



Paraluman
PH Sapphic Anthology

Unang Sulyap

Issue No.1



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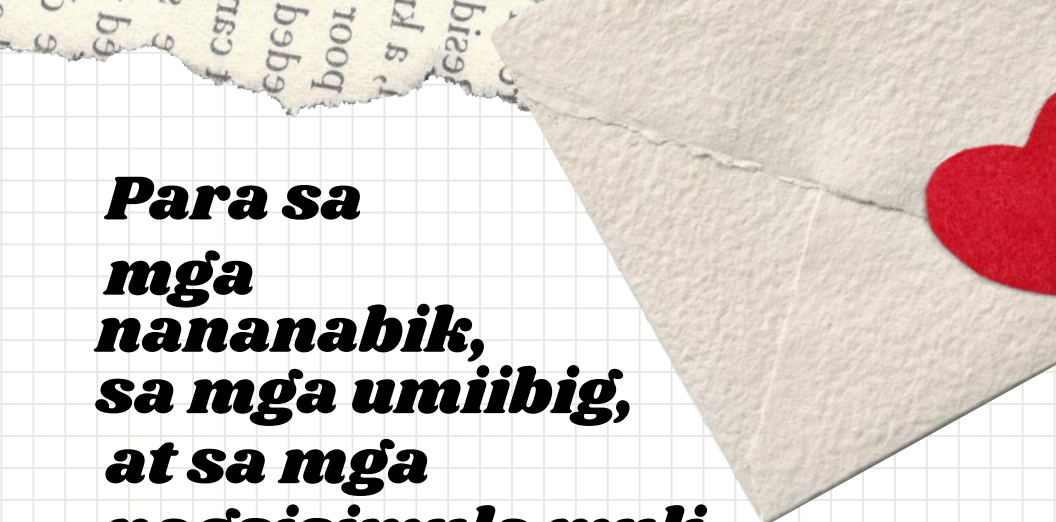
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Cover art by: @senyor_elias on Twitter/X

Comments, suggestions or feedback may be sent to the email filosapphiczine@gmail.com or <https://askparalumanthoph.straw.page/>. Meanwhile, Paraluman: A Filipino Sapphic Anthology can be found online on Twitter/X and Instagram @paralumantho_ph, and on BlueSky @paralumantho-ph.bsky.social.



Para sa mga nananabik, sa mga umiibig, at sa mga nagsisimula muli.

Sa unang limbag ng Paraluman, nailathala namin ang mga likhang sulat at sining ng mga Filipino creatives. Mula sa ating mga lesbiyana, sapphics, mga kasamang trans at non-binary, sa ating nabibilang sa mga asexual/aromantic, femmes, tibo, tomboy— para sa malayang pag-iral ng ating ibigan at komunidad.

Nais naming pasalamat si Thirty, isang dating kasapi ng aming moderator team. Nabuo mula sa kaniyang suporta at tulong noong konseptuwalisasyon ang antolohiyang (dating tinaguriang zine) na ito.

Maraming salamat sa aming malikhaing artista na si Rana na siyang gumawa ng aming kahanga-hangang logo. Maaari siyang matugunan o bigyang-commission sa X, @ranakii_.

Higit sa lahat, aming pinasasalamatang mga volunteer at moderator, silang nag-alay ng oras at pagsisikap upang mabuo ang antolohiya. Hindi ito mabibigyan ng pagkakataon kung hindi dahil sa inyo.

Maari rin naming ialay itong isyu para sa mga naunang simulan ipaglaban ang karapatang-pantao ng Pinoy queers. Tanging nangyari lamang ang antolohiya na ito sa kolektibong pag-organisa at pagsulong sa ating pagkilala at paglaya.

Sa aming mga mambabasa: umaasa kaming buo ang inyong pagtanggap sa aming Paraluman Issue No.1: Unang Sulyap.





for the yearners, the lovers, and to those healing from their firsts

In this very first issue of Paraluman, we compiled written and drawn works from Filipino creatives. Through this issue, we delved deeper into fellow sapphic firsts: first loves, first encounters, first heartbreaks, first coming out experiences. This issue is for our lesbians, sapphics, fellow trans and non-binary individuals, those who are asexual/aromantic, femmes, tomboys, butches—made from our uniqueness, delivered for our community.

We would like to thank Thirdy, a former moderator whose unwavering support and essential input during the anthology's (formerly, zine) conceptualization brought Paraluman to fruition.

Thank you to our creative artist Rana, who made our iconic logo. You can contact or commission through her X account, @ranakii_.

Last, but not the least, our gratitude to our wonderful volunteers and fellow moderators. This anthology couldn't have been made without everyone's love, time and care.

We would also like to dedicate Paraluman's maiden issue to those who started the advocacy for the human rights of queer Filipinos. This anthology only happened thanks to the collective effort of fighting for our freedom, especially from those of generations before our inception.

To our readers: we hope that you receive Paraluman Issue No.1: Unang Sulyap with much love.



Table of Contents

The Katipunera's First Love <i>4alpas</i>	1
Triptych: The First Time Fa Mulan Cut Her Hair and Rode to Battle <i>Almira Lawod</i>	2
liwayway <i>Anagolay</i>	4
Dear Miriam, <i>Graciela Monsalud</i>	5
first confession, five years late <i>Castle</i>	6
i know it's for the better <i>Beau</i>	7
Foolish Queer <i>Perry</i>	8
first friday mass <i>Karen</i>	15
pretty girls on Sundays <i>Kyle Talag</i>	16
My First Sin Was Lying That I Did Not Like Girls <i>Melchor Elias S.C.</i>	17
Wildflower <i>China Roberto</i>	24
For tonight, we are glorious <i>China Roberto</i>	25
Magkita Táyo Sa Buwan <i>Gwenevie Quiambao Bayaua</i>	27
Under this moonlight, she bestows a gift <i>Debi</i>	28
Tambanokano <i>Otter</i>	29

Maria <i>aloisa</i>	31
nang unang makapunta sa mall of asia <i>agosto</i>	51
sa lahat ng kung ano ako <i>agosto</i>	52
Bubbles <i>Den</i>	54
Nicole <i>Y.L. Domingo</i>	55
Pretty Gay <i>written by Cheesy Tteokbokki</i> <i>art by k_ulai</i>	57
in locker 6201 <i>v clark</i>	65
Hanging by the telephone <i>TRPLEGODDESS</i>	66
Maayong Aga <i>Anya Sandoval</i>	67
Naulol ako sa'yo! <i>Zo</i>	68
Snake Held Captive <i>CHUCHUPURIIN</i>	72
To A Cheater <i>Caitlin</i>	73
Vivid <i>Treziel Mae Mayores</i>	74
Untitled <i>Clane</i>	75
You Will Tell Your Father That You Love a Girl <i>Mariya Angelo Pasyon</i>	76
Index of Contributors	

Triptych: The First Time Fa Mulan Cut Her Hair and Rode Into Battle

by Almira Lawod

i. touching the blade

my father taught me how
to wield the battle-spear.

he left me three instructions on how
to choose it properly.

one,
it has to have one sharp edge
only.

one must be certain of where one
wants to go.

two,
the spear must be gained
when the moon is dying

one must remain covert
amongst prying eyes.

three,
do not buy it,
nor ask for it

it has to be offered
to one.

But tonight my father is asleep
on his papag, my mother at his side
and i stole his battle-spear
to cut the locks of my hair
right outside the door i kicked
from the inside out
while the full moon
sneered at me



Spot art by Grovey

ii. waking up

Au réveil il était midi.
- Arthur Rimbaud

when i woke up it was already
noontime.

when i rose from where i slept
the entire village was looking at me
as if i was the civet reborn.

or that i had my chest wide
open, guts spilling onto
the swollen ground

between my breasts, i have
the strongest shield, the thickest
parts of my armor

when i stood up to leave, i was
called to battle, and upon my
blackened feet, my palms sinew

and so one of them stooped
to the ground to pick a rugged
stone to throw at me

scarring me forever
with a birthmark



iii. battlesong

there is no greater atonement
than a world left hollow
with my passing, upon this
narrow and familiar world

my father taught me the wisecraft
of steel and bow and spear
war-torn blood, in the fibers
of my being

i rally my scars like the way
i wore the colors of my flag
wrapped around my body.
i have so much soul to carry.

i have more scars than i can
count now, my skin thickened
by all the words i let roll down
my back

soon, the smoke will abate
and the sea will swallow
my body
and i will be like
all others will be

deep down i know,
i am
all water.
all flowing.





blinded by your grace

liway,
i am having a hard time
comprehending this something
irresistible, pulsating within

liway,
what, what name should i birth
upon this emerging feeling
which describes like this:

you are the sun / and i am earth caught in a trance / constantly
revolving around you / if you were to inhabit your solar flares
into my skin / i would not evoke complaints on my utterances /
but you don't even know my name / merely nothing but
passing visage around your perimeter /

like a moth to a flame / i am tempted on drawing myself closer
into you / and i give in / as light creeps its way out from the
crevice of your soft lips / slivers of sunlight bask upon your
face / here then lies a fallen captive / yet i have no intention of
breaking away / if burning means existing next to you / then it
is alright / nevermind the chance to speak with you / existing
together makes a difference / for i am a melting wax
underneath the lit wick /

god, you are so, so beautiful / like the sun / i cannot look away
/ i do not want to look away / my eyes burst with hurt but i
endure anyway / i'd rather be blinded by your grace / this first
time memory is a kind of tattooed sunburn / an eternity-lasting
scar / yet i can only whisper everything into the air / and meet
you at night / as i bid a temporary farewell to the world / and
there in a dream / there exists a universe where the sun
discerns her earth / and i live inside it / where i hold the liberty
of calling you mine / god / what a living pleasant dream you
are / i hope to stay asleep forever in this state / please never
wake me up.



Dear Miriam,

from when you left your spool;

by Graciela Monsalud, she/her

I tailored ankle-length sheep fur dresses to steer you away from my weakened knees, now knowing gravity as it knew unease. You took away my speech, you see.

And my trinkets and sour tongue, too. If I trip and could not dance, a lie is *I prefer to catch myself* in heels through my shoes.

This language is not my mother tongue, nor is it yours. Be that as it may, let me sew your staggering skirt pleats of my wandering fervors.

Do not stagger if I embroider your name in a dialect I made.

I have only read about seams and hems not long ago.

I once punctured a fingernail of oxidized needles, after losing trains in thoughts of *routes to you*.

I never put the book down 'til I indulged its last syllable from up and below, let it be that I sighted step-by-steps for you in yarns and years I endeavored to do.

But when I saw you, my Miriam, in a satin pinafore dress pretending-silk, was when I knew my Miriam much favored lesser favors than fervors of mine in pink.

Sheep fur and satin, I weighed on my bare hands of layered ichor palms to understand where my stitches loosened or if bodices mismatched if I can no longer stand.

