinoman na kayang pantayan ang iyong pag-aaruga.  
At ikaw lang ang natatanging Ina para sa akin.

Sa simpleng tulang ito,  
Nais kung ipadama sayo aking Ina,  
Kung gaano ako nagpapasalamat  
sa Dios na ikaw ang aking Ina.

# *Bukas*

*Daryll*

Buhay ng tao ay parang singaw, pagdaka'y napapawi,  
Minsan malakas, mamaya't maya nakahimlay na,  
Ang buhay ay walang kasiguraduhan  
Walang katiyakan,

Sino makakapagsabi ng kanyang bukas?  
Alam mo ba ang mangyayari sayo bukas?  
Natitiyak mo ba ang buhay mo?  
Kung hanggang kalian ka?

Wala! Wala!  
Walang nakakaalam ng kanyang bukas,  
Walang nakakatiyak ng kanyang bukas,  
Sapagkat ang bukas ay puno ng katanungan, at hiwaga.

Bukas, Bukas,  
Puno ka ng kahiwagahan,  
Puno ka ng katanungan,  
Katanungang Dios lang ang nakakaalam ng sagot.



Puerto Princesa Underground River  
Google Image



*Life is predestined by God. We are  
His masterpiece- the best art created  
in history. He breathed in us that  
breath of life that makes us alive.*

*Prose...*

# He Knows Best

Butterfly

**P**ressures. Anxieties. Expectations. These won't make you sink unless you allow them. What we think of other people doesn't matter enough to upset them, this should be also true to us. Strife is inevitable, misery is optional. These constitute avalanche that came, which you need to surpass. You have to die a little in order to learn how to live. Therefore, on the verge of difficulties, you always choose to be where you are in the present (up or down) because as someone put it, the past is gone; all you can do is to learn from it - what works, what doesn't. So it's best that you identify your lapses, because at some points, these cause the doom.

No one else does. After all, a lesson is not learned until learned. While it's a relief to have good cry (and this might be quite paradoxical but) it is likewise a succor to be mirthful as emotions are powerful. I can't keep the bottled up forever, thus, I should try to exude a positive outlook. Whatever you want to achieve, you achieve it for yourself,

but I make sure I always look back to the two persons who will always be proud of us no matter how much the situation get worse. Having a support system can also help you in the process - people who'll let you see your strengths and weaknesses together; people who'll make you believe that there is something positive found in adverse situations; people who'll help you grow tougher than tough times.

God is reality; where hope comes forth and never ends; where the strength we could ever have covets its might; where every possibility finds its place; where failure means victory; where prayer sounds the sweetest. Indeed, someone was right when he penned this: *God is in control, if you let him be.* It all boils down to faith as you believe. Oddly, this is one of the worthy reasons to appreciate failures - they teach you to celebrate success in its truest sense. As it is mentally healthy, know to welcome the possibility of let-downs that is, being willing to fail and to go through the threshold of pain.

# Respect Begets Respect

Mara Klara

**I** think I got the wrong idea of the adage that says "Respect begets respect."

Before, I keep telling myself, "Why would I respect him or her if he or she doesn't even know how to respect me?"

As time passed by and because of the experiences I obtained, I learned that sometimes we rather need to start the cycle of respect.

If someone doesn't respect you, still, just show respect to him or her because eventually, even without you realizing it, he or she will also learn to respect you.

Yet it is easier said than done. Sometimes or most of the time it's really hard to do so because of pride.

I admit that I'm prideful but I thank God for constantly teaching me to maintain a lowly heart and be humble.

At the end of the day, "Respect at all times may not beget respect" but when you know that you did your part, you'll have a different feeling. You could move freely. Life is more care-free. And realize what a great fulfillment it is to show respect even to those who belittle and disrespect us.



# Becoming More Like Him

Klara Klara

**W**hen you look at the mirror what do you see, just yourself or the image of Jesus?

This is the question I ask myself every day. Each day I ask myself and ponder on the thought that, "Am I living closer to becoming more like Jesus each day or is it the other way around?"

Yes, I have flaws and failures but this won't stop me from trying. We must have this prayer "Lord, if I was not a good Christian yesterday, make me a better Christian tomorrow."

Let's thank God for He is not looking on what we have done and what we have failed to do or the times we fell and stumbled but He sees our willingness to take another try. He never gives little chances for us no matter how many times we have our setbacks.

Our part is just to keep on trying harder and harder each day to be more like Him and I believe someday God will say "Good job thy good and faithful servant..."

Let's keep on serving our Creator in the best way we can.

# Life With a Purpose

Jannahry Ann Campos

**L**ife is more than just words. It explodes into many different colors. It means so much. Life is a journey. It comes with twists and turns, it goes with ups and downs.

Life they say starts from birth and ends in death. More than just the start and the end, what is in between matters most- the existence after birth and before death. Is our existence purpose driven?

We are a blank page, the moment we come into existence, we jot down our own life story, and we create our story line. It is us who make choices for us and that we determine who we become. But are we really left with no choices? Are we left with the idea that yes, only you can make your story line?

Life is full of contradictions. Its

beauty comes from its many conflicts. Happiness shared with sorrow is something to be grasped and understood. When confronted by problems, is it the problem that manipulates us or it's our tendency to be at peace and find joy in facing those in order for us to end up solving the problem? Or when we're at the peak of our lives, enjoying it so much, are we courageous enough to let that happiness be still and be able to become flexible in facing other facets in life?

I believe that life is predestined by God. We are His masterpiece- the best art created in history. He breathed in us that breath of life that makes us alive. More than just what we know, life is to be lived out the best especially He gave us the best.

# Goodbye Kitty

Dreza Mae

I was on my way to school one day when the jeepney I was riding accidentally bumped a kitten along the road leading to Metro Gabu. I felt the impact, I saw the blood on the road and I saw the unfortunate kitten dying by that time.

From the moment our class started 'til it ended, my mind was pre-occupied by what happened that morning. The sun began displaying its variety of spectacular colors from yellow to orange to red to fuchsia to purple and finally to a deep blue, but the picture of that pitiful creature's been stuck on my mind which kept me pondering. Only when the tiny stars started winking at me did I manage to take my dinner and finish my home works before that day ended.

During the time I was thinking of the kitten, I wondered about life and death. I realized that everything in this oblate-spherical-shaped planet, including me, was mortal. I was reminded that my time is likened to the sand-castles in the tide, slowly washing out to the sea OR it might just be a clock's tick away.

I also reflected on why such a thought would occur to me on a sunny afternoon when everything seemed to be going very well and normal. Well, I thought that maybe

God was just trying to convey a message on me through the kitten. Was it because my buzzer time was near? EERNNG! (a buzzer sound for a wrong answer) - I rejected that thought. I don't know. Maybe - just maybe, it was just to prod me to start doing something constructive with my life. (Yeep! - That was it, girl!)

Upon realizing it, a picture of a happy family was drawn in my mind... Together under one roof - no petty fights, no worries about financial matters, just a home full of laughter and joy. That was what I really want to have in the future. And then I realized, indeed, I need to focus, give more, more and more focus, on my studies and work hard on it at this point of my life in order for me to have what I aim for.

"I guess, it's not bad to be reminded of our mortality once in a while", I thought to myself. "In that way, we may make efforts to make our dreams come true. Without these reminders, we may dilly-dally our lives away and it might be too late before we realize that we have wasted a whole lifetime."

Let us pause to look and think of the things happening around us even just once in a while. Who knows? It might be trying to tell us something which we are often too busy to listen to.



Photo by: Kathrine Jessica Colaneri

# Growing Up

Riptide

**B**eing born was the most wonderful gift I ever received from God. I am blessed with wonderful parents, thoughtful friends, and awesome adventures.

But being me actually is quite difficult – being me as the only child. It's not that difficult actually, but in some ways, it is. Now, many of us think that being the only child, you get all what you want in this world – from cars, gadgets, foods-for-the-rich-only, and name it, lots of money. Well, not everything that some people think. The only child like me lives a normal life like what the ordinaries, and the contented-of-what-they-have-and-never-ask-for-more-than-to-be-happy kind of life.

You may be asking why sometimes, my life is difficult. Okay, let me tell you why.

From birth to you know...to what we are now, we were raised by our parents. Teaching us how to count, to read, and to explore many things – not to mention those ugly days of being slapped because we made mistakes. Hey, that is not child abuse anyways. We were being slapped when we were young for our mistakes because they love us – like they do not want us to do that mistake again and to remind us that we will never do it again. Trust me, it was effective, but yes I admit, I was a little bit scared and traumatized back then and until now. That's why I simply become more careful in things today.

Without them, we could have not known what's good and what's bad. Without them, we may be wandering – never knowing if we're

doing the right thing or the wrong thing, and yes we're so thankful they taught us about it.

Recently, I turned 20. In twenty years of living especially when I entered the teenage life, I was...yes, treated still like a child.

I mean, they keep reminding me of things like:

"Don't forget to take your medicines."

"If you are hungry, go buy foods and eat it."

"Wear your jacket if it is cold out there."

"Come home early."

...and the worst?

"Don't forget to take your milk. Okay?"

...and others that I do not need to mention because it kills me.

Things like these, when it comes to me, makes me think like "Am I not responsible enough that's why they keep telling me these things for the past years?" Like I don't know what to do that they keep reminding me of things that I should do.

Also, sometimes, when one of my friends called me to hangout - you know, the normal teenagers do, like going to the mall, or anywhere that we can just chill and relax - I mean these places where one can release the stressful days, weeks, or months and just try to refresh oneself without the vices or wrongdoings. My parents knew me for not having any vices, and you know what that mean? It means that I don't smoke or take non-sense tequilas or any form of alcoholic drinks and I never will. But when I ask for their permission to go out with my friends even if the place we'll be going is near, they sometimes tell me "No," or sometimes if they say "Yes," but there are

still a lot of questions like:

"Where are you going?"

"What time will you be home?"

"Who's with you?"

"What will you do out there?"

To be honest, sometimes, it makes me frown with disappointment like I still am a kid, running from nowhere, doesn't know what to do. I mean, to the extent and to the fact that I am growing old and not growing young? They should also consider that I am not a child anymore to treat me like I am, and that they should trust me like I respect them. I mean, what if I got a job someday and we were destined somewhere far and that I need their permission and they might say no? Seriously, when will I have my freedom to make my own decisions? When is the time that they will treat me like a grown man and not a kid anymore? These questions affect my personality, of who I am today and what will I be in the future.

I understand that I am the only child, but how can I extend my comfort zone - not literally by leaving it but just expanding it, how could I learn, and how could I enjoy life if they keep holding me back? I have read an article on the internet and I quote, "The tighter the leash, the farther it will go." - The saying hit me, right into what I am now. But the difference is, I am not that kind of man who will be rebellious about these things that's happening in my life.

