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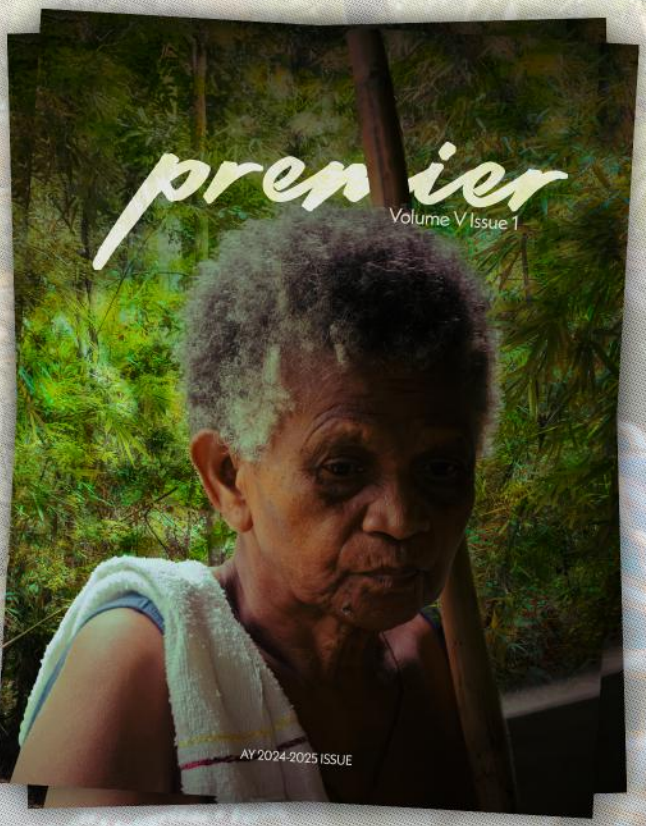
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About the *Cover*

Behind the hustle and bustle of city cars, lies a hidden beauty amongst the forest. Amidst the quiet embrace of the mountains, a simple exchange unfolds — a conversation with the people that have long lived with the rhythms of the land.

In this issue, The Premier Post presents a collision of two worlds between generations. Like the trees that surroud their familiar home, their daily life moves at the pace of nature.

As a planted seed grows taller and full of bare fruits, their stories are one that is deeply rooted in ancestral wisdom and experiences. In every shared story, the past finds a voice — and the future, a guide.

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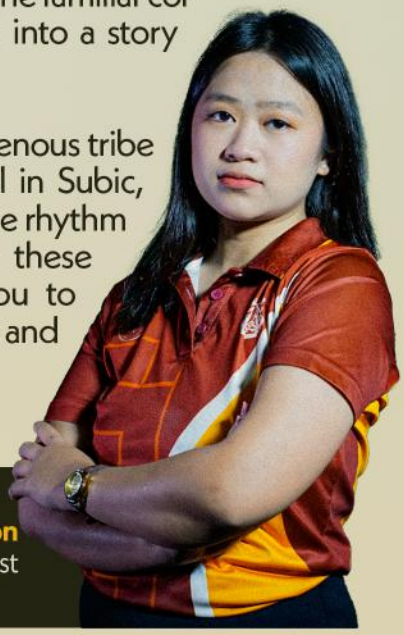
Editor's *Note*

What we protest must never be silenced.

Let me lead you into a quiet world, vast and verdant. A place where the wind speaks in whispers, and the earth hold stories too sacred to shout. Here, in the heart of nature, serenity thrives — but its voice is often drowned out.

In the Volume V, Issue 1 of The Premier — the official magazine of The Premier Post in Olongapo City — we step beyond the familiar corners of our campus and into a story often overlooked.

We walk with the indigenous tribe of the Pamulaklakin Trail in Subic, whose lives echo with the rhythm of the forest. Through these pages, we challenge you to listen deeply, act boldly, and stand in solidarity.