And so, Miriam, I left yellow pleats that blackened over time, a duration longer than when I learned how to sew. I may cut my dress above my hips or hate embroidery, but *my knees never recollected knowledge of forgetting gravity*. I shall strip naked, or wrap myself head to toe. Whichever it is you prefer, need not to forget my anatomy in analogies of my agony, *how I deem us a tragedy*. You have my speech, you see. And my trinkets and sour tongue, too.

From the affable,
A retired
seamstress

first confession,
five years late by Castle

i don't know how to love you the right way. sometimes, i'm still scared to hold your face. sometimes, my hair is livewire against your reason. sometimes, i burn against you, akin to a matchstick fire against skin. isn't this how the legend goes? when we were younger, you wrote a story about an aegir who protected the seas, and i wrote about an aswang who flew too close to the sun. the struggling winds of reality was wrapped in fantasy and folklore. icarus died not because his wings melted off, but because the sea carried him further down. everytime i open my mouth, i drown. everytime i fall, i am caught by the sea. your liquid arms around my burnt pyre. your palm against my neck, gentler than the world. your riptides traced by my fingertips, meeting no start or end. my first and last both outlined in your face. i don't know how to love and protect an ocean. i'm happy you've let me all the same.

Spot art by Orange



i know it's for the better

by Beau, he/him

the toughest decision is the wisest one among the group. you're the toughest decision i have to make—it's difficult enough to be stuck here for the first time, whether taking the path or not. i move one bit and i walk three steps backwards because that's how i am: **always picking up the litter, the leftovers, the least of things i deserve.**

but i gotta know it's for the better. this, here, **you—**

it's for the better—toughening myself out to make the toughest decision ever.

the litter, the leftovers,
least of things i deserve

Foolish Queer *by Perry*

[A collection of violating events from my first year of trying to prove my sapphic identity as I battled comp het & sexual trauma]

TW: SA, death, depression

(Dec. 22, 2022/Oct. 16, 2023)

When you start to have trouble feeling full after hours of licking senselessly clean the dead skin cells off another. When the blood you have drunk from both her lips are no longer enough to quench your true thirst:

Would it be foolish to wish that it could? Is this not as raw and real as it gets? Is this not the final level of vulnerability I was taught to covet as a young girl?

[HER]


I claw and gnaw at her – greedy teeth and tongue hoping to sink into flesh tender enough to hear a cry. I fill my hope into her vulnerable touch praying it will be enough to put to rest the sinking weight in my stomach. ‘It’s okay’ I (you) tell myself (yourself), never having felt a touch this tender since my mom died at 35. ‘Maybe this is the feeling that is meant to come after.’ How silly it is that it becomes so easy to lose yourself to that tingle between your shoulder blades. To the quiet thrumming in your lower back kneading fingers deep into your belly. I feel myself fall into a warmth – once only felt in a soft embrace – now amplified tenfold in a series of short sharp gasps till crescendo. ‘Wouldn’t it be nice to have this feeling enrapture me for more than a few short moments – for forever?’ Instead, it’s immediately met by a weight off the bed so abrupt it feels as though my body were thrown against a wall; and the weight falls back into the bottom of my belly, dragging me back down into the bed of another. (I hope it’s a

continued on page 10

Carnage Carnation by Perry



I created this at a time when I felt so incredibly angry at love, sex, and human connection (while also realizing that the people who've hurt me may never pay &/or may never learn to heal). All of it at the time only seemed to hurt when it was supposed to liberate me from my sheltered and abused past. Traumatized and unable to set boundaries in sex and love led to broken &/or evil people in my life. Colors are raw and bright to reflect a rage stemming from the AFAB experience. Created using acrylic and textured acrylic to mimic broad and thick oil brushstrokes used to reflect a classic romantic renaissance painting, straying from a typical black background of the period to indicate that the darkness ignored is not usually so void of feeling. I chose this work to accompany my piece of writing as it is literally the visual embodiment of it. More detailed visuals on my art IG @perrythepeartreedraws & personal @discothequequeen.



woman – and it usually is when I have a say). And words so crass they pierce the blanket of calm placed over us just moments ago: ‘Did you finish?’ and ‘I’ve got to go but this was nice.’ as she/he/they shuffle back into their wares. Abruptly, I am reminded of the hook and sink weighing down my belly again; an anchor tied to my middle, the bait just my body and none of the features I necessarily value or equate to myself.

Glub glub glub.

[HIM]

I let the water fill me (perhaps the only thing that can in this broken body) and contemplate that maybe death will enter me if no one else. I watch as bubbles rise all around me and feel my eyes crease to cry and my teeth grit to smile. What painful irony that not even my own body works when I need to escape the pain in my mind. When that man lay there sizing me up and talking me out – I let a moment of that young rebellious girl who wanted to prove to her dad and the world that a male (socialized & born) and woman (socialized & born) could hold hands and make talk: without a devilish ulterior motive – win. I was the one tossed around and out of control no matter if I was at top or bottom, whatever he did or would do, very few would believe me even if they chose to. (Because: who would rather utter an ‘I’m sorry and I was wrong’ over an ‘I told you so’).

A part of me watched it all happen. You could blame me the way I blamed myself for it, if you felt a bit of monster in you.

But there I was, nonetheless, delighted in the familiarity that all that pain and weakness brought in. Curled up tight like an unborn child; amniotic fluid mingled with blood still clinging to my bare slick skin as I was pinned to the floor by my father’s violence.



*A part of me felt like I was home. **But no matter.** I could not even be a good enough vessel for this man who had taken my body. I had to *whisper* to him that it was ‘medically impossible’ (maybe a medical condition would have him reconsider if I couldn’t) for him to penetrate me when he insisted it might work if he went slow, or maybe that I just hadn’t tried it before. I coaxed him further with soft words saying ‘I tried before and it really hurt and I cried – I’m sorry’. But for *fuck’s sake*. Who in the world was I *apologizing* to? To my **father** – for being too young, too fragile, and too easy to manipulate? To all **men** – for loving women over them? To the **man** towering over me, turning blind to the way my muscles tensed or in the way I jumped when his wet pointed dick tortured my holes – begging for its warmth? Gods’...who and what and why was I **apologizing**. But I did, over and over and over and over again in that instance and in all the ones like it before.*

Over:

I’m sorry for being woman formed and shaped.

And over:

I’m sorry that I’m so easy to attack because of how I look or how I dress.

And over:

I’m sorry I’m different – that I don’t fit in and I don’t make sense.

Again:

I’m sorry, so painfully sorry, for just trying to be.

Surely, despite my pain – a part of me is to blame anyhow for being such a **whore; such a dirty godless pussy loving queer.**


continued on page 13



Who in the world was I apologizing to?



Carnage Carnation by Perry



Why couldn't I just love cis straight dick the way god intended, so I could *finally* give my autonomy up, for the grand, shiny position, of a prized woman shaped object?

[HE/SHE/THEY]

No one counted those bodies except me, counting the steps backward I took from heaven's gate (from my mother's arms) every time I lay with a man or a woman, neither or in between, & reflections of me. I sat there again – cross-legged – yet still sinking, and allowed myself a moment of contemplation.

Yes, men are the problem.

[SHE]

So. I let her in. She was older and we had nothing in common. But she was so eager and persistent. Surely in her position of power this could grant me a foot in the door, yet such an enticing offer could only turn on me. As time passed I was treated less like a person and more like a shiny new toy on Christmas day surely to be forgotten about on the top shelf of a dingy closet not long after. It felt nice for a moment, but I realize now that it didn't feel just nice. It was a captivating, angry swarm of bees, covered in wet warm honey made to reflect the image of a mother. It was a wild bear you appeased momentarily with an enticing orange before you tossed it; running for your life.

I did not spend most of that friendship feeling listened to or cared for unless I spoke up about it. I lied, as I fought to explain how she did care to friends who knew better than to take my word for it. I worried that when I allowed it to dawn on me: how I had fallen into the same trap that my father had set before her. That I would realize how inevitably stuck I was in the same cycle I had struggled 18 years of my life to free myself from. So, I ignored it. As long as I could isolate her effects on me to mirror back onto herself then I was safe – right? Eventually, after a heavy year, you come to realize that

being a living reflection is not a job for a one year old adult. And that it was not friendship she had wanted but my body and what it could do – just like the ‘him/her/they’ before ‘she.’ But, what did it take for me to realize that and finally make my great escape? It was – ironically – quite simple. It was when I realized that I must always look behind the surface of those I encounter, even if it is my face staring back at me.

As people of the world unveil their true demeanor, I wonder to what ends will I throw myself into belonging before it destroys me.

[MINE/HIS/HER/THEIRS]

My arms, his arms, her arms, theirs. The arms of the past? The present? The future?

Likely, solace may only be found within the arms of my mother – cold and dead; just like the arms that violate me in my waking life.

After all of this, I’m now allowed to say: “**Yeah, I’m sapphic.**”

It was when I realized that I must always look behind the surface of those I encounter, even if it is my face staring back at me.





first friday mass

by Karen

the big man changed his stole yesterday
and the green does not suit his complexion.
we listen to lectures paid for by
the sweat glistening behind this blue cloth
over my mouth.
silent, agape slightly at the abstractness of
his advisories on the awesome and the beyond
and there is nothing to stop the liquid
that falls from my lips,
running down my chin; like how i wish i
could run from this and find the Kingdom
behind thin, wet, crinkling cloth. and i know deep down
that it is sin and we walk on thin ice, you and i,
but the big man wears green and we are seen:
the sun sets an angry scarlet upon the scarred stone floor.
but press your lips to mine and whisper
in tongues and prayers like being possessed
by a Spirit. together, let us be
choked by the incense smoke of
two thousand years of lengthy habits
thrown over our heads and our ankles.
thrust your fist through the eyeholes and rip
a snarl from inside of you and erupt
against the setting sun, in this place, in front of
this man, and these people, and right after, right after,
settle your head on my lap. listen instead as i recall
how some seven years ago
the trees were white and the sun was golden.
hands linked by our very pinkies like grape vines
gathering on their trellises,
our fluttering skirts were the color of leaves.





pretty girls on Sundays

by Kyle Talag

her name rhymes with the names of deities on weekdays. white button-down contrasting her pink flannel and black slacks jumping onto her Converse. but even on Sundays, she reincarnates in every doe-eyed gal i encounter. this is why my heart chimes in the silhouette of cinema aisles before i get enraptured twice under the high ceilings of a 2000-year-old cathedral; she is everywhere. a biblical myth imprinted in my wandering mind and, most of the time, the angels clang wedding bells at every count of the stomp of my heart. our school is the rendezvous, where the pillar of my gallantry stands tall, yet crumbles down when she is within my vicinity; determining the force theory true. because under the rubble, i am bruised and wounded, which is not an intolerable pain but a pleasure to the anarchy inside the swell of my chest. an epigram sours my mouth. a paronomasia suckles my throat and i cough the weight inside me: her, her, her.