So, being mature enough to handle situations, what can I do? Well, I said to myself:

"There will come a time one day they will understand I am a grown up man, and I know my responsibilities. I just need to be patient, and still honor them as my parents."

# Friends

Jannahry Ann Campos

**F**riends are extremely important and friendship is a major part of our lives. If there's one thing we can all agree on, it's that friends are awesome.


Having friends is similar to having a family. During the good times and the bad times, through thick and thin, your best friends are there for you. They are the people that you can count on in your greatest time of need. They can help you in times of trouble, and be there to enjoy and share the great parts of your life too. They are very great, they are the people who will always be on your side and they are always there to protect and defend you. They are the people we can rely on to give us the much needed support and comfort that we all seek in life. That's what you call a real friend.

On the other hand, there are people who are "so called friends."

According to the Urban Dictionary, they are the friends who only act as your friend when they need something from you, who use you, talk to you even though they don't like you and they only talk to you to damage your social life, they can be very jealous, insecure and they talk behind your back without regrets.

Well, they are the people who will just be with you for their own benefits, they are parasites. They are the people who will share a good relationship with you when you are useful to them and abandoned you when you are in trouble, they are insincere and are more likely to betray us. They never put any effort in the friendship but they will expect people to call, invite or visit them without giving the same effort.

They will say in public that, "This



is my friend," but their actions reveal something else. They backstab. They lie to us. They break our trust. Sometimes they are judgmental. They are the same people laughing and smiling in your face saying, "That's my friend!" They are hypocrites.

They are more interested in other's businesses than their own business. They talk to us, make themselves trustworthy and then talk about us behind our back. They fake promises, they are more like to say, "I promise not to tell a soul, which you can tell me anything!" But, as soon as that friend gets out of that person's presence, he or she has told other people about their business. They are so fake.

They don't keep their words and act like they do not care. But when others do the same thing, they get mad about it. Sometimes they are

friends with someone that they think they really like and then you find out that they are stealing from you or talking about you. One thing that really exasperating about friends is when you think they are to cool for you.

It's good to have friends that care about you and always have your back. It is always good to be honest with your friends. If you aren't honest with your friends how can they trust you and how can they ever be honest with you? If you talk behind a friends' back about them and you lie about it they will find out if you really were.

There are friends that are not that good in keeping relationships and only have friendships that are only short-lived and somewhat superficial but time cannot always tell whether that friend is real or not.



# I Fell in Love With a Priest

Chris

**S**he fell in love with the parish priest and kept her feelings hidden for a long time, (close to 2 years). She prayed to God to please take those feelings from her as she knew but the heart would always win out over the head time and time again. She told herself that her feelings could not be sinful, yet she still suffered great pain. Her heart ached and longed for his presence.

He was to her the perfect man, possessing all the qualities she had ever wanted. Problem was he is a man in cloth. His kindness, friendliness, charm and wit overwhelmed her very soul. She knew she was in trouble.


They shared a common work ethics and sense of humor. They worked in several ministries together and he counselled her a few times,

but nothing inappropriate ever happened.

At times she caught him gazing at her, and she could not get over the feeling that perhaps he had also felt attracted. She felt he truly appreciated her kindness and her love of the Catholic faith.

After one of their last meetings, she told him how much she admired him and how much she appreciated his kindness, help and compassion and also how sad she and several others would be should he be transferred.

She gave him a small token that said "You are Loved" a very simple and general (not personal), acknowledgement of how all of them at the parish felt for him as a priest and shepherd of the church. But of course, she is sure he sensed she had very personal feelings. He acted very awkward almost like a school kid,



She gave him a really big hug and held on for a long time—he did not push her away though.

Two weeks later he made the announcement during mass that he was being transferred to a far place. Coincidence? She remembers her knees buckling under her and she felt like she was going to faint. She was absolutely devastated, went home and wrote him a very long letter revealing her feelings, which she personally handed to him the next day. This later proved to be a big mistake for her emotional and spiritual well-being.

At the time though she wanted the burden off her heart, but instead she just put it on him. She knew she should have run away from such intense feelings. He never once led her on or did anything inappropriate, but after having been extremely friendly to her prior to this, he suddenly

backed off, which did indeed hurt her very much. That marvelous smile of his never came her way again.

He never acknowledged that letter, any future emails, birthday or holiday wishes. He simply dropped all communication. For almost two months she looked in the mail for a thank you note, as she gifted him with money and homemade prayer cards when he left. She was devastated. When other family and work problems came into her life later on, she asked for his prayers but he never answered her. This killed her.

She will never ever know if he ever felt any tender feelings for her...and yes she did want just a tiny piece of his heart. She suppose she will always hold feelings for him. It is the most painful thing she had ever gone through and she felt like she died.

# Forgiveness

Mara Klara

**I**t's funny how you would learn many things from a single incident.

One sunny day, I was on my way to school. When I saw a tricycle approaching, I signaled the tricycle driver and he stopped driving then I immediately rode.

Few minutes later, we arrived at Dingras-Laoag terminal. I quickly moved out of the tricycle and gave a P100-paper bill since I didn't really have coins that time.

The driver said he had no barya. "Okay. Here we go again," I thought. I know the saying that "Barya lang po sa umaga" but it was already past ten in the morning. The driver should at least have a change for my bill.

I waited for him to do something such as inquire the other tricycle drivers, or ask the stores nearby to kindly change my bill but he did nothing, which annoyed me.

The tricycle driver then checked his pockets. He said that he has a change for my bill. "Okay. You should

have checked first," I thought. What happened made me more irritated.

He counted his money and handed me my change. I said thank you.

As I started counting my change, the tricycle driver swiftly drove away. It was too late when I realized that my change lacked P15.

I was dreadfully disappointed that time not because I am greedy for money but merely because of the dishonesty of the tricycle driver. I just hate dishonest people. That very moment, anger, displeasure and other emotions filled me.

I looked back on the highway and saw how the tricycle went smaller and smaller as it went farther from my sight. I was able to memorize its plate number. I told myself that never again would I ride on that tricycle.

When my high emotions slowly become still, I thought again and gave the tricycle driver the benefit of the doubt - that what if he didn't intend to do that.

I gave up thinking that time and got my cell phone from my bag and

wrote in my notes that only God knows His heart. "Bahala na ang Diyos sa Kanya," I told to comfort myself.

Then, the jeepney going to Laoag City arrived.

When I was sitting inside the jeepney, my feelings began to arouse again. Still, I couldn't get over from what had happened. I became very sentimental that time.

Many times I was fooled, cheated on and hurt. I hate myself for being so dumb and vulnerable. If only I were smart enough, people would never have the chance to do that to me. But I know that is not what God wants me to learn from that incident, forgiveness is.

If you are reading this, perhaps you are not an exception from those who have been hurt by other people. Even the simplest things could hurt you simply because we are humans. Humans are prone to pain, disappointments and discouragements alike.

You may get hurt physically and emotionally, as well. They say, physi-

cal pain may heal over time but emotional pain heals a little longer and sometimes not at all – it all depends how a person handle the pain.

I realized how comical I reacted from that incident. I thought over and over again that "No one is perfect." I grasped that I, even I sometimes hurt those people around me whether it be intentionally or unintentionally when I tell a "white lie", when I was unfaithful to my words and promises, when I talked back to my parents and siblings, when I disappointed my friends, when I fail to do my part as a student, friend, daughter, niece, granddaughter among others.

I prayed in my mind a part of the Lord's Prayer that says, "Forgive me from my sins as I forgive those who sin against me."

Then after about 45 minutes, the jeepney arrived in its terminal in Laoag. Before I went down from the jeepney, I decided to forget and just forgive not just tricycle driver but all those people who offended and hurt me.

# Kindness With No Limits

Kathrine Jessica Calano

**K**INDNESS KNOWS NO AGE

One hot afternoon, I went to church. The 1pm sun hurt badly that I literally ran as fast as I could to get inside the church. However, a little girl aged five or six kept blocking my way as she persuaded me to buy sampaguita. I declined politely. She followed me inside and kept offering the flower. Again I declined. But even during the time I was delivering my prayers, she never left my side. She was quiet but she was gesturing, lifting the flowers near my sight. After I prayed, she again insisted and tried to convince me. I got annoyed. It is very unlikely for me to get annoyed on children because I love kids but this one really got into my nerves. And so I bought one. I bought one to stop her from annoying me.

I felt bad for feeling annoyed with a poor little girl working under the scorching sun to raise money but I could not help it, I could not control what I felt.

The sampaguita is worth 10php. I gave her two five-peso coins. She smiled at me. A smile I would never forget. It was a big smile, her eyes became temples of happiness. I told myself, how could a 10-peso bill make this little girl smile the most beautiful curve as if I bought the flower with a million dollars?

When I was about to turn my back on her after I bought the flower, I saw her do something unexpected, something that made me stand there for a long while without moving. I saw her going towards the donation box stand, opened her left

hand where she held my payment, her right hand grabbed another four-peso coins in her pocket, put the coins altogether, counted these and put these into the box. She turned to me and again smiled innocently. I smiled back, still unable to move.

My heart was touched. Of all people I encounter everyday, a little girl taught me the value of giving. And it was not just giving, it is giving unconditionally. Without thinking of how much heat and exhaustion she went through all day just to earn, she gave her money to the Church, and she's just five or six years old.

That incident, I admit, is a huge slap on my face. It's not that I'm selfish or a brat. It's just that sometimes, I give with conditions and I don't give because of reasons. The "I-earned-this-so-it's-only-right-to-pamper-myself" mindset sometimes overcome me that I forget how to share my blessings. And that is very wrong, that is extremely wrong. I thought it was just normal to be that way, I thought it is a human nature to give conditionally sometimes. And I would use these thoughts as an excuse to be like the others. But I was wrong. Your 'acts of giving' do not depend on others' 'acts of giving'. Not because others do not give, you also will not give anymore. You give because you want to give and you give wholeheartedly, without expecting something in return. That's the way it should be.

The Kathrine who gives with conditions is not the person I want to be. So I'm

thankful to that little girl who set a fire into my cold heart. I owe you something big. You're one of a kind.

#### **KINDNESS KNOWS NO GENDER.**

I went home late. I was fortunate enough to catch the last jeep. The jeep was almost full and could only accommodate one more passenger. But an adult lady with her two kids came along. She looked inside the jeep, realized it can no longer accommodate them, looked back on the money she got in her palm and she displayed the "it-would-cost-me-a-lot-to-ride-on-a-tricycle" face. She looked frightful they may not be able to go home. I waited for a man to show his faith to the code of chivalry because it would be a big slap on the men's faces if a young lady would first do the honor to offer her seat. But none of them is a knight. None of them offered his seat.