Arahbella Grace Baylon
Editor-in-Chief, ThePremierPost



Cutting Culture and Conscience

When the government decides to cut lessons about art, morals, and world culture from its tertiary curriculum, it is not just syllabus revision, but an act of amputation to rhe very soul of the nation's future.

An article published by GMA News, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), in coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd), plans to remove these foundational general subjects — The

Cartoon by Mark Joshua Gallardo

Contemporary World, Ethics, and Art Appreciation from the college curriculum, framed as a cleanup for duplication

If the issue at hand is about learning duplication, why not also remove Physical Education, General Science and Mathematics in the curriculum for college students?

Success is not just measured and taught on textbooks and lectures. Sometimes, conscience, good will, and being grounded by culture will lead one.

DepEd Assistant Secretary Janur Datukan commented that these courses already appear in basic education under secondary education subjects such as Araling Panlipunan, MAPEH, and Values Education. Datukan also reasoned that the three mentioned courses will be relocated to Senior High, freeing roughly a semester of college study. However, this mere freeing a couple of loads in college might change a crucial personality foundation of a college student, who has a different level of thinking compared to a high schooler.

When it comes to efficiency and depth, CHED and DepEd argue this streamlining could shorten college, reduce unit costs, and leave more time for on the job training (OJT). However, this will leave thousands of humanities professors displaced and degrade academic rigor, stripping tertiary education of its ethical, cultural, and artistic foundation.

This plan alone is putting holistic education at risk, narrowing down educational lens, undermining critical thinking, moral reasoning, and cultural awareness.

With the government pushing to compress college appears driven by neoliberal, employment-centric goals.

The Manila Times argued in an article how this educational recalibration manifests a more utilitarian approach of learning rather than a humanistic one.

Stripping college education of subjects that foster humanities and culture is a risky shortcut. If CHED and DepEd proceed, efficiency and intellectual depth should be balanced, never losing sight of the broader purpose of education, to not just produce high skilled workers, but also well-rounded citizens of society.

Success is not just measured and taught on textbooks and lectures. Sometimes, conscience, good will, and being grounded by culture will lead one.

Someday, machines produced by technology will overtake a lot of professions, but any machinery will never be able to compensate the concept of ethics, culture, and arts. The knowledge acquired, the skills mastered and enhanced in these courses will never be replicated by any innovation.

Climate Change is Expensive

The Need for Government and Corporate Accountability within the Environmental Crisis of Ordinary Filipinos

■ *Angustia Juelle Danao*

In a world where the climate clock ticks down with only 6 years and 201 days left, and in a country where environmental issues are often sidelined in favor of "infrastructure development," climate change is no longer a distant threat. It's a harsh reality creeping into the daily lives of every Filipino.

"Within the broad pressing issues in the Philippines, including the Sierra Madre deforestation, the privatization of Chocolate Hills, and untreated water wastes in urbanized areas—also lie the confined personal struggles that the average Filipino, even you, experience.

> ***Amid these experiences, we often miss another hidden impact: Climate change is real and costly, hitting the population where it hurts the most.***

During extreme heat and rain surges, many turn to air conditioning to find relief when temperatures soar up to 50 degrees. But when cold snaps intensify, heaters and blankets become necessities at home, along with medicines for when someone falls ill.

At the height of frequent rainfall changes, drought and extreme floods also become existent—which destroys the crop yield of farmers and harms water supplies, and then increases the prices for food and water scarcity.

And when the marginalized are at risk to lose their homes within the hands of displacement, natural disasters, and poor urban planning, every single one of their homes costs a large sum of their savings to repair.

While these hardships are felt deeply by individuals and communities, they stem from decisions made far beyond our households and personal management—decisions shaped by government policies and economic priorities.

Environmental incidents as a vicious cycle that every Filipinos face, which underscores how climate change can take away loads of pesos in plain sight. However, the problem paints a bigger picture beyond the individual sustainable ethics of every Filipino.

Its bigger struggle lies in recognizing that the causes for climate change is not just about personal contributions; it is a systemic issue where the percentage majorly contributes to the nation-wide political and economic decisions made by our government.