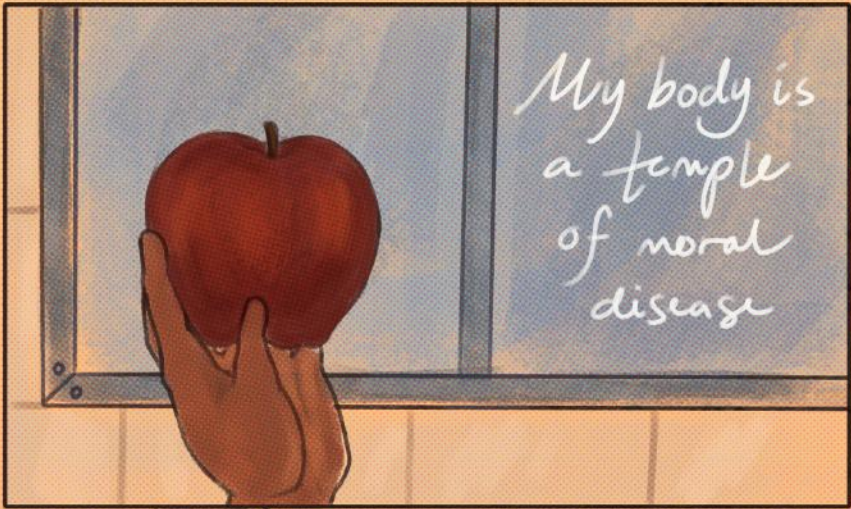
the pretty girls i see on Sundays were all about her.



My first sin
was lying
that I did not
like girls



by Melchor Elias S.C.



My body is
a temple
of moral
disease


and you are

my
venerated
one

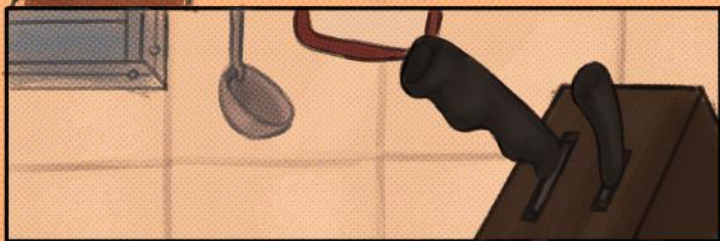


my

messiah

A hand is shown holding a large, vibrant red apple. The background is a kitchen sink with a faucet and a drain. The scene is rendered in a soft, painterly style with a warm, yellowish-orange color palette.

but I will
not find
the gentle
hands that
will truly
wash me



my own fingers
and their
callouses —

A hand is shown holding a red apple, which is being cut by a large knife. The knife is positioned diagonally across the apple, and the cutting action is emphasized by motion lines. The background is a solid, warm orange color.

of a
wound
so
infected

because—



I've been
so afraid of
staining
you



even if



Christ would have held me
regardless



but you
can't be
Christ

and I
shouldn't
make you
be anything



because —



even
if I
would
pray to
you

on
my
knees,

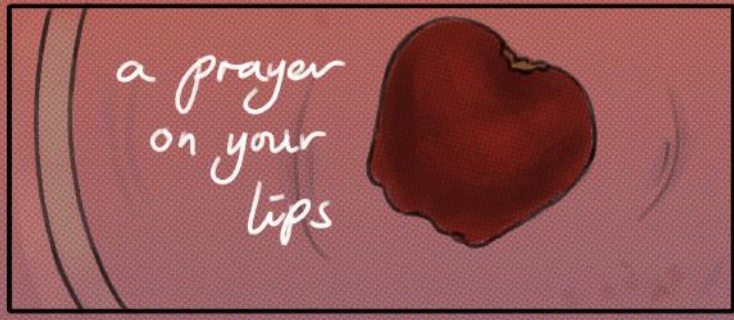
I know you cannot give me



the salvation I need

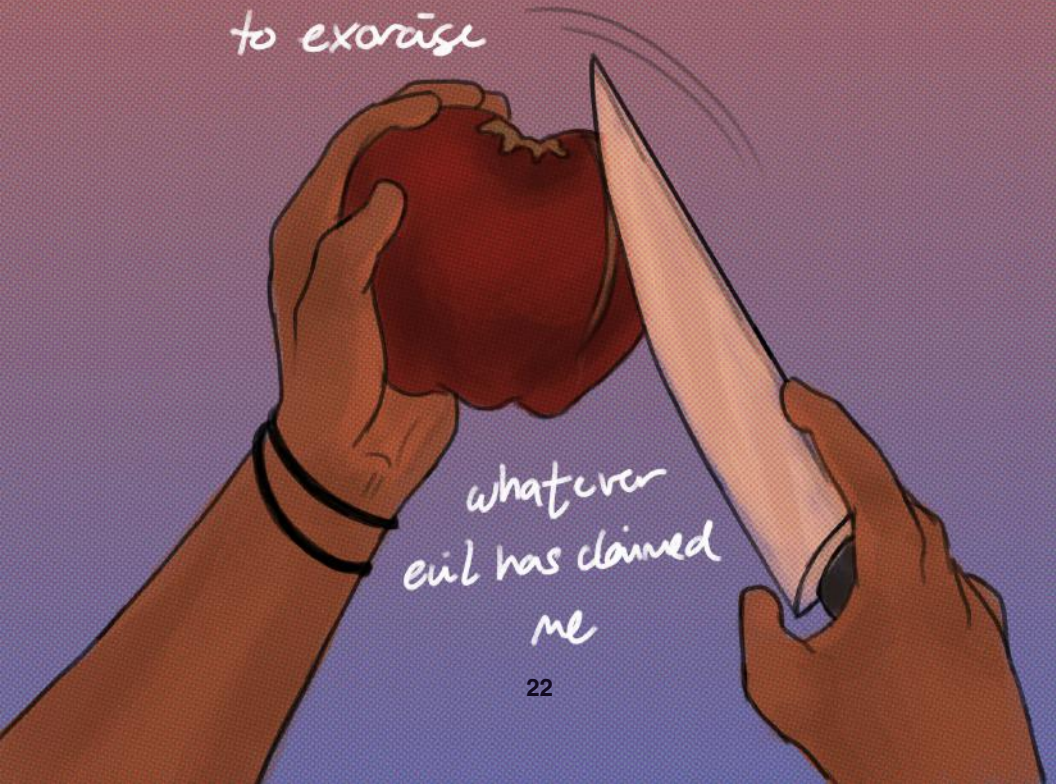


but you will
still put your
hands above
me



a prayer
on your
lips

to exorcise



whatever
evil has claimed
me



you will name me



and God—
I pray that it's all I need



Wildflower

by China Roberto

Wildflower,

Chanced upon each other, didn't we?

Nevermind a meadow, or rolling hills of green,
Or an open field to prance around in.
To bloom in concrete is most admirable—
stubborn against the elements, scraping against gravel.
Summer sun beats down on
the walkway we inhabit;
with it, comes
my fear of wilting, of drying out.
Tell me to anticipate the May showers
And I'll question the possibility of being uprooted,
washed away.
But tender are the hands that tend to us:
your own and mine.

*We have brought spring to a
place where it does not exist.*



*For tonight,
we are glorious*
by China Roberto

For tonight, we are glorious—

set the beaded chain aside; I'll tell you about all
the times I found God.

V.

Donned in every hue,
marching down the sidewalk with
my best friend grasping my hand,
a familiar stranger holding the other.
The warmth in our palms is
a different kind of prayer and
the flag strewn around our shoulders
are like coronation robes. This is
reclamation of stolen heaven and earth
because we loved without reason.

IV.

Under fluorescent lights—
finally speaking freely about a part of me
I was taught to equate with sin.
I used to hold my tongue
the same way they used to hold who we loved
against us.
Who do we blame for the way we suffered
when the text remains the same? So here,
we reunite with pieces of ourselves we let die.

III.

In a shared group chat,
with my friends bidding each other a happy month
ahead.

One of them tells me it's funny how
they spoke their truths one after the other,
right after I did. Almost as if
I started a gentle fire that can never be put out.

II.

At the dining table,
watching my father talk to my sister and the girl she
brought home.

No heavy silences. Just air to breathe, laughter to
share—
the promise of acceptance.


I.

Within the walls of her rented apartment,
basking in 3:00PM sun. Heart to heart, skin to
skin— the way it brings me back to life.



Magkita Táyo Sa Buwan

by Gwenevie Quiambao Bayaua



Under this moonlight, she bestows a gift

by Debi (she/her)

In this dim room, the moonlight shines on her body as she lays next to me, her figure hugged by the silk nightgown. Careful hands and whispered promises, I silence my doubts by kissing her nose bridge. For a moment I am terrified, ready to run away and change my entire life if she did not return my affections.

But she returns it tenfold. A hundredfold. A thousandfold.

I am breathless in her embrace. She paints my canvas red.

This invisible string pulls her body towards me. Just like how the ocean meets the sand, her warmth washes over me. Our sighs echo the sounds of waves.

Don't leave. Stay the night. Stay with me.

“TAMBANOKANO”

by Otter

One must embrace the fear of being known to achieve love's highest level of intimacy.

I told her about a short story I made about someone who lost their mind because of the sea, or rather, the one that dwells beneath it. The character recounts meeting a giant crustacean that came up from the bottom of the seabed. It ends with their desperate cry to the Moon, who comes to meet them.

She listened with keen interest. I could tell from how her eyes shone and folded upwards like little crescents.

She rushes towards me; such a brave and selfless act to save a worthless being. Yes, Lady of the Night, I hear you, I see you! The rails have led me astray, but you have come to take me home. Please, take me home!

I told her this is where it ends after reciting the story. Others have read my creations, but only she has heard them from my lips. I watched her pause, lost in deep thought.

She then asked me if the character was in front of a train. I blinked in surprise.



As she went into detail, I couldn't stop smiling. I didn't realize that she knew me so well. It was as if she looked me in the eye and said, *I found you, hiding behind phrases and punctuation marks.*

My heart beat three syllables, words I wished I could express one day. No story, poem, or passage will ever be able to contain the feelings that grew within me.

"Did I get it right?"

I chuckled at her response.

Maria

By aloisa (they/them)

Maria Louise Tanjuangco began working at her family's bakery on a Saturday, the first day of that summer in 2008.

Though she had spotted the older girl while making her round of deliveries in the neighborhood at 5:45 A.M., Ysa had still managed to write this down in vivid detail after dinner at the end of that day—a whole thirteen hours later—solidifying her proof of this encounter. Ysabella Valdez was, in all known and unknown accounts of that Wednesday, the first non-Tanjuangco Bakery employee to see Maria on her first day of work. The first witness, if you will.

Maria had worn a crisp white button-up and black trousers under her navy apron embroidered with the bakery's logo, the standard for Tanjuangco Bakery employees. Ysa recalls being in awe of the older girl, seeing her outside of their black and white school uniform for the first time. Ysa had also noted how Maria had a matching set of pearl earrings and necklace which glistened in the darkness of that early morning as she handed her a bulk of newspapers from the San Agustin Printing Press.

But what had really struck Ysa the most was how Maria was as kind and graceful as she was in school when she took the newspapers from the wide-eyed and gaping girl, even making a passing comment about how she remembered Ysa from the school hallways and cafeteria. Ysa swore that she almost felt her heart drop right down to her feet when Maria smiled and handed her a twenty peso tip for the delivery which was already more than what she often got from her other clients.