Of all the seven strong-looking men in that jeep, none gave a nudge. Only one gave up her seat to the mother of two. And yes, she's a she. She's a lesbian. She stands small, she's skinny, she carried a bag yet she offered her seat and sat at the doorstep of the jeep.

That's a heroic act for me.

I've always been a fan of gays and lesbians. People tease them, call them awful names, people misjudge them like they are just a piece of shit in the society. But in reality, they are even more human than straight men and women. They are the colors of the world. We don't usually understand their lingo but they also speak one language that even a deaf and mute can understand and that is KINDNESS.

I bow down to you ate in blue. I wish I was able to get your name. You made me believe stronger in the idea that our world is not yet doomed. Thank!

#### **KINDNESS KNOWS NO DISABILITIES**

I always pass by a blind man. He's a beggar. I always see him standing in front of the church and occasionally in front of a shopping mall. He usually wears a cap, a worn out dirty shirt, a tattered maong short, Spartan slippers with a hole on the

left and two bags crossed in his body and he holds a plastic container in his hand where people can drop some coins.

I twice saw him cross the street amidst cars approaching. The sight was literally frightful. He slowly walked towards the road, lifted his stick on the air and waved it as he crossed to signify that he was there crossing the busy street. The second time, I accompanied him cross the street.

It was November 1, 2014 when I saw a different side of him. He looked neat. He wore a clean blue and white striped T-shirt tucked in a black short held tightly with a belt. His feet looked presentable in his clean but still worn out slipper. He did not wear a cap, instead his hair was nicely cut and combed in the middle. What's more surprising is that he was not holding his plastic container rather he was holding a bouquet of white roses wrapped in a pink sheet flower wrapper. He also had a little candle. It was no ordinary bouquet. It was huge and expensive-looking. He was walking in front of that shopping mall again, but he was not begging. He seemed in a hurry.

I stared at him for a moment and I told myself, "Why am I here?"

It was a day designated to visit our angels and I was there roaming around the metropolis while a man, a blind man who was even unsure of the whereabouts of his way- was on his way to visit a deceased loved one. A man, a beggar, who spends his days asking for money to support his life, was on his way to give an expensive bouquet of flowers to a deceased family member or a friend.

He's a good man. He's an inspiration to me. Every time I go to church I would give him a share of my blessings not because I pity him, but because he deserves help. Also, I always pray for him and his kind. He's a blind man who sees more than the eyes can perceive, that's LOVE.

Life is full of mysteries. Mysteries as to why some people who are more blessed with complete physical senses are less sensitive to human feelings. There must be an explanation. I wish to understand,



Photo by: Kathrine Jessica Calano

# Never Give Up

Butterfly

**I**t felt like I fell seven times when I heard that I won't be able to advance to my fourth year as a BSA student at my former school. Nothing is more painful than to see your parents' disbelief through their eyes. Even I haven't heard anything from them, their disappointment was written all over their faces.

Just like the other accountancy students I stayed late at nights just to review for those unending nerve-racking quizzes, to read in advance the topics assigned, and drinking a sea of coffee only to stay wide awake until you finish the pile of paperwork's as late as 3am—but that wasn't enough.

Another story is when I realized how challenging it is to transfer to another school only to pursue my dreams. All backed to zero. It was like starting with scraps again, restoring

myself from the debris of downfalls. It's more than just going through your last two semesters of surviving the stringent retention, dreadful remedial examination, near fail quizzes and getting literally low scores, name it. It's life after life. Whatever the consequences are, these are rewards of the past so we might as well focus on what it is now, a constant reminder from God that everything happens for a reason. It's a blessing or a lesson. I consider both. Working for the better, whenever I think that I've done my best, I think eight times, more than the times I fell. Indeed I do not have to be overly serious. I just have to concentrate and be guided with the efforts I make. Sometimes, it's just not good enough but essential to: be motivated, disciplined and spiritually armored.



# Single

Mara Klara

**M**asaya 'pag single. Hawak mo oras mo, walang hassle. You can be with whoever you want, whenever, wherever. Walang pumipigil, walang kumokontrol at walang kumontra. Malaya kang makipag-saya sa kahit na sinong taong nais mo at pumunta sa iba't ibang lugar kasama ang mga kaibigan at kabarkada... MASAYA.

Pero 'pag mag-isa ka na lang, nakakalangkor din pala. Yung tipong sasakay ka sa jeep o bus na walang kasama, tapos yung katabi mo naglalambingan pa. Kaya ikaw, biglang soundtrack na lang ang DRAMA.

Kapag kakain ng lunch sa mga fast food chains o restaurants, mag-isa ka na nga 'yung mga nasa paligid

mo nagsusubsuan pa. Hindi ba, nakakawala ng gana?

Kapag naglalakad ka, para kang timang mag-isa. Buti na lang may ever faithful kang kasama... CELLPHONE.

Kapag single ka na, mamimiss mo rin pala 'yung "kayong dalawa". Kahit na naging sobra 'yung sakit na nasdulot niya, iba pa rin yung sayang nararamdaman mo 'pag nandiyan siya... 'yung sayang hindi kayang mapunan kahit pilitin mo pang hanapin sa IBA.

Kahit anong sabi mo sa sarili mo na ayaw mo na, kailangan mo pa rin talaga ng kasama. Kasi at the end of the day, realization sets in na sa libu-libong tao na nakapaligid sayo, mag-isa ka pa rin.

# Ang Love at Ang Jeep

Inamorata

**A**ng buhay ay parang pag-sakay ng jeep. Punong puso ng kadamahan. Parang teleserye lang.

Sa pagpapara pa lang ng masasakyan dami ng drama. Yung tipong may nakapila na nga na jeep sa harapan mo, ang lapit na sa iyo, niyayaya ka na ni manong driver na sumakay para di ka na mainitan at pagpawisan pero mas pinili mo pang lumayo at pumara ng ibang jeep na di ka sigurado kung isasakay ka. Yung jeep na di ka sigurado kung ikaw lang ba ang sakay or siksikan na.

Parang love. Yung taong gusto kang protektahan at mahalín ng buong buo nandyan na sa harapan mo pero ini-snub mo lang. At anong ginawa mo? Pinili mo yung taong dika sigurado kung mahal ka ba talaga? Pinili mo yung taong di ka sigurado kung ikaw lang ang ta-

man ng puso? Minsan talaga tayong mga tao may pagka-shunga. Sabi natin love is blind. Yung tipong kahit anong itsura, kahit anong estado ng buhay, kahit anong size ng balakang, kahing anong shade ng kutis mamahalin mo kasi binulag ka na ng pagmamahal mo sa kanya. Pero yung love is blind minsan iba na yung meaning eh. Sa sobrang pagkabulag ng puso mo di mo na nakita yung taong totoong nagmamahal sayo. Haaaay!

Edi sumakay ka na nga at iniwan yung nakapilang jeep. Ang arte mo lang. Yun, nakipagsiksikan ka pa. Amoy pawis, anghit at kung ano ano na. Tapos uupo ka sana kaso ayaw umusod paharap nung ale. So siniksik mo yung pwet mo sa lakaunting space. Konting kumbot na lang nung ale mahuhulog ka na kaya kumapit ka ng todo sa bar handle. Eh kung

magreklamo ka? Eh kung sabihin mo, "ate magbabayad naman ako ng tamang pamasaha kaya paosad ng konti please. Tsaka pare pareho naman ayong bababa di ba?" Pero ayaw mo? Nagitarte ka ulit, nahiya, natakot na baka mareject eh rejected ka na nga in the first place ayaw mo lang tanggapin. Nagis ka sa konting space na binigay sayo.

Yan tayo eh. Alam mo ng wala kang lugar sa puso niya siksik mo pa yung sarili mo. Ang matindi pa nyan, kumapit ka pa. Ang mas matindi pa diyan, harap harapan na nyang pinapakita sayo na ayaw ka niya, dinedma mo lang, di ka nagsalita, di ka umimik. At ang pinakamatindi sa lahat, nagtiti ka at paruloy kang nagtitiis. Paano kung byaheng Luzon hanggang Mindanao yan? Abay malayo layo rin yan. Sabi mo kakayarin mo kasi mahal mo? Ang tanong, mahal ka ba?

Ayon, medyo nakahinga ka na ng konti kasi bumaba na yung ale. Naalala mo di ka pa pala namasahe. Tinsignan mo yung wallet mo. Naku! Wala kang barya. P100 lang meron ka, yung na nga lang pera mo eh. No choice.

"Ading, wala kang barya?"

Yung feeling na binigay mo na lahat ng meron ka pero hihingan ka pa rin? So sa loob mo nagdrama ka ulit. "Saan ako nagkulang? Binigay ko naman lahat? Minahal naman kita higit pa sa pagmamahal ko sa sarili ko. Pero kulang pa rin? Ano pa bang gusto mo? Ang sakit na!" Ang dami mong tanong pero di mo man lang tinanong yung sarili mo, "Nagkulang nga ba talaga ako?" Arte mo! Hindi palaging ikaw ang nakukulang. Hindi porket hinihingan ka ay nagkukulang ka na. May mga tao lang na talagang hindi nakuntento.

to. Minsan, siya ang nagkukulang. Hindi siya gumawa ng effort para masukilhan yung pagmamahal na binibigay mo.

Di mo na matake ang kadrumahan sa jeep. Buri malapit ka ng bumaba.

"Manong para po."

"Manong dito na po ako!"

"Bababa na po ako dito!"

"MANOOOOOOOONG! PAR-AAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!!!"

Pinagsisigawan mo na nga waley pa rin. Halos buong mundo alam nang mahal mo siya, pero siya walang kaalam alam. Manhid? Bingi? O talagang ayaw ka lang pansinin? Hay nako! Kapag ganyan ang drama niya, move on na. Mamamaos ka lang.

Kapag nagmamahal ka talaga ang daming mong kadrumahan sa buhay. Bumaba ka na nga sa jeep kukunin mo pa yung plate number, idariary mo kuno.

"Dear Diary, di ako pinansin ni crush. It hurts. Pero okay lang. Nakatabi ko naman siya sa jeep with the plate number LLV 143."

Minsan talaga yung pagmamahal nakakabaliw lang. Kung ano ano ang naisip ng tao ng dahil sa sila ay nagmamahal. Pero hinding hindi natin maitatangi na ang pagmamahal ay ang pinakamagandang pakiramdam na pwede nating maranasan . . . . .

"Hoy KC! Anong tinutulong tulog mo dyan? Nagdakilase tayo tapos matutulog ka lang? Pangiti-ngiti ka pa dyan! Gising! Sagutin mo yung tanong sa board!"