The Philippine government plays a crucial role in addressing the environmental crisis. Its implemented policies, budget allocations and regulations directly shape how Filipinos can face the climate crisis.

Without accountability and transparent governance, these efforts risk falling short or becoming costly mistakes, placing an even heavier burden on ordinary citizens. With that, effective action requires the government to lead responsibly and ensure resources are used wisely.

Importantly, even when the conversation doesn't directly address the larger issues, everything is inherently political—including environmental matters and the way society chooses to manage and respond to them.

To truly address climate change, we need to look beyond individual actions and see the bigger picture. Existing large corporations and government agencies; especially those in mining, agriculture, and energy, have a significant impact on our environment and must be held accountable for the harm their practices have affected large sums of citizens.

Without major changes at this level, individual efforts are close to ineffective. The environmental damage from government and corporation decisions is too massive and fast-moving to ignore.

> ***"And in the moment when these large units leap into sustainable decisions that benefits every single one of our communities, only then can we hope for the Climate Clock to slow down before it's too late.***

The window for meaningful action is closing, and only through major systemic changes in how we handle existing and potential problems within our environment, can we hope to secure a climate that will manage to last for many more years to come.



Page Design by Geoffrey Lee Garcia

When Fake Becomes Fact: The Alarming Rise of AI Deception

■ *Shairelle Suba*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become deeply embedded in our society, shaping a world where technology evolves at lightning speed. Today, images and videos can be generated and circulated online without meaningful restrictions, blurring the line between what is real and what is artificial. This growing trend poses a threat to our judgment, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish fact from fiction.

AI opens a world of possibilities, not only in education, but also in the realms of entertainment and media. However, alongside its convenience and creativity, AI also brings with it serious consequences that undermine social trust, violate privacy, and compromise the integrity of information. It has become a powerful tool in digital editing, producing convincing results with just a single tap.

A recent trend on TikTok allows users to type prompts and generate AI videos that mimic real-life situations. What's alarming is how realistic these videos appear, complete with believable people and settings. To the untrained eye, they could easily be mistaken for actual footage.

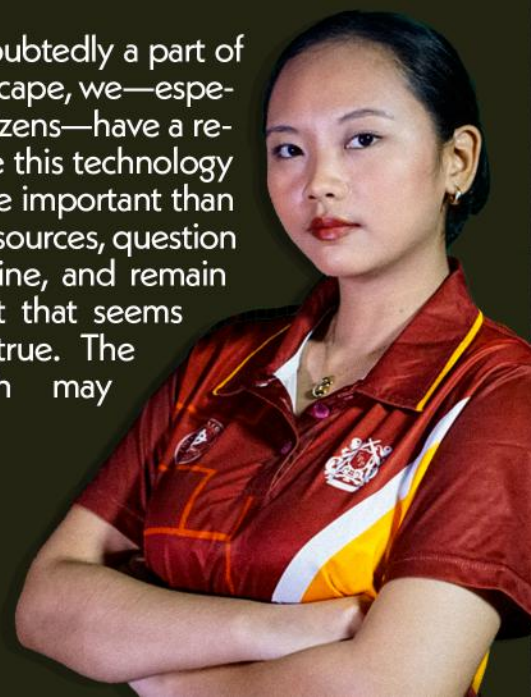
This issue echoes the popularity of Deepfakes, a technology that swaps faces in videos, often placing celebrities' likenesses onto others' bodies. While once considered entertaining or humorous, Deepfakes now raise serious ethical concerns. They can be used to make public figures appear to say or do things they never did, potentially transforming entertainment into a vehicle for fraud and manipulation.

At first glance, these may seem like harmless digital experiments. But in truth, they pose a real danger. AI-generated content can be weaponized to spread misinformation, particularly among older generations who may not be as adept at spotting doctored content. In a country already grappling with the persistent problem of fake news, the misuse of AI threatens to further erode public trust and distort factual discourse.