“You’re Ysa, right? You’re in the same batch as my sister, Annie!” were the first words Maria had ever uttered directly to Ysa, later immortalized word-for-word in the pages of the younger girl’s diary. “Yeah, I always see you buying Lipton and Sunflower Crackers during recess! You know, I used to buy those two together too.”

Maria Louise Tanjuangco, the daughter of one of the wealthiest Filipino-Chinese businessmen in the quiet town of San Agustin, back-to-back winner of the Miss San Agustin High School beauty pageant and Reyna Elena of the parish, valedictorian and prom queen of batch ‘08, captain of the senior dance team, and president of the San Agustin High School chorale. The muse of their quaint seaside town had smiled at the shy incoming seventh grader Ysabella Valdez.

To be within two feet of Maria Louise Tanjuangco was one thing, to be greeted by her and be remembered by her from passing interactions in school was something else entirely. It was like a miracle, maybe even something akin to a Marian apparition, so of course Ysa had written it down in great detail in her diary before going to bed that night.

But unlike the fleeting image of the Virgin Mary, Maria Louise Tanjuangco had still been at the bakery in the summer days that followed. On Sunday, she had her long pin-straight black hair in a bun and a hairnet, capped off with the white baker’s cap. While Ysa had refused to make small talk during their exchange of the newspapers and her twenty peso tip out of pure nervousness, Maria took it upon herself to wish the younger girl well on her travels around the neighborhood.

On Monday, Ysa had arrived at the bakery to the sight of

Maria feeding the bakery's black and white stray cat, Minnie, by the building's entrance. If she were any other person, Ysa would've comfortably joined her in squatting down on the concrete and petting the cat, but this was Maria; and so she put the newspapers on one of the bakery's waiting benches and left.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, Ysa came in with her father as customers and had both been bid good mornings by Maria, who wrapped up their orders in brown paper bags at the counter. Maria had even made it a point to compliment Ysa's skills in front of her father for delivering the newspapers at 5:45 A.M. on the dot, almost sending the young girl into a spiral of embarrassment.

And in all of the subsequent four days that Ysa spotted Maria at the bakery, Maria had consistently greeted the girl by her first name, proving that she genuinely remembered her.

"...befriending the older girl and initiating a conversation with her should have been easier than striking up a conversation with a boy that Ysa was supposed to like in ways that was deeper than her admiration for her girl-idol."

So on and so on, until it fully registered in Ysa's mind that Maria had been apprenticing in her own family's bakery that summer, before her supposed departure for university in Manila. By then, it had already been halfway through April as the heat steadily climbed up their houses and shores, lengthening the days and blowing hot and humid air that greeted Ysa in the streets every morning.

That was the opportunity of a lifetime— to be near the girl Ysa had been idolizing in school for a long time, maybe even form a genuine friendship with her even if it would have been fleeting at best. The problem was that in the entire month of April, Ysa had only ever uttered two phrases to Maria: “Good morning,” when she parked her bike on the side of the bakery and made her presence known; “Thank you”, when Maria took the bulk of newspapers from her hands and gave her either a twenty peso tip or a small bag of half-cooked pandesal as payment.

Ysa had always felt stupid after every failed encounter in that first month of summer, biking away to her remaining delivery at lightning speed while she hit her head with her fist in frustration. Ysa had scolded herself, sure that she didn't have a crush on Maria like how her parents and friends say she had on certain boys. Maria was just another popular girl that she and her friends followed around in pure admiration—albeit prettier, smarter, kinder, and more talented than most. So befriending the older girl and initiating a conversation with her should have been easier than striking up a conversation with a boy that Ysa was supposed to like in ways that was deeper than her admiration for her girl-idol.

But being in the moment, facing *the* Maria Louise Tanjuangco up close and lightly brushing hands with her to pass newspapers along, had always messed with Ysa's mind in ways that she couldn't fully explain. As if her mind had wiped itself clean of all thoughts every time she was actually in front of the real person and not just thinking about all the ways that she could have said something else other than a good morning and a thank you. She had merely observed the little changes that Maria made to her bakery uniform, or the way she had baked the pandesal that she offered Ysa.

"In the five years that she'd been looking up to the older girl, Ysa had always justified her own personal admiration to everyone by saying that she wanted to take inspiration from how Maria carried herself..."

It was during that time when gossip surrounding Maria's summer activities had begun surfacing among their peers from school and even among some of the neighbors. Maria was bored out of her mind but didn't want to move to Manila and live with her aunt and uncle yet, most girls at the beach said. On the other hand, some some who were serving as sacristans or taking violin lessons from the nuns at church that Maria's true

passion was actually baking and not in business as she initially made it seem with her choice of program at the University of the Philippines. Hence why she's making the most out of staying at home for the summer. Others, still, said that she probably wanted to improve on her baking and cooking skills in order to prepare herself to become a housewife once she and her boyfriend of four years, Erik Marquez, got married after college.

People had talked as they always did. That's a given, even in sleepy San Agustin. But that time it reached even Ysa's own closest friends, Alex and Roseanne, who were not avid gossipers themselves, but still they had ended up talking all about it whenever they biked around the town plaza in the afternoons.

The two had been particularly interested in gushing about how Ysa was lucky to be delivering newspapers for her family's business this summer, and they had even teased her that she volunteered her services at the printing press purposefully to see their popular Ate Maria everyday.

Ysa, however, had always denied this because she could remember vividly, with her diary as evidence, that she started working at her family's printing press two summers before Maria even began working at her own family's bakery. Delivering newspapers around her neighborhood had always been her summer activity, something that she shared with her siblings. More importantly, as much as Ysa was an avid admirer of the infamous Tanjuangco girl, she genuinely never expected that she'd see Maria get her hands dirty and cheeks smeared with flour down at her family's bakery. For Ysa, having seen this girl from afar her entire elementary school life, it just hadn't seemed like her scene.

"Maybe it's destiny," Roseanne had suggested one time as the trio biked past the bakery after a long day of jumping between rocks at the beach. It had been nearing the end of April when the beach was empty. The three were talking about Maria again after they saw her and Erik eating afternoon snacks by the Marquez's beachfront resort, much to their disgust.

That day, Maria was wearing a flowy white dress, blue flats, with her hair in two fishtail braids that rested on her bare shoulders— an outfit that Ysa had sketched on the margins of her diary that night, as reference for the next time that she wanted to go shopping for clothes with her mother in the city, of course. In the five years that she'd been looking up to the older girl, Ysa had always justified her own personal admiration to everyone by saying that she wanted to take inspiration from how Maria carried herself: so elegantly and gracefully, a stark contrast from the younger girl who was often described by everyone as messy and clumsy.

Spot art by Sky



“Maybe it is destiny, but you’re wasting your time not striking up a conversation with her like an idiot,” Alex had agreed with Roseanne like she always did, much to Ysa’s disapproval.

“What do I even say?” Ysa had dismissed the notion quickly. “You can’t just go up to Ate Maria and waste her time, she’s the most popular girl in school!”

Before her friends could retort, they had reached Ysa’s house just four blocks away from the bakery. The blushing girl bid her friends a rushed goodbye before she ran inside.

The truth of the matter is that Ysa could have easily answered her own question in a million different ways. After all, she had been thinking about it that entire summer. She could have complimented Maria about her hair and her pale, unblemished skin; how Maria was always glowing even in simple clothes, like her bakery uniform, or their school’s

standard white blouse with white and blue checkered skirt because she wore complimenting gold accessories and knew how to style her hair in elaborate braids.

Ysa could have complimented Maria forever about how great she was at dancing and singing, like those teen pop stars that you'd see on weekend dance shows on television; how Maria could have easily become an idol herself had she not been accepted to university. If not, Ysa could have also said something about how Maria was one of the kindest people she's ever met; how she was a good role model and positive influence to her underclassmen at San Agustin High School, especially with how she always made the effort to remember things about people; and how she always stood up for other students to school bullies.

Or maybe Ysa could have recounted the times she'd always looked forward to seeing a glimpse of Maria in the hallways, or at the choir's corner at church, or the vegetable garden at school, or at the town hall practicing a new choreography with her dance team.

Ysa had the opportunity to say everything that she had built up in her chest from almost five years of admiring Maria and she knew this very well. Even then, she had known that that was the destiny that Roseanne and Alex were suggesting.

But being a twelve year old about to enter high school brought its own waves of self-consciousness and cringe that Ysa had put talking to Maria off for a week more, sticking closely to her almost robotic good morning and thank you.

When Ysa had finally gathered enough courage to strike up a more proper conversation with Maria, however, an unexpected rain poured down the streets of San Agustin.

It had been nearing the end of May by that time. The radio had forecasted light to moderate rains in the area as the new school year approached with a tropical depression. Cassie was its name— like Maria’s best friend, Cassie Jane Dela Cruz, who was always trailing behind her at school with a dazed look in her eyes for reasons that Ysa did not understand back then, because she herself did not look at the mirror much. What the radio had forgotten to broadcast to the town of San Agustin was the possibility that the rain could have come as early as 5 A.M. when Ysa usually made her newspaper deliveries.

As she rounded the block to the bakery that Monday morning, a droplet had suddenly landed on her cheek. Then another on the back of her left hand, followed by three on her bicycle’s brake and her white and purple sneakers at the same time. And before she could even adjust her helmet accordingly, it had started pouring all around her, raising the hairs on her forearms and tickling a chill down her spine.

If there was one thing that her father had taught her the first time she was assigned to deliver newspapers, it was to protect the fragile papers first in the event of rain at all cost. The Valdez family could easily get medicine for colds and fevers



Spot art by Sky

from Ysa's pharmacist older sister, Catherine. But biking back to the printing press' warehouse to replace the newspapers was too much trouble. With Ysa's quick reflexes and two summers worth of work experience, the newspapers had been saved and kept dry at the unfortunate expense of her school uniforms that she had been working day and night to mend before school started.

Another thing Ysa was taught, this time by her mother, was that it was a waste of money to bring her worn-out clothes to the seamstress at the municipal trading center when the six Valdez children could simply learn from their mother. Mrs. Valdez was a proud homemaker, significantly skilled in all housework while also maintaining a job as a midwife at the San Agustin Medical Center. The only problem was that Ysa was slow at picking up the art of sewing. Despite having had extra lessons from the previous school year through her Home Economics class, Ysa's impatient hands never seemed to reach an agreement with the thread and needle. Her father noted this as a sign that Ysa followed in his footsteps more, but her mother had stubbornly disagreed and forced Ysa to spend her free time with the slight tears and loose threads on her two skirt uniforms until the eve of the first day of class. Hence, the makeshift cover for the newspaper.

That had been the first thing Maria noticed when Ysa arrived five minutes after the rain started pouring all over San Agustin: the blue and white checkered pattern of the skirts.

“Oh, is that your uniform?”