"Yes Ma'am."

"What is Love?"

"Love is when you find dream and reality in one person"

Oh di ba? Edi palakpakan yung mga classmates kong halipawot!

# A Lost Soul's Repertoire

Beatrix Domingo

**B**lankness, darkness, emptiness inside. He kept walking, oblivious of his own surroundings; even unconscious of his own existence, only aware of that warm air coming out of his nostrils. Then he suddenly remembered, it was life, he is still alive.

Where is he, where did he come from? What was his name again? He could hardly remember. He kept digging his mind to find even just a partial bit of information about himself. Suddenly, he heard murmuring voices that gradually became screams, grew louder and louder, intolerable and deafening. He blinked then his sur-

roundings were spilled and painted with blood. He glanced at his hand: he was already holding a butcher's knife and in front of him laid a woman's body, her chest and eyes still wide open. He was in deep hysteria, yet people around him were moving normally. He closed his eyes and covered his ears with his hands. Terribly shaking, stumbling his body to the open ground. He rammed his head against the ground until the murmuring voices were gone. He stopped, waited, stared at the open sky. Only thought of hopelessness, only though of one question addressed to his wrathful God, "Why are you punishing me?"

In a few moments he rose up, his mind went blank again. He walked calmly, his mind in solitude, he can't remember anything. This filthy man reached out his hands to various people he met on the street side but nobody cared, no one even wants to come close to him. He kept walking until he came to pass by a night club and saw one of the hostesses, almost wearing nothing. She was trying to find a customer, with a cigar and a bottle of liquor in her hands. He studied her carefully, trying to find what makes her so familiar. It was those gentle eyes of her though covered with heavy cosmetics. Where did he saw those? He can't remember but he was very sure that those eyes met his a thousand times before.

He kept digging his mind again. He closed his eyes anticipating the murmurs to come but there was nothing. He opened them, shocked that he was no longer in the street. He was inside an apartment. He saw familiar faces in the apartment, he was standing there yet it seems that he was watching a scenario that he can't take part into, he is invisible to them. There was a woman and her sleeping child, then a man. He knew them, but before he remembered who they were, there came another man in clerk's uniform. The woman was shocked that the clerk came home, she was not expecting him. He was her husband. That man in clerk's uniform found his wife and her lover having romance that night. The wife's lover was the clerk's brother. The clerk got furious, went down the kitchen and when turned to his wife, he was already carrying a butcher's knife, ready to hit his target. The wife pleaded but it was too late; the knife was

already buried in her lover's head. The clerk pulled the knife from his brother's head and rapidly swayed it towards the body of his wife, hitting her neck the widened the cut down to her chest. In this scene, the filthy man was still watching, like it was a movie he watched before. Then awakened, the child came in the scene, eyes wide open as she saw the tableau. Those eyes, wide open were the same eyes as the hostess in the night club; surely they are one and the same.

The filthy man looked around the room and found everyone gone. He saw a mirror and saw a reflection. Inside the mirror, the clerk was there holding the knife. The image in the mirror: the same body, same face as his. Then reality sank inside him-HE IS THE MURDERER, the only reason for his insanity.

Realizing this, he held his hand on his chest, breathing rapidly. He went out of the apartment running down along the streets. When he blinked, he was surrounded by people with no faces. He closed his eyes for a very long time and opened them when the noises resided.

Upon opening his eyes, he was again in the street along the night club, the hostess already gone. A moment passed he looked up the dark night sky. Then his mind went blank again. When he tried to recall what his thoughts seconds ago were, he remembered nothing. Again he continued walking in the street sides, reaching out his hand to people he will come across with, not anticipating what might come, not even death. He will wait until his God would look down to see him, to salvage him from his life of seemingly endless despair.

# Sleep Paralysis

Janlee J. Sardeng

**M**y terrifying story began at my young age. It started when we changed residence from downtown to a rural setting at Siam-Siam, Claveria, Cagayan for the sake of settlement since our family back then were on the rocks because of business issues.

Our new place was actually spacious, our house was located at the foot a mountain and the flat ground was for the buses to park. It was another start for our family but we never thought it was also a start of hideous agendum.

We have been living there for almost a year but we already started having eerie experiences. Mine though, would be perhaps, the scariest.

It was a usual night, not the kind of what you see in movies; no chilly breeze on the air, no wolf howls, no creepy noises. I took a bath, tuck myself in and went to sleep at about 8pm like a normal preschooler would.

But the rest the night for me wasn't as ordinary as I thought. I woke up sensing a presence in the room. I was lying on my back so I wanted to look around to see who was in my room. But what happened next made me regret it for the rest of my life. I tried to move my head but I couldn't. I tried to shift my arms and legs, but they were like pinned. All that I was able to move was my eyes but when you're in this kind of situation, it would be the last thing you wished I could move. So I tried everything that I could not to look at the corner that I feel a presence.

I tried screaming but even my mouth was paralyzed. I could see the objects of the furniture in my room, all regular and known and ordinary but trying to move and finding myself unable to had left me feeling exhausted and also intensely vulnerable. It took a long time to get to sleep again that night.

I spoke to my mom about it the next morning and she was more surprised than I thought she would be. She said we will see Manang Lilet that afternoon, after school, to ask her about it.

Manang Lilet was actually our family's witch doctor but my Dad preferred to hear it as "Faith Healer". Many people from different towns would actually come to her house and seek for help. After telling her my story, she told me that I got "it" from my mom which explained her reaction earlier that day. My mom is also experiencing it but only from a particular person, her deceased mother.

My situation on the other hand is much worse. She referred to it as "Batibat". This is a result of you would wake up, sensing a presence but unable to move. It is always menacing. Usually, the dread comes first, and then, slowly, I am hit with the realization that I cannot move. She told that to counter it, I have to relax and wiggle my toes repeatedly until I am able to move my limbs. Another, though quite peculiar is to put a knife under my pillow but mom wouldn't allow it and only saw it as a final resort if the "visiting" doesn't stop.

Although I can't remember how many times that I have experienced it by now, I would never forget the scariest one.

It was again when we moved from another house. I remember waking up at our living room because my room wasn't still ready. I was awakened by hearing footsteps from the back of the couch. I thought it was my mother who always get up early to clean and do her usual stuff so I tried to sit up. I tried to bring down my legs first but they were frozen

Before I knew it, I was having another paralysis again.

But this time it was far more frightening that I've ever had. I closed my eyes and tried to relax and realize that everything is just normal. Then I opened my eyes, hoping I can sleep my way out of it but it made it worse.

Upon opening my eyes I saw a silhouette of an entity looking down straightly at me. I tried to scream but it only made it worse. This time I saw his entire face and there was only half an inch of air stretching between us. He was staring at me like he was about to rip me apart.

I've never seen anyone from my whole life looking at me with so viciously. His eyes were not even blinking. His mouth was smiling like criminal. I wanted to scream so loud but I couldn't. After some several seconds of complete terror, I closed my eyes and I started to pray Our Father. But I never opened my eyes until I was completely sure of seeing nothing but sunlight.

Now I am living my life with it and as I came of age, I realize that it is actually sleep paralysis. I remember one time while me and my classmate is waiting for our next class, I fell asleep on our school's newsroom. Awakening from another paralysis, I told my professor about it and she got curious. We didn't have our regular class that day and researched about sleep paralysis instead.

Reduced simply, sleep paralysis occurs when, in transition between sleeping and wakefulness, the mind is alert but the body still sleeping. For most people, this happens during their waking process; while REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep allows for sight and hearing, movement is suppressed.

Typically, this muscle atonia is accompanied by the idea of a direct threat: the hallucination of an intruder in the room, or something or someone pressing down physically on your chest.

Folklore the world-over has provided explanations and narratives for these experiences and have given us a dense library of different, terrifying nighttime visitors: incubus, succubus, the Old Hag. In Chinese culture it is called, in pinyin, *gui yi shin* ("ghost pressing on body"), in Turkish *karabasan* ("the dark assailant"), and in Vietnamese *ma đè* means "held down by the ghost." The Hungarian term *boszorkanyonyomas* means "witches pressure", while German has *alldrucken*, or "elf pressing." This is an old story. The experience, though terrifying, is nothing new.

It is a strange thing, though, to see the things that scare us and look at them directly—all the murky, unshaped fears that lurk in some primal bog at the base of our skulls suddenly grow legs and arms and teeth and stare at us from the bedside or rest their chins on ours. And if I look at the forms my nighttime visitors have taken over the years, I suppose it is interesting to review their patterns—a misshapen parade of vague, malevolent intent—and to compare them to those in old folklore. For one thing, my visitors are mostly men: devilish sometimes, or shadowy and unformed, or just a regular sort of a man who might be holding something heavy. Ghoulish women, or witches or hags, never visit me in my sleep.

I wonder about that sometimes, but only in the daytime. I try not to think about these things when it gets dark.



# A Life For A Life

Janlee Sardeng

**T**hey all thought at first that it was just one of those normal conversations that they always had as friends. That in the middle of everything, as always, they will just relentlessly laugh about how silly or pathetic their jokes sound. Every time they get together, they never get tired of talking about their future plans, about how all of them are all eager to leave this province and go in big cities and get rich and make their dreams come true.

But this wasn't one of those kinds of conversations.

Lena and her friends are fresh graduates. They all have known each other since high school and went to the same university. And such duration of friendship have given them a bond much stronger. For them, they are brothers and sisters.

During that night that they sat together and ate grilled barbecues at their favourite grill house near San Miguel Beer Corporation. They knew that something was wrong with Lena. That something was bothering her as she insisted on telling them that there was something wrong and she needed to talk to them about it. But she was completely unsure of herself, always

stopping whenever she was about to say it. She was holding back but most of all, she was afraid. So her friends bugged her and persisted until they came to know what was wrong.

Her friends knew that the night would not be over until they got hold of what was wrong. Lena was not her usual happy-go-lucky, carefree way. During that night, she seemed really lost, that she was really going through a tough time.

They asked her questions that made her all fidgety while on her seat. She became really afraid, on the verge of crying when all of her friends' focus was on her. But even with her situation, her friends did not stop questioning her. They asked if she was having a problem with her family, if she had a cancer, or if she killed someone. They asked her all worse possible situations on what on earth could be bothering her. Apparently her friends failed to mention that scenario that could point to what was really wrong.

Until it all boiled down to that one single moment when she could not hold it anymore, that she was already crying and could not talk clearly. Her friends were stunned; they did

not know what to say. So for a while, they stopped asking her questions. They let Lena collect her thoughts, let her cry so much as if everything will be alright after it. And then just when her friends thought it was all over, that everything was already fine as she had already cried it all out, where it all just actually started.