Consider the recent incident involving Senator Ronald "Bato" Dela Rosa, who shared an AI-generated video of two students allegedly speaking out against Vice President Sara Duterte's impeachment. Although the video was tagged with "#AI," the senator appeared unaware of its inauthentic nature and failed to acknowledge his mistake when called out. This highlights how even public officials can fall victim to or contribute to the spread of AI-driven misinformation.

Such incidents show how AI can fabricate reality and falsely validate claims, potentially fueling political unrest and deepening societal divides. If left unchecked, this digital distortion may lead to widespread manipulation, propaganda, and mistrust.

While AI is undoubtedly a part of our modern landscape, we—especially as digital citizens—have a responsibility to use this technology ethically. It is more important than ever to verify our sources, question what we see online, and remain critical of content that seems too real to be true. The future of truth may depend on it.



The Philippines Bounty System

■ *Kane Darryl Muega*

As someone who is deeply concerned with social injustices, I firmly believe that controversies circulating in the Department of Justice (DOJ) and Philippine National Police - Criminal Investigation and Detention Group (PNP-CIDG) are identical to one another.

Several years passed, yet different news and published articles we heard are cut with the same cloth and faces. In 2017, I was in high school when I saw the news about Kian Delos Santos, a 17 year-old teenager who was being dragged into an alley. I remember thinking, "This can't be real. Not here." Seven years later, I found myself repeating that sentence. Only this time, it happened in my town but in a different scenario where the case of "Tatay Pruding" in Olongapo City proves that history repeats itself.

I used to think high hopes that something good will happen, seven years from now things will get better. I thought the tables would be turned, where there's a rotten apple on top of the table just like the justice system in the Philippines until today.

The heartbreaking case of Prudencio "Pruding" Cebu Calubid Jr., a 81-year-old retired technician, was arrested at his home in Olongapo City last December by the Criminal Investigation and Detention Group (CIDG) after he was claimed as a top-ranking NPA leader who had gone missing in 2006. The problem? Tatay Pruding is a retired technician, a father, and has never gone missing. But he did share the name of a wanted man.

Filipinos are bizzare to have common names that cause someone to be cursed. In Tatay Pruding's case, his name led to his wrongful wrongful arrest. If that's not a cruel twist of bureaucratic laziness, I don't know what is.

These cases reminded me of our own CC Exposé facebook page, where facts are often buried under reactions and shares. A meme spreads faster than a correction. A screenshot becomes a verdict. We laugh, we comment, and we move on—never really knowing if we hurt someone.

> ***Just like the justice system, digital spaces also have a bounty system: the prize isn't justice or truth, but virality.***

The tragedy is not just that these things happen, but that they keep happening.

If our justice system can mistake an 81-year-old man for a ghost of the past, and if our student body can mistake rumors for reporting, then we are all part of the same broken loop.

We owe Tatay Pruding more than sympathy. We owe each other better judgment—whether we wear badges or hold smartphones.



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A Reasonable Rise or A Burden Too Heavy?

on the Proposed Tuition Hike for A.Y 2025-2026

■ *Aurora S. Aurora*



In times when every peso counts, the sudden rise of tuition fees proposed by Columban College, Inc. (CCI) for academic year 2025-2026 strikes a deep chord in the hearts of students and families, as well as faculties and non-teaching workforce already battling economic uncertainty.

In a consultation meeting conducted by the Finance and Administrative Department with the school's stakeholders on January 10, 2025, CCI proposed a 3.5% matricular increase, targeting to maximize wage increase for the workforce, maintenance and modernization of equipment and facilities, and savings for necessary purchases, blended learning essentials, and others.

The increase depends on the inflation rate that Olongapo is currently subjected to, cited as key justifications for the hike. While the administration emphasizes that adjustment is necessary to sustain quality education, maintain employee salaries, and improve facilities,

many stakeholders are left wondering if this move truly balances institutional needs with student welfare.