Ysa had immediately frozen on her seat in the bike, eyes widened in shock as the fingertips on her left hand brushed the hem of the skirt. Heat rose up from her neck to her ears and face. Her forehead was cold, and a nervous lump had stuck itself in the middle of her throat. She opened her mouth to speak but no sound stumbled out.

Maria coughed under the red umbrella she held over their heads, taking the initiative to push the thick fabric of the two skirts to the side to reveal the bundle of newspapers underneath.

“Well, the good news is that the newspapers are mostly dry. Some drops here and there, bordering on damp, but it’s manageable,” Maria had pointed out, said newspaper expertly removed by her free hand from the bike’s basket and tucked inside her blue cardigan. She turned around and gestured for Ysa to hop off of her bike and follow her inside the bakery. “We’ll have to do something about your skirt, though. You can’t take it around, with you getting wet in the rain. Hold on, we can dry that next to the oven and put it in a bag.”

“O-Oh, no!” Ysa exclaimed in response. She immediately cringed at herself with how loud her voice was.

Maria had turned around at this, brown eyes wide in confusion.

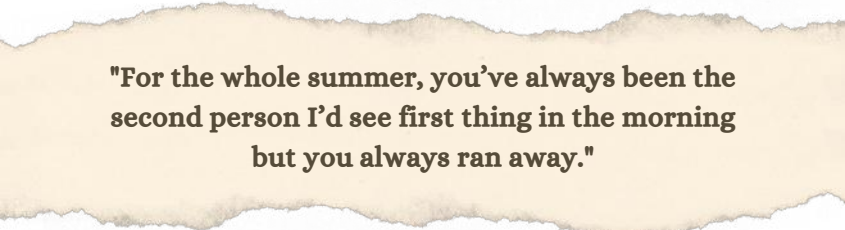
“R-Really, it’s ok—”

“No, no, I insist. It’ll be hard to mend this in time for school if it smells like the rain when you go home,” Maria

had giggled in response, shaking her head and picking up the wet skirts from the basket with the hand that held the umbrella. She had still been graceful and kind even when Ysa's red face and ears probably looked like they could explode any moment, and it had made the light and fluttering feeling in Ysa's stomach expand upwards to her chest. "Come on, let's go inside for a bit and dry your skirt. Bring your bag too, Minnie might take it when you're not looking."

Ysa had no choice but to follow. She took her pouch with her and followed the older girl inside the bakery. Maria wrung the skirts dry and draped them over an empty chair to dry next to the warmth of the oven while Ysa offered to arrange the newspapers on the news stand as a gesture of her gratitude for Maria's kindness.

The entire time, Ysa could only think about the fact that she had been standing so close to Maria, the scent of citrus bouncing in the air every time the older girl made sharp turns or walked ahead of her in the kitchen. It wasn't the fleeting kind of closeness that they had been dancing around in circles that entire summer whenever Ysa delivered newspapers; it had been a longer interaction that time as they moved around the bakery trying to save Ysa's skirts. That was it. That was the destiny that Alex and Roseanne had been prodding Ysa about: a chance to actually hold a proper conversation and a chance to make friends.



"For the whole summer, you've always been the second person I'd see first thing in the morning but you always ran away."

And as if telepathically picking up on this, Maria had immediately initiated small talk as she brewed hot chocolate and served pandesal to Ysa. They sat shoulder to shoulder, with the younger girl by one of the bakery's benches as they waited for Ysa's skirts to dry and the rain to slow down.

"So, why do you only carry one basket around? The older delivery men usually have baskets at the back of their bikes too."

Ysa could still recall to this day how she had almost choked on the piece of bread in her mouth when Maria had spoken directly to her, her damp chest clutched in her hand as she composed herself. "O-Oh, um, it's just that I...I only deliver around the barangay. My dad only wants me to bike around the neighborhood for now given how early I have to start deliveries," She answered after she quickly gulped down her food. "Maybe next year I'll ask to be given more work. But for now, I'll just be around here so...yeah."

If Maria had noticed how Ysa was struggling in front of her, she never brought it up and instead just smoothly continued to lead the conversation in whichever way she wanted. "Right, your family owns the printing press, 'no? Is it fun? Have you tried using the printing press? It looks really cool."

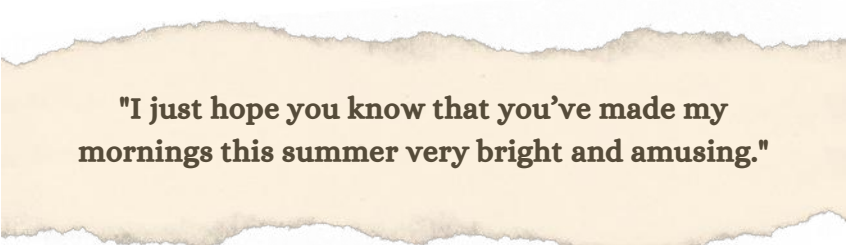
"Well, yeah, it's as fun and cool as it looks, I guess. Very tedious, but it always feels fulfilling to do."

"Hmm, I bet it's why your sewing is a little wonky on your skirt, 'no?"

“H-Hey!”

“I’m just kidding!”

Maria had an enthusiastic glint in her eyes, one that seemed to dazzle in the darkness of the heavy gray clouds that loomed over their town. She had asked questions about school, the skirts, and Ysa’s mending work with seemingly pure curiosity, and subsequently listened to Ysa’s every fumbled word with patience and understanding.



"I just hope you know that you've made my mornings this summer very bright and amusing."

And the entire time, Ysa had stumbled and stuttered over her own words as the younger girl tried to calm the heavy and nervous feeling in her chest. She had avoided eye contact at all cost, even when Maria tilted her head down to her height to meet the younger girl’s eyes and hear her better. Her eyes had darted around the glass display cabinets of bread and pastries climbing up the high walls of the bakery.

To any other person, and even Ysa herself, she would’ve easily come off as rude and weird. Even then, the younger girl had known that she was messing up what was possibly her one and only chance at a proper conversation

with Maria with the way she had been behaving, and it had made her instinctively curl in on herself even more rather than ground her to the moment.

But Maria had patiently put up with her throughout the short time that they had been huddled together under the roof of that bakery; even attempted to joke with her as the street outside lightened up and the heavy rain turned into a light drizzle.

Maria had a charm to her that both frightened Ysa but also drew her even more to the older girl. She had been naturally enticed into following along in their conversation before she had eventually loosened up enough to bounce off of the banter. Ysa had wondered if that charm was something that came with age as she noted how Maria's charisma felt similar to another alumni from school who had been equally popular in her time, or if Maria just acted naturally in this way to anyone that she encountered.

The younger girl had also wondered if this one encounter already made them friends— the dilemma that had been haunting her the whole summer. The thought had sent another chill down her spine, one that was even worse than the one she felt when the rain started landing on her hoodie and helmet as she rode to the bakery.

The question had sat at the tip of the younger girl's tongue but couldn't seem to find the right opportunity to come out. Maria had led the conversation with ease, maneuvering it expertly to whatever niche topic she'd wanted to ponder on as the two girls looked outside to the rain and Minnie the cat seated by one of the makeshift carton rugs. All those topics,

however, hadn't seemed right to cut short for Ysa to ask her question. Not when Maria had seemed genuinely interested in them. At one point, Ysa had even wondered to herself if it was even appropriate to ask, or if she had already overstayed her welcome inside the warm bakery shop that morning.

Outside, the sun had begun to come out of the gray clouds, the faintest light casted on the puddles right outside of the bakery where Minnie had eventually woken up to look at her reflection. It was almost time to leave, Ysa had known, and what might have been her only chance to talk to the girl she had always idolized beyond just two phrases was slipping right out of her hands quicker than she had wanted it to.

And, as if reading her mind, Maria had suddenly commented, "You know, I'm glad we had the chance to talk today. I've been wanting to talk to you all summer."

"W-What?" Ysa swore that she had almost felt her world stop right there and then as the words fully registered in her mind, her mouth falling open and her eyes turning to the older girl in surprise.

Maria had simply chuckled, unfazed as she stood up from the bench and stretched her arms over her head. "For the whole summer, you've always been the second person I'd see first thing in the morning but you always ran away. At first, I thought that you didn't like me or something," She explained, her nose scrunched up at her own words in

thought. “But then Annie said that you’re just shy in person so I thought I’d just try to talk to you if I could find an excuse before the summer ends. I’m glad it started raining today.”

Ysa had only gaped at the older girl as she spoke, having had difficulty fully comprehending the words that were being directed at her. If Maria had noticed as she continued speaking, she politely never brought it up.

“I guess it’s just unfortunate that I’m already leaving for Manila tomorrow. I wish we could talk more, especially after today,” She sighed before pausing briefly, as if she was contemplating her next words, then turned to Ysa. “But for now, I just hope you know that you’ve made my mornings this summer very bright and amusing.”

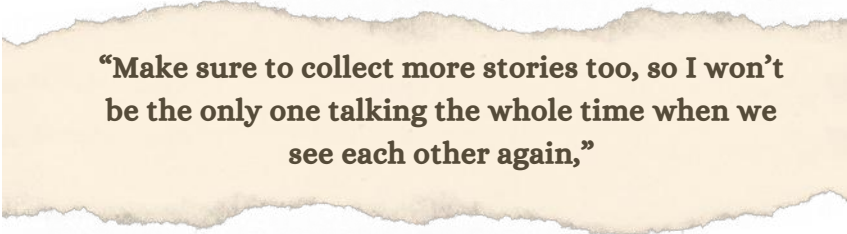
Maria then smiled as she continued before gesturing for Ysa to stand up as well. “Now, come on, let’s get your clothes. You still have to make your last delivery, right?”

The older girl had turned around then, and walked back to the kitchen through the cashier. Ysa, on the other hand, had remained frozen in place for a solid two minutes before she eventually jogged up to the older girl.

Only then had it fully and completely sunken in that that was the moment that Alex and Roseanne were talking about— the conversation that they were destined to have at the beginning of summer if Ysa was simply braver. The words that she’d always wanted to say for five years, maybe even longer, sat heavy on top of her shoulders as she watched the older girl disappear into the back of the

bakery. But, ultimately, no words along those lines had come out.

Ysa had purposefully held herself back, thinking that everyone probably said the same things to Maria all the time. Maybe Cassie Jane Dela Cruz did; maybe Annie did too as Maria's sister. Erik Marquez had definitely said better words of praises to Maria all the time as her boyfriend. Heck, everyone at school had definitely said the same kinds of praise words for Maria all the time.. She deserved it, of course, but Ysa had felt too conscious with herself at that moment, thinking that parroting words that everyone had said to Maria before would have felt too derivative at that point.



“Make sure to collect more stories too, so I won’t be the only one talking the whole time when we see each other again,”

Ysa had thought to herself that the words that bubbled up in her chest—her real and honest thoughts of the girl that she'd idolized for so long—could have waited a little longer, maybe morphed into better ones that could compete with those by the people that were actually close to Maria in time. Soon, next summer or ten years in the future, but not in that moment.

When Ysa followed Maria, she had found the older girl standing by the bakery's brick oven, her damp skirts being folded neatly into a plastic bag.