Lena, wiping her tears, started typing texts on her phone. And upon finishing, she dropped it on the center of the table and there on the screen was written, "I'M PREGNANT"

Just by reading what was written on the phone's screen, her friends could not believe it. They asked her how did it happen, why did she let it happen the first place. The issue was not that she was having intimate affair with her boyfriend but it was the mere, obvious fact that they did it and had sex without using protection. They were completely speechless and they had to let it sink in for a while, that they were actually in that situation; that their friend was pregnant.

They just could not believe it that one of their friends was pregnant. They could not rationalize it, cannot have a clear, significant explanation why it happened. Sure people get pregnant all the time but she was just twenty years old, fresh out of college and just starting to get a life for herself. She was just starting to live her dreams and unburden her parents of problems and be able to finally help them. But then, this happened. It sounded that her being pregnant was really a big problem, a thing that should not really happen like having natural disasters. That the only solution left was to have it undone.

Her friends asked what her plan was or what their plans with her boyfriend were. That was also unclear. Her boyfriend was not in the prov-

ince, he was somewhere in Manila working and so she was carrying the burden alone, all by herself until she slid it to her friends. They asked her if she wanted to keep it and she was unsure, she did not have a straight answer. Her friends tried to help her in making a decision but as soon as they laid it all down to her, she told them that she was considering an abortion. The word gave a shuddering response from her friends. They were afraid, they did not know how to react, and the word gave them horrifying images. But as soon as her friends could talk and let her know what they thought, Lena told them that she already went looking for possible places for her to have an abortion and she found one.

The problem came with the financial expenses, since she was still unemployed, she was clueless where to get the money for her abortion. She was afraid to ask her parents since it amounted up to Php 7,000. Raising that money was pretty tough. Lena confessed that she tried the traditional means of abortion but they were not effective. She tried lifting heavy objects up to walking underneath the scorching heat of the sun, but still they did not work out. So as her last resort, she wanted to have an abortion, in a medical way.

Now her friends, fearing for the future, supported Lena's decision. They tried to chip in and lend her money that would be used for her abortion. They were not really entirely sure if it was the right thing to do or not and if they were contributing to really something that was sinful. But then, they were afraid of what the future could bring to Lena, they were afraid if this was the right time for her to raise a child especially that she was too young to even care for herself.

much more to care for a child. They were afraid especially that Lena's boyfriend, an out-of-school youth, seemed like he did not care at all. As if nothing was wrong between them. What was worse was that, Lena's younger sister, just gave birth to baby girl who just turned one-year old this year. Imagined what would happen to her parents if they knew that their other daughter was yet again pregnant. It will be really devastating. So after all the thought, her friends and Lena scheduled the day for her abortion and they all settled that it will have to be done as soon as possible.

So after two days, Lena had it aborted.

It was on a Saturday. The sky was dull, as if grieving for the lost of a child. As if the skies had already known that something terrible was bound to happen in the life of Lena. It happened in a small clinic situated in the busy streets of the city. You would not know that something like that happens in that place. At around 11 in the morning it all started, everything seemed really normal. Lena was wearing her typical clothes and left her home by ten in the morning. She told her parents she was just going to her friend's house for a gathering.

She was accompanied by one of her friends, Jenny, in the clinic. There they were met by the doctor and a nurse who would administer the operation. They asked her to lie down on the bed situated inside a really cramped room. There was only one functional electric fan inside the room that was able to ventilate the place. But before starting the procedure, Lena was asked by the nurse to have the payment in full. And so upon payment, there started the worst day of her life.

Fearing for her life, she lied down

on the bed with her hands clamped together. She was offering a silent prayer to the heavens above. Silent prayer that could save her life with what she thought would be the worst decision she had ever done.

The nurse arrived in her natural disposition and had with her the equipment needed for the procedure. She was put on struck with a needle, put on a dextrose as if she was just having a fever or a sickness of sort. Nothing really scary paraphernalia was used. Lena and Jenny did not ask what was being put into her. They just let the situation completely on the hands of the nurse. After it was done, the doctor came in and Jenny was asked to leave the room for a moment.

And there after that, it all started the nightmare that Lena did not expect that would befall on her. That everything would last for a staggering eight to ten hours. After the doctor came out of the room, everything was going into a pretty normal rate. Nothing worried her for a while. But as hours went by, as the clock ticked minute by minute, there she felt pained. As if with the passing of the time, the pain intensified, went twice harder than ever.

After three hours, Jenny was joined by their other friends to look out for Lena. There inside the cramped, little room they stayed until the operation was over. Lena lied down, feeling and looking pained, she looked paled as if blood was leaving out of her body. But her friends tried to make the situation jovial, they were just talking about mundane stuff as if Lena was not in the middle of an operation. They were laughing about the most trivial situations. Lena was also laughing with them but it was mixed with pain, with horror.

Almost five hours had passed,

and Lena was on the ~~middle~~ of the most excruciating moment of her life. The kind of sound that she was letting out was horrifying. It was full of fear, of madness. Her friends who heard the sound were paralyzed with the pain she was feeling. They wanted to help her but all they could do was to watch her and hold her hand. It was a terrible sight. Wishing that the man, her boyfriend would be the one who was holding her hands and being with her in that dark moment of her life. Her boyfriend was not present during that time, he was in Manila and her friends did not know if he was aware of what was happening with her.

She did not stop her painful moans, it was utterly unimaginable. Someone would not expect that a person will have to get through that kind of pain. Minutes passed, hours went by. And closely, little by little, she was really into tormenting pain. She did not stop turning and twisting on the bed, she became paler; blood draining out of her. She looked really wretched. Her eyes were so dull, blank with any kind of expression.

Two hours left before everything will be over, her friends could not stop but to be worried about her. They never stopped imagining worse situations that could happen. What if this situation will not be successful, what would happen to her? What would happen to them? They were in the situation together, as one. After all, they made the decision together.

The storm continued and as the final hour of the operation came, she let out a sound that as if signalled the end of everything, that in a few moments, things were beginning to reside, to settle into their right places.

And the storm passed. What they

thought that would never end was over in moments. A sign of relief was done by them and it was over as soon as it started. Lena who looked so dull ~~heaved~~ a deep breath and slowly started to stand up. She was wearing a diaper during that time and she went directly to the bathroom. And soon as she went out, it was all over. They did not know what happened next but the nurse came in the room and guided Lena to change her clothes and removed the needle struck to her vein.

It was passed ten o'clock in the evening and what proved to be the worst day of Lena's life was already over. She went out of the room while her friends were waiting in the clinic's lobby. And there emerged a weak looking Lena, she was little by little coming to life.

After the wrenching and tormenting operation, they went out and grabbed a food at McDonalds. They started laughing about it, they joked about it as if nothing serious and painful happened. But in the middle of the conversation, a realization struck all of them that this should not happen again. Perhaps the right time for this one, for Lena to get pregnant and raise a child, will come sometime. But for now, they have dreams to realize, for a great life to make, for places to travel, for adventures to make and do all the things they could do while living the young years of their lives.

Perhaps it was a moral issue, something that comes between right or wrong. We never know what led to Lena's abortion decision. Maybe it was out of fear or the realization that things will never be the same again. Call it a mistake, whatever she had done. And so the day ended, call it a bad day, but after all, life goes on.

# Father's Love

Inamorata

**T**hey say, every child has a story of falling asleep on the sofa and magically appearing and waking up in their beds the next morning. They say it's every father's magic. Maybe my dad is not a magician at all. Because if he is, I can have the same story to tell.

I am a victim of "child-left-to-grandparents-while-parents-work-in-the-city" situation until I reach the age of ten. As a policeman and a teacher, my parents spent most of their time putting law to life and bringing the concept of success to

children rather than watching me live my childhood. But even watching me live my childhood is not a good idea I could suggest because I only lived it waiting for them.

Saturdays and Sundays were my 12 midnight. My favorite pink blouse and maong short were my blue gown. My grandmother was my fairy godmother who helps me get dressed. And I am Cinderella. A Cinderella not waiting for any prince rather for a King and his family. I cannot measure my happiness when I am with them.

Much as I want to, life is not al-

ways a fairytale. There were times that I got to visit. The absence of the King in most of the visits made the situation even more painful. The reason why is clear to me, he's on duty. This situation went the same until I reach ten and move here in Laoag with my family. But ten was too late, the distance between me and my Daddy already grew. I got a little cut in my heart from that distance and it got deeper and deeper.

I remember during my elementary graduation, daddy asked my Tita, his sibling, to just join Mama onstage to accompany me receive my award. That was my first major heartbreak from my Daddy. I tried to understand, maybe he's just shy or maybe he is not proud of me because I did not attain the highest rank. I don't know, I wish I could just erase that memory. When I got to highschool, things between us became worse. I usually go home late because my classmates make me feel better than staying at home and hearing him scold me with almost everything I do. He only talks to me when he asks for coffee. My response would always be a nod, avoiding a word which a mistake might root from. I felt more like a mistake rather than a daughter.

It was 2008, I was on second year highschool, when our youngest sister was born. Daddy was with my Mama althroughout her labor in the hospital. I saw daddy carrying my newly born sister. I saw him very happy, an expression I didn't get to see every time he look at me. I wish I could imagine the same instance, an instance where my daddy excitedly carries the literal bloody me. But I can't, I just can't because my daddy was not beside us when I was

born, he was away, he was on duty. I wonder if when he carried me for the first time, I made him smile. If he did, I wish I was conscious and saw him so I can have a proof that daddy once became happy because of me.

My youngest sister grew up to be a very sweet kid. She must have softed my daddy's heart, I thought. But I was wrong.

High school graduation was something I am looking forward to. I hoped that daddy will come and accompany me onstage. It is a higher step that I finished so I thought he might bother to come. I hoped and prayed hard. But he didn't come, even just to watch me receive my awards.

It was my second heartbreak from my daddy. Pain demands to be felt that time, jealousy also. I saw how happy my classmates are, they even brought their extended family. It was only Mama and me. It was so painful to the extent that I wish the stage would open up and swallow me alive.

Giving up on my daddy is not an option for me even if I am in pain. Maybe there are other ways to make him proud I thought. So on the same year that I graduated highschool, I tried pageantry. I won four crowns, in all four pageants that I joined within a year. But he attended none of those. Not even a congratulatory word. I wish I could see him in the audience seat, clapping and cheering for me as I own the night. I wish he was able to watch me do things dedicated to him.

One night, he came home drunk. That was unusual because he is not a drunkard. Mama opened the door, he entered and began yelling. He was yelling at mama but he was referring to me. He said I don't know

how to do household chores when in fact the clothes he wears were washed by me. He said that the only thing I know was to make myself beautiful when in fact it is normal for 16-year-old girl to put powder on her face and comb her hair. He said that I could not go further in life when in fact, he did not attend even one of the stepping stones I've accomplished to be successful. I heard every word he said from my bed, the pillow did not even help me not to hear him.