"Will you be back next summer?" is the only question that she had managed to ask as Maria handed her the plastic bag of her school uniform.

"Will you still be delivering newspapers around the neighborhood next summer?" Maria had asked back in answer with a small smile tugging on the corners of her lips.

Ysa nodded. Unlike Maria, she wasn't going anywhere, anyway. "I'll make sure to get better at sewing by then."

"Make sure to collect more stories too, so I won't be the only one talking the whole time when we see each other again," Maria had smiled, accompanying Ysa to the bakery's entrance. "Safe biking home, then, Ysa. I'll see you next summer, okay?"

Even then, there had been the tiniest hint of uncertainty in Maria's voice, like she herself didn't fully believe her own words. Ysa had quickly picked up on it for she'd somehow unconsciously figured out how to pick up anything and everything about the older girl, but she didn't know back then what it meant. They weren't close in that sense, after all.

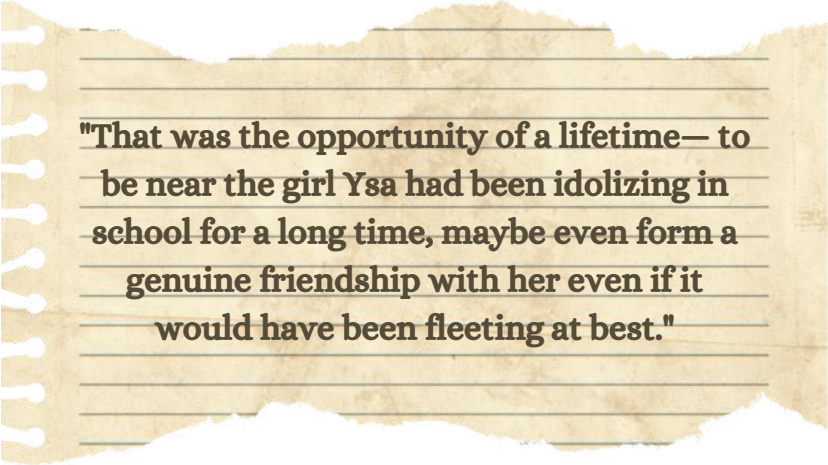
But Ysa had also always been optimistic herself as a

young girl, willfully choosing to ignore it in the moment as she instinctively echoed back, “I’ll see you next summer,” more to herself than to Maria. Ysa had climbed back to her bike, her helmet secured on her head. “Goodbye, Ate Maria.”

“Goodbye.”

Ysa had ridden away from the bakery as the rain completely ceased that morning, eyes never once glanced back as Maria waved goodbye to the younger girl until she turned the corner to her last stop.

It had been nearing the end of May that time, and nearing the last days of summer. It was also the last day that Ysa would ever see Maria Louise Tanjuangco in their quiet hometown of San Agustin. But Ysa hadn’t known it back then, biking home a little slower than she normally did after seeing Maria at the bakery to bask in the morning air that was a little colder than before from the rain.



"That was the opportunity of a lifetime— to be near the girl Ysa had been idolizing in school for a long time, maybe even form a genuine friendship with her even if it would have been fleeting at best."

nang unang
makapunta
sa mall of
asia

by agosto



Spot art by Perry

sinusuri ko ang mga mukha ng tao
sa pagtapak ko sa loob—
nagbabakasakaling makita ka
sa daan-daang nakakasagi sa balikat ko
malaki masyado ang moa
para sa katulad kong dayo lang
sabi mo, memoryado mo na ang bawat sulok;
mga kainan at bilihan
at kung nasaan man ang cr
at alam kong masisipot kita
kahit gaano man kasikip ang daan
kahit halos maglaho ka na sa'yong kaliitan
dahil kahit burahin ko man sa isipan ay—
kabisado ko pa rin ang hulma ng mukha mo
at hanggang sa pag-upo ko sa tabi ng seaside
sa paghagkan ng malamig na hangin sa balat
iniisip ko pa rin kung makikilala mo rin ba ako
sa gitna ng ilog ng mga tao



sa lahat ng kung año ako

by agosto

gawa ako sa korte ng nanay ko—
mula sa lambot at hugis ng mukha
hanggang sa poot na
ipinamana niya.

wala nang iba ang magkakasya
sa mga damit na iniwan niya
sapagka't hinulma ako sa paraang
para sa akin lang ang mga 'yon.

suot ko ang hinanakit
sa magkabilang balikat ko
ang bigat ng minanang galit ang
tunitimbang sa aking manggas.

kabisado ko ang pakiramdam ng kamay niya
sa tuwing pinapaliguan ako at inaayusan
hindi mawawala ang goma't suklay sa palad
pati ang makapal na sinturon at plastik na hanger.

naririnig ko siya sa bawat
sigaw at murang dumudulas sa
dilang noon ay tumitiklop
sa presensya niya.



*ang tanging bagay lang
na hindi ako—
ay ang nanay ko.*



sa pagtitig ko sa salamin ay—
unti-unti kong hinuhubaran ang sarili
mula sa bestidang kulay rosas, subalit
nananatili pa rin ang masangsang nitong amoy sa balat.

ngunit buong lakas kong
huhugasan
at uukitin
ang mga markang naiwan.

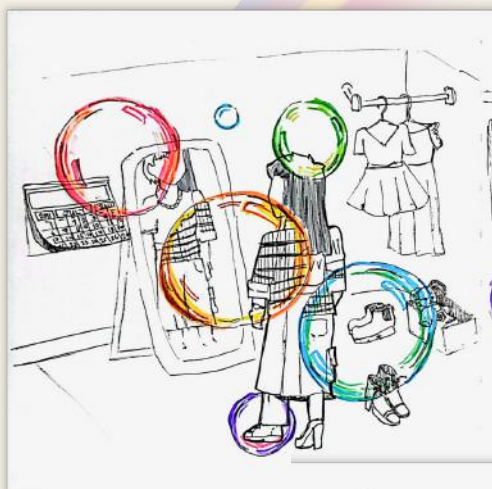
at sa unang pagkakataon
sa wakas ay nahubad na ang damit
na dahan-dahang ititiklop at
papalitan ng panibago.

isusuot ko ang pantalong galling sa ukay-ukay
ang basketball shorts na ninakaw kay kuya
at mga polong lukot na pinaglumaan ni tatay
na buong pusong yayakapin ang katawan ko.

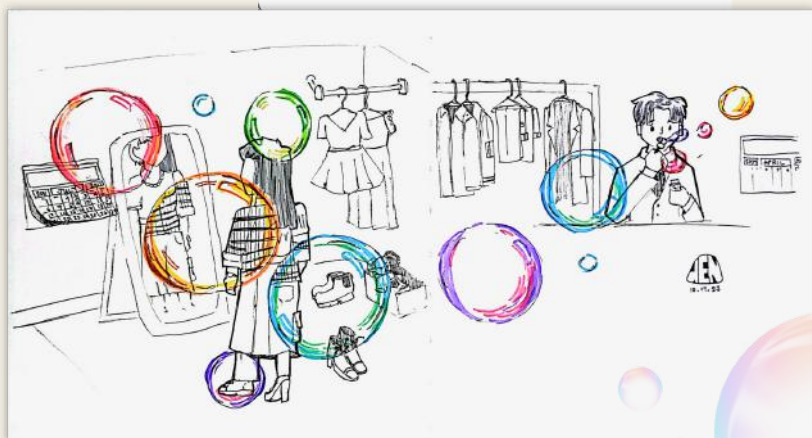
dahil sa lahat ng kung ano ako
ang tanging bagay lang
na hindi ako—
ay ang nanay ko.



bubbles



Art by Den



Pretty Gay

Written by Cheesy Tteokbokki

Art by K_ulai

She was something special.





She made me laugh,



She was outgoing,



KULAI

and
shy,

and
lovable,









and was pretty gay.



in locker 6201

by v clark

your kisses are kept in the dark;
bottled up to multiply
the tiny spheres. letting them glow,
without interruption.
you posit notes, scattered
on ripped filler paper:
01101101 00001010

& 01100011

....-

0시 20분 2NE1 MV

티저의
사랑해

akinyay akay

anay anglay

behind the door to ensure
light doesn't see through.
a box of chocolate almond
sticks, recessed on the corner
opens, reaching for me
at the other end.

i seal your kiss,
locking us in.

only you,
hold the code.





0:40

1:58



FIRST DATE by TRLPLEGODDESS

Maayong Aga

by Anya Sandoval

In this morning, patched together by seamless stitches of yesterdays' hands, wherein how I end and you begin is lost in us, the light sits between me and a drought—a withstanding residue, my best friend. I linger on the gaps of reason with my arms outstretched to reach in emptiness, ready to receive you. I look on, nonetheless, in the territory of love that is everywhere my sight runs to. In this morning, your absence and memory reside in a garden of sad mockery that I gladly tend to. In this morning that is full of you, I am burdened to be without you.

Every morning, I remember a little something of you that makes me full. I make space for you in a bed for one. I clean the plate and cheap silverware in your name. I twist the ring on my finger in places we have gone to. I devote an altar to you where the last slit of light endures the coming of the night in my room. I smile through the delicious sting of citrus in my fingers. I look at us, suspended in our heaven in pixels. I uncurl my hands and continue to stumble in writing with love since you.

Each morning, I look on my shoulder where your initial is perpetually etched for a kiss of you.

I love you. I love you beyond boundaries that stretch forever to where you are. I will love you even when the light I see reaches beyond you. I will love you, singing, in this freedom and cage. I will love you in this distance that permits us. I love mornings. I will love you more at each beginning. I will love you in the ones that will exceed me.



Nauuilol ako sa'yo!
Nauuilol ako sa'yo!
Nauuilol ako sa'yo!

by Zol

Lakad mo pa lang, alam kong ikaw na nga 'yan.
Astig, humahawi, may ere ang dating.
Kung ako sa kanila, hindi ka
mahaharangan,

alam mo iyon?

Kung ako nga lang ang may desisyon,
araw-araw may piyesta para sa iyo.

Sa ngayon, ako muna ang sasalubong,
babati ng kamusta o kaya kain tayo, saglit lang!

Kabisado ko ang timbre ng boses mo;
ang mga walang-humpay mong kuwento.
Alam ko ang hulma
ng iyong batok.

Lagi't-lagi ko na lang ba
kasing sinisilip.

Kapag tumatawa ka,
pati ang mundo sumasabay ng kanta.
Sikreto kong sabi sa'yo:
paborito kong kulay ang rosas.

Bakit? Tanong mo sa akin.
Wala sa itsura mo, biro mo.

Ang mas malupit:
iyon kasi ang kulay ng iyong tenga
kapag ikaw biglang sinasapian ng hiya.

Hindi ka naman iba sa akin.

Pareho tayo ng hugis.

Noong pinagalitan ka
dahil sa gupit mong “mukhang lalaki;”
sumandig ako sa ginhawa ng iyong bisig,
iyong lambing ako umuwi noong
itinakwil sa tahanan dahil sa katotohanan.

Punong-puno ang utak ko tungkol lamang sa'yo.
Puwede na ako maging komedyante
sa dalas ng tawa mo sa aking mga pinagsasasabi

Ako? Lumalaki lalo ang ulo ko.
Parang akong milyonaryo dahil sa'yo.
Kabaliwan na yatang wala akong inisip
kundi ikaw—



umaga; gabi; tanghali; hapon.
pati sa hatinggabi,
minsan aabutan pa ng
tilaok ng manok.
puro ikaw, ako, at tayo.



May pagkakaintindihan tayong
hindi huli ang kiliti sa ibang tao.

Hinayag ko sa'yong lipad sa akin ang make up.
Kumplikado. Mukha akong ginuhitan ng bata.
Ipinagkibit-balikat mo lamang.
Ikaw nga, sagot mo sa akin,
pinamigay mo lahat ng palda't high heels mo.



Bawat bukambibig mo,
bawat sandig at apir at
imbentong handshake natin...

Hindi ito ang unang beses na parang
may tatak sa noo kong: "tibo ako! Lesbian ako!"
Pero, sa totoo lang, ito ang

pinakamalalang humaling sa lahat.

Talas ng tingin mong
nagiging ngiting para lamang sa akin;
Ang kamay mong lapad
at ang aking siyang tinadtad ng kalyo;
at ikaw, siyang hindi ko na tinigilang purihin:

guwapo ng porma mo!
swak talaga gupit mo!

Medyo kinain mo salita't sagot mo:

*Puwede namang pareho tayo.
Gayahin mo 'yung akin.*

puro ikaw, ako, at tayo
puro ikaw, ako, at tayo
70 puro ikaw, ako, at tayo
puro ikaw, ako, at tayo
puro ikaw, ako, at tayo

Muli, kita ko ang tenga mong nagkukulay.
Muli, ang pawisan mong hawak sa'kin.
Ang mga mata mong umiiwas,
ang mga labing nanginginig
dahil sa takot; dahil sa kaba;
ang mga labing gusto kong halikan.

*Oo, sige. Kung iyan ang gusto mo.
Idolo kita, eh.*

May kaunting ilang, walang kasiguraduhan.
Hindi mo na lang sinabing gusto mo pala ako,
sambit ng aking bibig.

At muli, ang minamahal kong halakhak
siyang nanumbalik;
ang mga pisngi mong pula, tulad ng pag-ibig.

Ito na iyon, ika ko.
Sa aking puso, bawat tibok,
para sa'yo.



Spot art by Grovey



SNAKE HELD CAPTIVE

by CHUCHUPURIIN

The world clamored to touch you.
For hours, waves bowed and wept,

choking milkfish and tuna
with the salt of their devotion.

The wolves, with no words for
beauty, could only howl your name,

and I, with no heart for worship,
could only wish you misery.

You sensed it:
my hissing,
my forked, flickering anger.

How easy it would have been
to raise your ankle and snap
my coiled, vine-like spine.

How honest it would have been
to strip me of skin and scale,

to echo the violence of the
First Woman to the First Snake.

My fangs bared themselves
to welcome you, but you—

You smiled right back,
and I could only gape in wonder.



Spot art by Sky



To A Cheater

by Caitlin, she/her

I wrote a letter that shouldn't be sent.
As a writer myself,
I know well enough not to put out
words that are raw and uncensored.
But, as a woman full of rage,
wouldn't it be a waste
to leave this unsaid?

You're lucky.
I hope you know that.
You betrayed a fairly amiable poet.
If I had no self-control—
there would be a story
that's so beautifully-written,
it would ruin your life.

Good riddance

...for now.



Spot art by Orange



I never saw you cry when you broke up with your boyfriend.
I never saw you cry when nobody remembered your birthday.
I never saw you cry when I heard your father curse on your phone.
I never saw you cry when you found out your mom was sick at home; and

I never expected you to cry
when I won you a goldfish.
I didn't know what to do
so I did whatever my heart pleased.

I told you: "I love you,"
and you broke down, sobbing at my chest.
In the middle of a crowded carnival,
just you and I.



by *Clane*

Bakit mo pa siya sinusulatan ng tula?

Ito ang kadalasang tanong ng madla
Nagsasayang daw ako ng oras mag-isip ng mga salita
Hindi rin naman daw aabot sa kaniya,
Hindi niya makikita't mababasa

Mga tula ko raw ba ay aking pighati?
Naglalaman ng pangungulila't hapdi
Sa pag-iwan ng inibig na binibini
Pinagpupuyatan tuwing gabi,
Ngunit iniwan lang din sa huli

Mga sinusulat ko raw ba ay aking pag-asa?
Na isang araw ako'y babalikan niya
At sasabihing siya'y nagkamali't nagkasala
Saka sasabihing ako'y mahal pa

O baka naman mga kalungkutan
Na bumabagabag sa gitna ng gabi,
Nagwawari kung anong nagawang mali

Ngunit ano nga ba ang dahilan?
Ano ang tunay na kasagutan?

Ako'y sumusulat ng tula,
Upang maging malaya.
Para kumawala,
Sa mga labing alaala
Na siyang gumugulo sa kaisipan.
Habang nakadungaw sa bintana,
Tinatanaw ang kalangitan,
Humihiling ng himala sa mga tala



Spot art by Orange

You Will Tell Your Father That You Love a Girl

by Mariya Angelo Pasyon

One day you are going to tell your Dad that you like girls. You might do it after your college graduation, after you've applied to your first job, and after you've taken the law school examinations for the Ateneo, University of the Philippines, San Beda, and Arellano. Then, you will bring him to your favorite Mann Hann branch, the one that overlooks the makeshift river of the Venice Grand Canal, and you will drive your Dad here in your Mom's car because you don't own one yet, then you will read out the menu to him because he can't see very well anymore. After you order, you will begin to talk.

You will tell him stories about apolitical things and safe topics, like your little brother's academic prowess, memories from your childhood, and your interest in his work. Your Dad will respond in kind, talking to you about his retirement and his youth, his insights on geopolitical tensions, and how the sweet and sour spareribs haven't changed throughout the years, hmmm, isn't this nice, anak? I like it. It's consistent.

You will eat together, plates clinking and utensils scraping, and then in the middle of your meal, you will stop. You try not to make it abrupt—but you just can't help it. Shit, you can't take it anymore. Your hands are sweaty, your face is serious, your voice shakes when you say, Dad.

Ano 'yun, anak?

I want to tell you something.

He will pause. He will wipe his mouth with the cheap and thin napkin with the Mann Hann logo on it and say, Okay.



Spot art by Orange

You will take a deep, steadying breath—brace your core and steel your spine—as you tell him that you like women. No, mali, you love women. You've loved women for a while now. (You will not be looking at his face.)

I have a partner, actually. She's beautiful, kind, supportive, and above all else, she's gentle with me. I'd really like for you to get to know her.

The silence will be heavy. You will think of all the ways you can coax the earth to swallow you whole, while your Dad collects himself.

First, he will throw away every daydream he has of walking you down the aisle of a beautiful chapel, church songs and roses and white veil and all. He will have to bury that dream fast because there will be no groom, there will be no bride, and there will be no father-daughter dance during a royal, lavish wedding. He will have to think quickly, too, about an appropriate response, struggling with the two visions he has of himself: one a respected, macho general and the other a father. The general would scream. The general would take you to conversion therapy. The general would pull your hair and push you and break a rib or two.

But the father...

He will take a sip of water when he looks at you.

This role—he knows he has not perfected. There are no rigid guidelines to being a father, after all. In the military, he screams when a stupid diego gets something wrong and sneers when they admit failure. In the military, from his plebe years up to his retirement, he wore the skin of a wolf and a lion, alternating

between the two whichever animal's teeth was sharpest, whichever would get him out of there alive.

But with you...

You are two things to him. First, you are his chubby, bungi, big-cheeked little girl, the subject of his favorite portrait, the crumpled two-by-two picture he kept with him in his breast pocket while he slept in the mountains, hearing gunshots and screams go off in the distance. And the other version of you—the one he is still trying to figure out—is the young, anxious, ambitious woman you are now. The woman paying for the meal with her own money for the first time, trying to make her own path, asking for him to understand.

He will reconcile both, eventually.

But for now, this is what he knows: he loves both of you. (And he will love all of you.)

"Okay," he will say. It will take him a while to say this—maybe three minutes, perhaps four—but he will find the courage to. He will clear his throat. He will joke, "Basta sa Viking's tayo kumain ng..." a pause "girlfriend mo, at basta libre mo."

And you will laugh and cry and try not to tremble because you don't have any money left, actually, but you're so relieved you could vomit. There were a million ways this could have gone wrong. But you look him in the eye, you acknowledge the gray at his temples and the age beneath his eyes, you acknowledge that your father now is not the same father of your youth, the one who wouldn't have said this, who wouldn't have smiled at you like this, and say, "Sige lang, Dad. Sige lang."



Spot art by Grovey

Contributors

4alpas

The Katipunera's First Love, page 1

4alpas is an artist who likes to draw emotion in motion — through dramatic lighting, surrealistic composition, or simply raw emotion. Her username is a wordplay on “aalpas” which means to “break free” in Tagalog — a feeling she aims to proliferate and cherish by being proud of love and the mundane, by drawing it with her heart. You can visit her art through 4alpas on Twitter or Instagram.

Almira Lawod

Triptych: The First Time Fa Mulan Cut Her Hair and Rode Into Battle, page 2

ALMIRA LAWOD is a word-weaver who loves words, waves, wine, and women (not necessarily in that order). More than anything, she is in constant love interest with her Muse, who remains blind and deaf to all of her pleas and her prayers. You can follow her via her Instagram @avx.am

Anagolay

liwayway, page 4

Anagolay is a queer and unqualified collegiate adult from Mindanao. She transcends her words through the bareness and frailty of prose and poetry. She was among the pioneering fellows on the first Anunaw: Bukidnon Writer's Camp held last in September 2023.

Graciela Monsalud

Dear Miriam, page 5

Graciela Monsalud is an 18-year-old Filipino sapphic poet and lead guitarist—a combination too stereotypical she can't help but love. More of her works are posted on her literature account on Instagram @graciewrites__. She believes the world needs more of “living as a lifeless kind yet alive enough to be kind.”

Castle

first confession, five years late, page 6

Castle is a genderqueer femme lesbian based in Quezon City. They are currently studying comparative literature and write poems in their spare time. Some of their work may be found on Twitter @stelrush.

Beau

i know it's for the better, page 7

Beau turns into a poet when he feels a lot of emotions, when things get so overwhelming, when there's so much things to say — which is the entire reason why he's so into the world of writing, whether it be about life-long admiration to sunsets, or love letters dedicated to someone who's so love shaped which happens to be a member of SEVENTEEN. The love letters can vary from 'scoups, be happier than me' to 'scoups !?@?!?' — no in between, so long Beau can write about it.