That night, I gave up. I got tired on trying to make him proud, it's like pouring vinegar on my wounds over and over again. So I decided to just stop.

College to me was a way to escape the pain, and him. I decided to study far from home. I lived in a dorm. There, I realize how hard it is to have a daddy yet you have no father. I have a daddy, but I have no father. I don't have a father who says "if a boy breaks your heart, I will break his neck". I don't have a father whom I can share the story of my first date. I don't have a father who comforts me after my first puppy love heartbreak. I don't have a father who says it's okay to cry on his shoulder. All I have is a man whom I call "daddy".

It took me a long time to heal. But despite all pain and heartbreak, I still love the man I call daddy. I love him more than anyone else. I don't hate him. I did not even love him any less. I don't understand yet why he is rude to me, but I know, and I am sure of it, he loves me too. There is no father that doesn't love his daughter. He is proud, he just doesn't know how to show it. His harsh words are just ways to motivate me, and these are

effective. I can't be who I am today without him.

He made a lot of sacrifices for us, his family. Being a policeman is one of the biggest sacrifice he had ever done. It was a risky job that his life might be on the line. But he still chose to serve the country. And that is something to be proud of.

These realizations made me decide to come back home. After spending a semester away from my family, I decided to transfer to a nearer school. I would not add four more years to the ten years I did not able to spend with my family, especially my daddy. I am happy we are now talking to each other. He doesn't just simply asks for coffee now, he also says I'm better in making coffee drink than mama. He now appreciates the things I do and supports my passion. Little by little, my daddy is becoming my father.

I will soon graduate in college this school year (hopefully), and I only have one wish. For him to attend my graduation and accompany me onstage. I will not have the third major heartbreak this time. I know daddy will come. I know he loves me.

If maturity is trying to understand the situation of the person who hurts you rather than hurting him back, then I probably have reached my maturity. I don't want to hurt back my daddy. I may outgrow his lap, but I will never outgrow his heart I won't give up on him. It's funny I smile because he is my father, but I laugh because he cannot do anything about it.

Yes, daddy is not a magician and now I'm thankful that he is not. Because if he is, I don't have this different story to tell.

# Oblivion

Ruomarap

I sat perched on the side of my bed, as I hit something under it. Then I saw a box with written letters spelled as "O-B-L-I-V-I-O-N". Inside the box is a pile of old photos which had been taken one or two years ago. As I go over them one by one, I can't help but notice a single photo buried deep in the box. In that photo there is a beautiful girl, dressed in a little white dress together with a guy wearing blue denim long sleeves. They looked happy dancing- both hands of the guy are holding the hips of the girl, while the girl's hands are over the shoulders of the guy. Then memories began to flashback on my mind.

In the photo is a friend of mine and me. Using the word friend would be safer, I guess. Back then she was a transferee from another school. We

were in the same class 5 days in a week. She was catchy yet simple in every little way. She dressed like a skater girl in a skinny jeans, a pair of sneakers and a shirt, nothing more, nothing less. What made her catch every attention was her angelic face, glossy black hair, and snow white skin. She was petite but she carried it fine.

As days went by we began to know each other. We became drinking buddies. Every time we finish a quiz in our major subject, sure thing that would come after would be a "drinking session" in her apartment. In those sleepless nights I began to know her more. Everything that she said was transparent, no filters. Maybe it was the side effect of the alcohol we were drinking, but I know that's her. Every morning both of us



would wake up early. It already became a habit when I'm with some others home, and nothing is better than to see her sweet smile. Day after day we would discuss several topics that no one could ever imagine. Those were probably the best days of my life. There were also times where I couldn't sleep or even continue the day without texting or talking to her. Then I realized...I already like her.

We called each other "LOVES", with an S, only a sign of casualness and confidence between us. But for me it's more than that, to her? I just don't know. Besides she was the one to first call me that.

Every hour I'd see to it that a single message was sent to her. We even texted each other while having our class. About how boring the discussions were, how hard was the topic, or even about what to do after classes. For me it felt like we are more than friends, but less than lovers.

In every way we were both compatible. We had the same favorite movie. We would fancy look at the top music charts and listen to it. We share the same playlist—most of them which were pretty impossible but yes. We have the same favorite desert—mouth-watering carrot cake. And most of all WE LOVED EATING.

Confessing my love to her was the least of the things I would do. I would love everything to go just the way it is now. I didn't want to risk anything for I knew that I would be better off like this. One thing more, she had a boyfriend who was in a far place.

Then, news came that she had already broken up with her boyfriend. According to her long distance relationship couldn't last, maybe that's the reason she broke up with her

boyfriend. After knowing the news myriad questions began to acrabble in my mind. Should I pursue on courting her? Or should I remain the way we are now? Deciding is the hardest thing that I've ever done that took me sometime. Then the next thing I knew one of my closest friends was already courting her.

What hurts most is seeing someone you love with your friend whom you talk to about crushes and love. Your companion in those sleepless night outs. That person you share your deepest thoughts with. That person you thought you know very well. That person you've loved like a family. That person who you thought was always there and will never betray you even the world ends. That person...

Within that day, two persons were gone, two people I thought the world is incomplete without. I wish I could've been braver in pursuing her. I wish I were not that dumb to know that your friend likes her too. I wish I were not that scared of getting off my comfort zone. I wish...

Until now she still texts me and calls me the same name, LOVES. I'm using it also. Without realizing how hurt I am. All I can do now is to stare at her, for I can't get any closer to her. Now using my camouflage as a friend is the best thing that I could do. For being in a relationship is something that you choose, and being friends is something that's what we are.

...I flipped the photo, then I saw scribbled words saying, "Hi there partner!" Then I picked up my bag, grabbed my breakfast then went out to go to school. Then I said to myself, "What a good day, to have a good day!"

# First Time

kaleidoscope

**I**t was 3rd of July, two years ago. It was raining so hard and I couldn't see anything outside the window. I cleared the glass a little bit with my bare fingers until I was able to peek outside. I saw a young man standing under the rain, staring straight at me.

Stunned with what I saw, I did not expect him to be there. His wavy hair looked straight and thin as the water drips all over him. His face turned pale as he shivered in cold, "that stupid guy!" my eyebrow raised as I threw a sharp look on him.

I hated him for sorts of reasons. First, he was not gentle, he treats me with sarcasm whenever I talk to him. Second, he's tactless, when he's mad, he just throws piercing words on me without thinking twice. And third, he is taciturn, in simple words, KJ.

I met him in church when I was 14. He was unexpectedly called to play the guitar for me when I sang onstage. I was amazed as I was deeply touched by his melody. He plucked the strings smoothly and gracefully. He was just one year my senior but he's already excellent in playing stringed instruments and even the keyboard.

One Saturday afternoon, I visited the church to attend an activity. I was about to leave when I heard someone singing a contemporary gospel song. The voice was romantic and was beautiful to hear. I slipped into a small room where the sound came from, it was from him.

To my excitement, I opened the door and saw him indulging himself to his passion. When I entered the room, he was surprised and ruined his voice, his tone went higher destroying the song. I looked at him as my lip curled, but he beamed at me.

I don't understand why the moment he saw me, he acted that crazy. It annoys me when he's teasing me with my height. I also remembered how I slapped the pillow on his face when he's lazy enough to get himself one while he has the time to play online games in his laptop. His meanness irritates me.

Years passed but I still don't understand his indifference. He's a college junior then when he started to have a serious conversation with me. I remembered when he agreed to make me a poster for my project for the first time one afternoon and

I demanded him to give that to me early tomorrow.

When I came to see him the next morning, he did the poster amazingly. He handed me the poster with his fingers still painted. His face looked happy but his eyes were not, I can see how he longs for a company, for a friend who would listen and care for him. Living away from his family is a tough thing for him. He has to live alone in order to have easier access to transportation to the university.

He's a diligent student. Although he hates writing essays, he still tries his best to make one. In exchange of the favor, I did his essay assignment in Philosophy. This is one thing I came to know that such gesture.

The day came that we became best friends. He also changed the way he talks to me. Gone are the sarcastic words, instead these turned sweet and caring eventually.

More than his stories and more than his presence, there is really one thing I wish he would grant me. It is for him to sing with me.

It was 7:30 in the evening, I turned my head back to the window as my worried eyes stared at the guy under the rain. I ran into the pouring rain and pulled him inside the house. As usual, he's still as stubborn as he was before, I told him not to go and meet me that night because it's raining so hard, but he insisted to come. He said, he just wanted to grant me my wish.

Holding my Davis acoustic guitar, he plucked it smoothly and sang my favorite song.

In my whole life, I never had a guy best friend, but now, I believe I already have.

# Providence

Ruomarap

**L**ights out, slow music plays, spot light turns on and that's the time when the magic begins. Magical is the word to describe every promenade that every junior and senior had ever experienced... but not mine.

A movie once said that there are two types of people in the world, the realists and hopeless romantics. Realists are people who don't believe in destiny, they put that one face that they love in any other face of people they meet. While the hopeless romantics believe that they are destined to only one person in the world.

And in my case I'm one of those hopeless romantics, someone who's afraid of something new and who's instilled in his comfort zone and doesn't want to leave it. So when

something new knocks in, I'm there ignoring it, likewise, when girls come texting or calling me and confessing their love (I'm not being proud about it, but yes they are the one who are confessing to me). I guess I'm a martyr, yet I'm not afraid of love at all. The thing is, I don't love or even like them.

I don't believe in love at first sight, second sight, and even third sight. I believe in a relationship where the base is time, effort and knowing each other truly. So basically they all failed in the first three criterions. But these things were died out, things that obstructed my supposedly most memorable moments in my life, the High School, after realizing that all of them don't really matter.

Of all the ones who confessed

their feelings and had been dumped, here is this one girl who never stopped texting me, asked for my health in every single thread of messages she sends and who I laugh jokes with, without minding that she had been rejected in the first place. Another thing that I cannot forget about is her rubber watch gift—which is very popular that time—, laid in a bed of cotton sheets, which includes a letter telling that it's her first time giving a gift to someone and how she loves me. A very cute act which I truly appreciate, but I never worn it; ask me why, I don't know.

After several weeks... she stopped. Stopped texting, stopped asking about my health, and just stopped everything. Maybe she got tired. It felt like the period in every sentence, a dot and all that came next is a huge blank space, I wish it had been an ellipsis though. The next thing I've known is that she's already seeing someone, maybe not just someone but one of my classmate which I share a room with, 5 days in a week. It never hurt me, maybe just a pinch but not too much, just until the promenade came.

She was junior that time and I'm a senior. As one of those who can somewhat dance, we were tasked to cast a production number for the promenade program. And by chance, we were partnered. AWKWARD, yes it is, but as the practices go on, we had been comfortable to one another, comfortable with those sexy dances, and touches that part every time we move; also with those near kisses that the choreographer wants to see. But being comfortable with each other is just the first thing that it brought to me, the next thing that came are the butterflies which I remember in every single teenage movie I've seen and

the drumbeats that pumped the heck out of me every time I touch her. And there also came the sleepless nights of thinking about her. With all those, that's the time I said to myself... I already like her.

Liking her could've been easy if one; I didn't dump her and two if she doesn't have a boyfriend yet. But in my case it wasn't easy at all.

As days go by I began to miss her texts, miss the tone of her mid-toned voice, missing her scent, not sweet, not strong, but just the smell of detergent and bleach, simple, that's what she is.

Then the promenade came. We had been okay for a long time now. We are friends (Just friends), but it is better than nothing. Now, being optimistic is the only thing that I can do.

Tick, tock, tick, tock, then it's time for the production number. By those times I thought only of a single thing, "This may be the last dance that we'll ever be into, so I'll better do my best and remember every single look on her face".

Close, step, close, step, and turn. The production number ended, and then we part ways. That is probably her first dance for the night, so it is legit to claim that I've got her first dance. Haha. Just Kidding. Her first dance is her boyfriend. The thought of seeing them dance to the beat of a slow music is already bad, how much more seeing it. Then I took the courage to dance with her, it's a take it or leave it decision to make. I'm graduating which means this would be the last chance I could ever get to dance with her.

Despite the long queue of boys wanting to dance with her, I came to her table and asked for a dance, good thing he never asked me to wait for the others to be finish, hence he said

that it should already be time for her to dance with. I felt special that time, we dance from the beginning till the end of the song, were face to face but we don't see eye to eye, her warm hands held to mine, and no words were spoken. We just spent that ephemeral moment leisurely.

When the song ended we know to ourselves that it's time to detach ourselves from one another. I could've said sorry, I could've said that I regret the things I've done. But it's already too late, she's with someone right now, it's better for things to be left unspoken than to cause trouble to them.

Then the last dance song came, there she is with her boyfriend (again), dancing with flowers and chocolates. I didn't ask for a dance that moment, seeing them happy together is enough, despite the fact that bitterness is surrounding me. I'm happy to see her happy, even I know that she still likes me...

(Happy background music plays!) Today, we are still friends. We even tease each other about our little beginnings every time we have a chance. The word awkward had already lost its power as an adjective to describe us. We know to ourselves that we are better off being friends than lovers. But maybe we can work that out if we try... probably. She's single now, should I take the risk of courting her? Or be afraid of getting dumped? We'll see. He he.

Starting that promenade, I've been one of the realists who believe that you cannot find a person for you if you keep on waiting for someone who you believe is destined for you.

Just a piece of advice, destiny is a word only made for people to make them believe that there is someone out there for them, but the truth is, it is you who will make it become true. You know that a ball will stay in its place if no force is applied to it; same is true with life, if you stay where you are right now, you'll be expecting the same old activities that would come to you. So better start moving now or be left alone in the starting line.

PS: I wrote this article when I was still in 4th year of high school, now I'm already in my 3rd year of being a college student. Revisions had been done. Now that I'm reading it, it felt like I'm listening to a Saturday show with the voice of Charo Santos. Just Kidding! It's just by this time that I had the courage to publish this work because I know to myself that I've already outgrown the past ME. Three years had passed, a lot of things changed; the young minded guy had grown up. All I wanted to tell to those guys who haven't grown up yet, also called as torpe's is to "get a life", start from socializing with other people. Life is not meant to be just a selfie but a groupie that you need to expand every day.



Photo by: Kathrine Jessica Calano

# 7th Day

Joanne Faith Manayag

**H**indi ko maatim ang lalaking nasa tabi ko ngayon na parang isang bangungot ang makasama siya sa altar na ito. Siya ang naging dahilan kung bakit ako nagkakaganito at lalong siya ang dahilan kung bakit nawalan ng pagkakataon na mabuhay ang sana'y magiging anak ko. Kaya hindi niyo ako masisisi kung bakit hindi ako masaya sa pagpapakasal sa taong pinagkait lahat sa akin at sumira ang buong buhay ko. Napangisi ako ng bahagya habang pinipigilan ko ang pagbubos ng mga luhang kanina pa nagbabadya. Ito ang araw ng kasal ko at ang araw na unti-unti akong mamamatay dahil sakit sa loob ko.

Siya si Keith Montaverde. Napatingin siya akin maharil napansin niya ang mga munting pagtawa ko. Pero muli, binaling niya ang kanyang atensyon sa paring nasa harap namin. Ilang sandali pa ay narinig ko ang katagang "You may kiss the bride". Humarap ako sa kanya at tinignan ko siya sa kanyang mga mata na napakainosente at aminin man o hindi, minsang nabihag ako.

"Makukuha mo ako pero kailan man ay hindi mo makukuha muli ang puso ko." Nakita kong gumuhit sa kanyang mga mata ang sakit at lungkot ng sinabi ko. Binaba niya ang kanyang mukha't marin niya akong hinalikan. Ito ang hudyat na



hindi na ako si Elle Marie Villanueva na malaya. Ako ang nag-iisang preso ng apleyidong dadalhin ko habang buhay at mag-iisang asawa ni Keith Montaverde.

Napatawa ako ng mariin nang binati ako ng nanay ko pagkatapos ng kasal. Masaya siya dahil nakita na niya daw akong lumakad sa altar. "Sino ba ang hindi masaya na magpakasal sa taong kinamumuhilan mo?" Sarkistadong saad ko sa kanya. Bumuntong-hininga siya at ngumiti ng pilit. Ang sabi niya ay kung alam ko lang sana. Lumayo ako sa kanilang lahat at nagmuknok sa isang sulok habang hawak-hawak ang isang bote ng alak. Gusto kong magpakalasing at lunodín ang mismong sarili ko nito dahil ngayon pa lang ay unti-unting nararamdaman ko na naman ang sakit ng kahapon.

Mabilis na dumaan ang mga araw, hindi ko na lang namalayan na isang buwan na pala kaming kasal. Sa mga araw na iyon, walang araw na hindi ko siya nakitang masaya at walang araw na hindi niya ako sinupresa. Kung sana hindi pa ako nagbago, marahil lumuhundag ako sa tuwa at kikiligin ako ng sobra pero ngayon pakiramdam ko ay naiinsulto ako sa ginagawa niya dahil habang masaya siya, ako naman ay hados mamatay sa sakit ng aking nadarama. Sa mga araw ding iyon, pansin kong lagi niya akong kinukuhanan ng letrato. Ang sabi niya ay remembrance lang daw pero agad kong kinuha ang kanyang camera at hinagis lihanggang sa masira pero kung gaano kawasak ang camerang iyon, hindi matutumbasan kung paano ako nawasak noon. Ngayong araw, nagkayayaan ang barkada na gumimik at sumama ako sa kanila. Naglakad agad ako patungo sa kwarto para maligo't magbihis. Napansin kong nawawala ang

aking telepono pero nagulat na lang ako nang bigla niya-mabot sa akin. Marahan kong kinuha iyon sa kanya pero ang mas kinagulat ko nang dumapo ang kanyang mainit na palad sa aking likuran at yinakap niya ako. Malamig ko siyang tinitigan habang tinatanggal ko ang yakap niya. Bumalikod ako't naglakad palayo nang bigla niyang abutin ang kamay ko at iniharap sa kanya.

"Bakit ka ba nagkakaganyan Elle? Nasasaktan na ako sa ginagawa mo. Walang araw na lumipas na hindi mo pinakita na hindi ka masaya sa piling ko. Halos mamatay ako sa sakit na nadarama ko!" Napayuko siya at nakita kong tumulo ang kanyang mga luha. Naging malalamang ang titig ko sa kanya at napatawa ng marahan.

"Bakit?! Tinatanong mo kung bakit? Ikaw ang dahilan Keith! Matapos mo akong iwan sa gitna ng daan, iwan ng walang dahilan pagkatapos tatanungin mo ako kung bakit? Karapatan ko rin naman Keith ang tumanggap ng paliwanag mula sa iyo pero hindi mo ako binigyan. Ipinagkait mo sa akin iyon. At anong ginawa mo? Lumayo ka at iniwan mo ako sa ere, Keith. Sino ba ang hindi masasaktan sa ginawa mo?" Napatim ang aking bangag at napayukom ng palad at bahagyang napangisi habang nagpipigil ako sa pagdaloy ng mga luha ko.

Nanlaki ang mata ko nang lumuhod siya sa harapan ko at humagagulgol. "Ano ba ang dapat kong gawin para bumalik ka sa dati, sa akin, Elle? Elle, I'm so sorry, Elle. I'm so sorry that I leave you but please give me a chance. Nakikiusap ako, Elle. Putawarin mo ako. Mahal na mahal kita, Elle. Please, Elle."

Hindi ko alam kung anong mararamdaman ko dahil kahit mabilis ng tibok ng puso ko, tinatabunan ako

ng lungkot at galit sa kanya. Halos manikip ang dibdib ko na makipang umiyak siya pero hindi ito ang tamang panahon para panghinaan ng loob. "Kung ano ako ngayon dahil yun sa kakagawan mo. Parawad? Hindi ko alam kung maibibigay ko ito sa mismong tao naging dahilan ng pagkawala ng sana'y magiging anak ko. At pwede ba, wag mo akong pakielaman dahil pag-aari mo lang ang pangalan ko, hindi ang buhay ko." Tinakpan ako ang aking bibig dahil nagsimula na akong humilbi papalabas ng bahay. Napagtanto ko na mahal na mahal ko pa din siya sa kabila ng nangyari at kapag bibigay ako sa kanya ay parang tinapon ko ang hustisiya sa pagkamatay ng anak ko at hindi ako papayag doon.

Randam ko ang pagdaloy ng mainit na likido mula sa lalamunan ko kasabay ng paduloy ng mga alaala na hindi ko makakalimutan kasama siya, ang panahon na nasa tapat kami ng aming unibersidad. Bigla niyang sinabi na makikipaghiwalay na daw siya sa akin. Tinanong ko kung bakit, kung saan ako nagkulang dahil sa pagkakaalam ko ay binigay ko naman ang lahat sa kanya pero iniwas niya lang ang kanyang tingin at naglakad palayo. Hinabol ko siya pero bigla akong nakadama ng matinding kirok mula sa tiyan ko at napaupo sa gitna ng daan. Pilit akong tumatawag ng tulong mula sa kanya pero bigla na lang siya nawala parang bula. Unti-unting nagdilim ang aking paningin kasabay ang pagdaloy ng pulang likido palabas sa akin. Kinabukasan ay nadatnan ko ang aking sarili na nasa kama ng hospital. Napaluha na lang ako nang ko maalala ang nangyari kagabi. Lumapit sa akin si Mama, tinanong ko kung ano ang nangyari. Napayuko siya at nanpansin kong naluluha

siya. Sinabi niya na buntis daw ako at tinanong kung sino ang ama.