Perry

Foolish Queer, page 8

Hi! My name is Perry! (they/she/he) [IG @discothequequeen] I'm a 21 year old writer, poet, & artist of all mediums gifted to me by the powers of autism, ADHD, & only child status. I am a half Filipino/Chinese immigrant who grew up in Canada, ran away from a homophobic narcissistic father at 18, lost my mom at age 12, & have lived in 5 different countries. I currently reside in Manila & spend my time hosting queer sapphic parties, crafting the pain away, and being a malewife to my loving (trans athlete and counselor) girlfriend!!!

Karen

first friday mass, page 15

Karen studied at a Catholic all-girls high school a while ago, an experience that greatly influenced her sapphic journey. She enjoys writing poetry and has been writing since she was in high school. Other than writing poetry, she spends her time working as a biologist, focusing on tiny animals called tardigrades. "first friday mass" is her first published work.

Kyle Talag

pretty girls on Sundays, page 16

Kyle Talag is a writer and poet from Quezon City, Philippines who likes to write anything whimsical, unorthodox, or hedonistic. When she is not writing, she is having an existential crisis. You can find more about her at <https://shewastoday.carrd.co/>.

Melchor Elias S.C.

My First Sin Was Lying That I Did Not Like Girls, page 17

Melchor Elias S.C. (or just Elias) is a transmasculine horror komikero and writer that enjoys writing about gay angst, being a chronically online queer and the hyperfixations that fully take his attention. He's currently an animation student based in Bicol.

China Roberto

Wildflower, page 24

For tonight, we are glorious, page 25

China, more frequently known as "Cas", is a Filipino-Chinese writer currently residing in the Philippines. She is the current Associate English Editor for Heights Ateneo, the official literary and artistic publication for her university. Often, her poems find their foundation in past experiences as a way for her to make sense of them. Aside from writing, China likes to jog, discover local cafés, and watch films in her downtime.

Gwenevie Quiambao Bayaua

Magkita Táyo Sa Buwan, page 27

Gwenevie Quiambao Bayaua is a 20 year old writer, illustrator, cosmetic artist, performer, and komik/zine maker from Las Piñas City, Philippines. Their writing and artwork, with overarching themes of existence and participation as a furious queer woman living in the global south can be found independently shared on their social media platform, @DakilangDiwata.

Debi

Under this moonlight, she bestows a gift, page 28

Debi (she/her) is a Filipino aromantic sapphic writer from Quezon City who is currently pursuing a college degree in Creative Writing.

Outside of college, she spends her time attending Kpop concerts, journaling, and writing self-indulgent sapphic prose and poetry. She has also been published in her college's writing organization under the poetry section, motivating her to submit her works to other zines and publications. She aspires to continue writing sapphic works and blinding people with her colorful outfits. You may find her on Instagram and Twitter/X as @worldbydavi.

Otter

Tambanokano, page 29

Otter is a first-time contributor of Filipino sapphic zines. In her free time, she writes emotionally-driven short stories and passages with a touch of existentialism. She aspires to take up scriptwriting as a side job and help write a local sapphic rom-com film or series. You can find her as @Ottermadness_ on Twitter/X.

aloisa

Maria, page 31

aloisa (they/them) often wonders if previous encounters with other women growing up were actually crushes and they couldn't articulate it as such back then or if they just simply had the tendency to admire women so intensely. Regardless, they believe that to love and connect with people is always a good way to pass the short time that we are given on this earth. Currently, they are a Creative Writing major at the Ateneo de Manila University, specializing in Fiction and doing semi-okay at it. You may find them lurking around the Internet at @_aloisa for Twitter and Instagram.

agosto

nang unang makapunta sa mall of asia, page 51

sa lahat ng kung ano ako, page 52

ako si agosto, labinwalong taong gulang na butch lesbian o di kaya'y tomboy mula sa malabon! :3 isang humanistang naghahangad na maging social worker at aktibista, dating student journalist na hindi na gaano marunong mag-sulat, self-proclaimed na graphic designer at cinephile, muling pinapaalala na, mula ilog hanggang dagat, lalaya ang palestina at atin ang kulayaan!

Den

Bubbles, page 54

I'm Den, a 23-year-old queer woman who has a keen eye for art and layouting.. and uhm.. women. Finishing my studies relating to psychology. Short masc/ androgynous person who likes to play first person shooting and battle arena games. I recently enjoy low budget cosplaying kasi wala pang pera pambili ng costumes haha. Mutuals? My art dump account is @_ddennyl on Twitter hehe

Y.L. Domingo

Nicole, page 55

Y.L. Domingo (they/she) is a psychology major slash nonbinary lesbian who religiously listens to Taylor Swift while writing about all her unlived lives and the inherent pain of living (and enjoying it). They are currently a contributor to The Ether Novocaine at tethernovocaine.wordpress.com, a self-run archive of fiction, prose, and poetry drawn from the crevices of her own mind. Although she is a tragedy girlie, they are also a hopeless romantic who recognizes the beauty of being alive and all the ability they have to turn impossibilities and dreams into realities.

Cheesy Tteokbokki

Writer, *Pretty Gay*, page 57

Cheesy Tteokbokki studies at De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde, taking up the course Bachelor of Arts in Governance and Public Affairs. She is currently a feature writer for Explained PH. You may find Cheesy Tteokbokki on Instagram as @cheesyshots_andworks.

k_ulai

Artist, *Pretty Gay*, page 57

k_ulai is a wlw artist and sociology major, intent on drawing girls in love and the occasional pretty boy. Her twitter handle is @k_ulai and her tumblr is kulai.tumblr.com.

v clark

in locker 6201, page 65

v clark is a researcher and writer based in mandaluyong. they are currently a poetry editor for hominum journal, an online literary magazine that seeks to go beyond the anatomy of narrative. their works have appeared in sine liwanag, novice magazine, sinuman magazine, and kino punch.

TRPLEGODDESS (Sky)

Hanging by the telephone, page 66

Hi, I'm Sky! I love to make colorful illustrations about the fun and magic in everyday life. I also love *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) a little too much. Socials: [instagram.com/trplegoddess](https://www.instagram.com/trplegoddess) | twitter.com/trplegoddess

Anya Sandoval

Maayong Aga, page 67

Anya Sandoval writes with love in all forms.

Zo

Nauulol ako sa'yo!, page 68

Si Zo (they/she) ay isang non-binary lesbian mula sa pagmamahal ng peminismo, aktibismo, dyornalismo, at ng kapwa bakla ng lipunan. Hindi pa siya “out” sa kaniyang magulang. Mahilig siyang manood ng mga kanseladong sapphic shows, Hello Kitty, Loona, at pagiging cat parent. Nagsulat na rin siya dati tungkol sa pag-aaklas, ang estado ng bansa, at lesbiyanismo.

Narito ang koleksiyon ng kaniyang mga malikhaing sulat:

<https://zofoliocreative.carrd.co/>

Maari rin siyang makita gamit ng @zoeniche sa Twitter.

CHUCHUPURIIN

Snake Held Captive, page 72

CHUCHUPURIIN is a portmanteau formed from Chuchu (of Revolutionary Girl Utena) and Pompompurin (of Sanrio)—but unlike the lightheartedness that her pseudonym implies, CHUCHUPURIIN spends most of her time stressing over academics, stressing over mommy issues, or destressing through toxic codependent yuri. CHUCHUPURIIN knew she was sapphic as soon as she knew what a “crush” meant, but if one were to ask her to be specific, she would point to the two-day-long heartbreak her ten-year-old self endured after finding out that Daniel Padilla, unlike her classmates in her all-girls Catholic school, wasn’t actually a butch lesbian.

Caitlin

To A Cheater, page 73

When I was younger, I often romanticized being hurt and would get excited at the thought of writing so many poems about the agony of losing someone I love. Now, the younger me has two women to thank for breaking Future Caitlin’s heart. My submission is about one of my realizations after getting my heart broken twice: Realizing that I got cheated on for the first time in my life.

Treziel Mae Mayores

Vivid, page 74

Treziel Mae Mayores is a poet who likes getting lost in her thoughts. She loves the rainy season but treats the sun as her muse. When she's not busy cuddling her cat, or cycling around the village, she writes on her blog called "Ramblication." Her work is featured and forthcoming in *Trash to Treasure Literature*, *eMerge*, and *Haunted Words Press* to name a few. She also tweets @the_meiyor.

Clane

[Untitled], page 75

I go by the name Clane. I am an undergraduate student and an aspiring writer. I use writing to create various literary works as an outlet for my emotions that I cannot directly express. Honestly, I'm not sure what I should include here because I'm submitting this entry spontaneously. I share my works on a private blog that only my close friends are aware of, as I believe my works are a part of me that reveals my most vulnerable state. Besides writing, I also enjoy cooking, listening to music, and gaming.

Mariya Angelo Pasyon

You Will Tell Your Father That You Love a Girl, page 76

Mariya Angelo Pasyon is a Political Science student and a prose editor at *HaluHalo Journal*. Her work has been published in *New Feathers Anthology* and *healthline zine*. In her spare time, she is an avid reader of queer novels, and a writer who puts queer characters in the center of her love stories, her family dramas, her gritty, historical fictions, and even her meditative, literary pieces.

About *Paraluman*

A Filipino Sapphic Anthology



Kung nakaabot ka dito, maraming salamat sa iyong suporta sa aming anthology! Ginawa ang “Paraluman: A Filipino Sapphic Anthology”, also known as “Paraluman Anthology” or “Paraluman PH,” para magkaroon ng plataporma ang mga Filipino sapphic creatives. Para rin ito makabuo ng komunidad (kahit online lang) na makabasa, makakita at ipahayag ang ating identidad sa isa’t-isa; para alam natin na hindi tayo nag-iisa.

Paraluman PH is not the first of its kind to provide a queer avenue of expression and creativity. Hanga kami sa mga mas nakatatandang at naunang ipaglaban ang karapatan nating makilala sa loob at labas ng Pilipinas. Pangarap lang namin ipagpatuloy ang kanilang pag-iral sa ating kalayaan sa ganitong paraan. Sana sa iyong mata, natupad namin ito.



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(Issue #1, 2024)

Moderators and organizers

Elias | K | Rams | Zo

Writers and proofreaders

Ann | Beau | Castle

Artists

Grovey | Han | Orange | Perry | Sky

Online and social media monitor

Clq

Zine formatter

Den

bpi!

Paraluman

Account number: xxxxxxxxxxx927

Want to read more?
Donate what you can to Paraluman and help sustain a Filipino lesbian/sapphic anthology!



gcash!

The money used for this effort comes out of our pockets, as we want to keep this anthology as accessible as possible. The money donated are allocated to the following: maintaining our website hosting; increasing budget for physical publication; providing incentives for volunteers; donating to relevant feminist, lesbian, queer, and other community organizations. We'd also post transparency reports on our social media accounts whenever needed. **Thank you for your support and look forward to more from us!**

Transfer fees may apply.

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Paraluman

A Filipino Sapphic Anthology

Issue #1: Unang Sulyap

Find us online

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*for the yearners, the lovers, and to the
ones healing from so-called firsts*