"Ama? Wala siyang karapatan sa anak ko dahil mismo siya ang umiwan sa akin, sa amin." Napaluha ng tuluyan ang bahay ko at sinabing nalaglag daw ang sana'y magiging anak ko. Halos magwala ako sa sakit ng aking nadarama at halos istumpa ko ang lahat dahil nawala sa akin ito kaagad. Hindi ko naranasan na kahit maging isang ina sa maikling panahon at lahat ng iyon ay sinisi ko si Keith.

Napabalikwas ako ng biglang habulitin ni Lea ang intimum ko. Hindi ko alam ang mga sumunod na nangyari basta't natagpuan ko ang sarili ko papasok ng bahay habang inaalalayan ako ni Keith. Pilit kong tinataboy siya pero patuloy siyang lumapi. Halos mamahid ang aking kamay nang sinampal ko siya.

"Wag mo akong pakielaman pwede ba!" Agad na akong lumakad patungo sa kwarto. Di na ako nagpalit ng damit at dire-diretso na lang ako sa pagtulog.

Tinanghali na ako ng gising. Nakaramdam ako ng pagkirot ng aking ulo. Agad akong lumabas ng kwarto pero ang pinagtataka ko ay hindi ko nadatnan si Keith. Pumunta ako sa kusina at naghanap ng makakain pero wala. Napabaling ang tingin ko sa camerang bago ni Keith na nasa lamesa pero agad ko ding binalewala ito. Inaliw ko ang aking sarili sa panonood buong maghapon. Gabi na pero hindi pa rin umuuwi si Keith. Inisip ko na baka may nangyari na sa kanyang masama at hindi ko maiwasang mag-alala. Tumayo na ako at nagdiretso sa kwarto at natulog, bahala siya. Ilang araw ang ganoong naging eksena, giging ako at matutulog na hindi ko siya nadatnan. Sinubukan kong tawagan pero lag-

ing nakapatay ang kanyang telepono. Ika-pitong araw na simula ng hindi ko makita ni anino niya. Nibang ko ang akling sarili sa nanood ng telebisyon nang nabigla akong makatag ng marahang pagbukas ng pinto kaya naman ay napatayo ako. Nakita kong pumasok si Keith. Agad kong tinanong kung saan siya nanggaling sa nakalipas na araw. Hindi niya ako pinansin at naglakad lang siya patuloy papunta sa kusina. Tinanong ko ulit siya kung saan siya nagpunta nang bigla niyang binagsak ang basong ginamit niya.

"Di ba sabi mo na wag kitang pakielaman. Bakit pinapakelaman mo yung buhay ko ngayon? Pwede rin ba, wag mo akong pakielaman." Halos manigas ako sa kinatatayuan ko. Masakit rin palang marinig kapeg sa mismo taong mahal mo maring iyon. Naramdaman ko ang pangginglid ng luha ko pero taas noo pa rin ako.

"Sabihin mo kung hindi ka uwi dahil nagpupuyat akong hintayin ka kasi walang magloload ng pinto." Kinurot ko na lang ang sarili ko dahil alam kong walang kabuluhan ang rason ko.

"Wag mo nga akong pinagluloko. Pagod ako!" Linagpasan niya ako habang hihilot niya ang kanyang sentido pero agad akong napatakip ng bibig at napasingshap nang nakita kong bumagsak siya. Mangiyak-iyak akong lumapit sa kanya at nangginging dahil hindi ko alam kung ano ang gagawin ko. Agad akong tumawag ng tulong para maldala siya sa hospital.

Pumasok ako sa loob ng kanyang kwarto pagkatapos kong kinausap ang doktor. Nakita kong napatingin siya sa akin pero agad din siya tumalikod ng higahan.

"Bakit ka nandito? Naawa ka ba sa akin o isusumbat mo na naman ba ang pagkamatay ng anak mo na anak ko rin?" Malapit niyang tanong sa akin. Agad akong lumapit sa kanya at yinakap siya likuran at hindi ko maiwasang na mapahagulgol.

"Keith, bakit hindi mo sinabi sa akin?" Tanong ko sa kanya. Naramdaman ko ang pagyugyog ng kanyang balikat senyales na umiyak siya. Ni minsan, hindi ko naisip na pati rin siya ay nasasaktan siya sa pagkawala ng anak naming dalawa dahil walang magulang ay may gustong mawala ang kanilang anak. Mahal na mahal ko si Keith at malaki ang pagkukulang ko bilang asawa niya at simula ngayon ay babawi ako sa kanya sa lahat-lahat kahit anong mangyari.

Nanatili si Keith sa hospital ng ilang araw. Napagpasyahan kong umuwi ng bahay para kumuha ng mga gamit na kakailanganin niya para pa sa ilang araw niyang gamutan. Papabalik na ako sa hospital nang biglang mahagilap ang akong mga mata ang camera ni Keith. Agad kong chinarge at binuksan iyon. Pinanood ko ang huling kuha niya at halos matakip ako ng bibig nang makita ko ang esensang umiwi akong lasing at sinampal ko siya pero ang nagpaiyak sa akin ay pagkatapos non ay narumba siya at nawalan ng malay marahil dahil kanyang sakit.

May Leukemia si Keith.

Ilang minuto ay nakita kong pumasok ni Andrew na bestfriend ni Keith at marahil siya ang nagdala sa hospital. Pinahid ko na ang akong mga luha at humabas ng bahay, dala ko ang camera para maging surpresa ko kay Keith. Naglalakad ako sa corridor ng hospital nang nakita kong aligaga ang mga doktor at

nurse ng hospital. Sinubid ko ang tingin ko sa kanila at napabitaw ako sa hawak ko nang labas-pasok sila sa kwarto ni Keith. Agad akong tumakbo papasok ng kwarto at nakita kong nag-aagaw buhay siya. Halos nangisinging akong lumapit sa kanya at hinawakan ang kanyang kamay. Hindi tumitigil ang pagdaloy ng ak- ing luha kasabay ang patuloy kong pananalangin sa Diyos na sana'y il- igtas siya at pinagsisi ko ang mga panahong sinayang ko na hindi ko pinakita na mahal na mahal ko siya bagkus ay pinakita ko na nagsisi ako kasama siya.

"Please Keith! Wag mo akong iwan ulit parang awa mo na. Hindi ko kaya. Please, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry dahil ikaw ang sinisi ko sa la- hat. Please... Don't leave me!" Patu- loy pa rin ang mga doktor sa pag- sasalba sa kanya.

"Mahal na mahal kita Keith. Please Stay." Hinawakan ko ng mahigpit ang kanyang kamay nang nakaramdam ako ng munting paggalaw niya. Hi- rap niyang minulat ang kanyang mga mata at dahan-dahang tumingin sa akin diretso sa mata. Maluha-luha akong napangiti nang nakita kong ngumiti siya sa akin.

"Sa wakas narinig ko muli na mahal mo ako. Mahal na mahal din kita. Ikaw lang at wala ng iba. Ba- bantayan kita lagi kasama an gat- ing munting anghel basta't tumingin ka lang sa langit. Patawad sa lahat, Elle." Mahina niyang sinabi sa akin.

"Yes. Pinapatawad na kita. Let's forget everything and let's start anew. Basta, please wag mo akong ii- wan." Humahagulgol kong pakiusap sa kanya. Hinigpitan niya ang kan- yang pagkakahawak sa aking kamay. Umiling siya ng marahan kasabay ng pagtulo ng kanyang mga luha.

"Promise me, you'll live happily kahit di mo ko kasama. Gusto kong maubuhay ka sa maganda nating alaala dahil yun lang ang maiiwan ko kasabay ng aking pagmamahal sa'yo. Kung sakaling darating yung panahon-na magmamahal ka ulit, sagat ay wag mo akong kalimutan. Mahal na mahal kita Elle. Mahal na mahal kita." Huminga siya ng mala- lim at kasabay noon ay narinig ko ang pagtunog ng makina sensyales na wala na siya. Wala na si Keith. Wala na ang taong pinakamamahal.

Isang taon lumipas pero parang kahapon lang namatay si Keith. Ma- hirap sa akin sa umpisa pero pinang- hahawakan ko ang kanyang bilin na maging masaya. Masakit sa akin pero kakayanin ko kahit durog na durog ako. Bigla akong tinabihan ni Mama habang nakatingin kaming pareho sa lapida niya.

"Alam mo mabait na bata si Keith kahit iniwan ka noon. Nung natukla- san niya na may sakit siya, agad si- yang pumata sa amin at humingi ng tawad kasi iiwan ka daw niya. Sinabi pa namin noon na nalaglag yung anak niyong dalawa, sobra siyang umiyak noon dahil masakit para sa kanya. Isang araw, nakipagkita sa amin at sinabing may taning na ang kanyang buhay dahil kahit anong ga- mot ay hindi na epektibo sa kanya. Ideya ko yun anak na ipakasal ka sa kanya dahil alam ko iligaya lang kayo sa isa't-isa kahit sa huling pag- kakataon. Sabi pa niya ay gagawin daw niya ang lahat para mapasaya ka. Ang araw bago siya mamatay ay tinawagan niya ako, bilinan daw kita na wag kang malulungkot kasi lagi naman siya nasa langit at binaban- tayan ka. Magbagong-buhay ka daw kahit wala na siya. Kung dumating yung araw na may matatagpuan

kang iba, gusto niya dapat lagi kang masaya kapag at siya naman ay magiging masaya para sa'yo dahil hindi man kayo para sa isa't isa ngayon ay nabuwala siya na susunod na buhay. Layo naman daw ang magsasamang tatanda. Lagi mo daw ingatan ang sarili mo anak. Mahal na mahal ka daw niya"

Nagbuhos ang mga liha sa mata

ko at napayakap na lang ako sa Mama ko. Nagpapantamad ako dahil hindi ko man alamindihan sa una ang desisyon niya pero alam niya pa rin na dito ako sasaya. Npataingin ako sa lapit. Para kay Keth, magkikita tayo muli. Asahan mo na kahit lumapas ang panahon ay mananatili ka pa rin dito sa puso ko, ikaw lang at wala ng iba. Mahal na mahal kita.

*Unleash  
the*

*Flame*

*within... =*



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