> The increase was decided to meet with the country's inflation rate, this includes prioritizing an increase on wages of the school's employees, facility and equipment improvements, maintenance, and others

Dr. Eric Matriano, Vice President for Finance and Administrative Services said during the tuition fee increase consultation conducted last January 2025, allowing the school to keep up with the economic pace fhe country is undergoing.

It is without doubt; inflation has affected everyone – from basic commodities to transportation. Schools are not exempt from these economic shifts, and operating costs naturally follow the upward trend. The teaching and non-teaching employees deserve fair wages, maintenance costs grow, and learning resources must keep up with technological demands. These realities make it difficult to argue against any form of tuition increase.

However, the question remains: how much is too much? For many students – especially those relying on scholarships, part-time jobs, or struggling families, even a small increase can pose significant hardship. Education should be a right, not a privilege for the few who can afford it.

In times like this, CCI has considerate ways to meet with the stakeholders halfway. There are discounts, grants, and scholarships offered to students who meet the requirements.

> ***If the goal is truly to enhance education, the school must ensure no student is left behind due to financial constraints.***

In a time of economic difficulty, understanding and compromise are not just ideal – they are essential.

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Columbanite Favorites

Food Places and Comfort Finds



In the vicinity of Columban College, Inc., both Main and Barretto campuses, there are humble food spots awaiting the hardworking, most probably, hungry and starving Columbanites.

With nothing more than just a 2-minute walk from the Main campus, you'll find one of the cheapest burgers in town, a Korean-inspired one called Moongchi Burger. With just a single bite, you can already taste how flavorful and satisfying their burgers are. These aren't your ordinary burgers either, they're chicken burgers! And not just that, they come in so many different flavors.

They also serve other dishes like ramyun, spaghetti, and a variety of chicken meals. Starting at Php 69, their food is so worth it. It won't shock your wallet, especially considering how good it tastes. The place is spacious enough for groups of students too, giving you not just a spot to eat, but also a space to share stories and create memories.



Lorem Ipsum

Another go-to comfort food of Columbanites is siomai rice, found just beside SM City Olongapo Downtown, a short walk from the Main campus. You'll see a few vendors parked around there, using their small tricycle and bike carts to serve up this student favorite. It's kind of crazy to think that for just Php 30, you can already get fried rice with siomai, perfect for students who are always on the go. And yep, there are flavor options too: pork, beef, even Japanese siomai. There's no official seating area, but that doesn't stop students from settling down beside the cart or somewhere nearby to eat. And honestly, those simple, spontaneous moments of eating whilestanding with your barkada, laughing and eating by the street, they hit differently. Food stops like these are proof that who you're with matters more than where you are.

Moving on to the Barretto campus, though almost 7 km apart from the Main campus, the food culture is actually no different than the other. At the very front of the campus itself, you will come across these small vendors also using either a small tricycle or bicycle mobile carts, selling various kinds of street foods. There are actually plenty of choices to choose from. There are your classic Filipino street foods like fishball, isaw, kwek-kwek, kikiam, and etc. There are also some vendors who offer different snacks like turon, banana cue, while others sell different flavors of drinks like juices or palamig.

Photos from www.facebook.com



And of course, the range of prices are still very much studentfriendly, starting with just as cheap as Php 5. These simple yet meaningful quick bites have become part of the daily routine of students, with it being able to recharge them in b tween classes or to unwind after a long day.

And lastly, if you're in the mood for something a little extra, just one quick tricycle ride away from the Barretto campus is a spot that has become a comfort food fave for Columbanites who have a bit more than the usual student budget. It's called The Coffee Shop, and it's superpopular for its jumbo tacos and big servings. They also serve crowd favorites like seafood rice, classic Filipino dishes like adobo and pinakbet, plus a good selection of American-style breakfast sets, omelets, sandwiches, and other appetizers. Their menu's pretty diverse too, offering Filipino, Asian, and even international dishes. They've also got drinks for every mood, whether it's coffee, tea, or even cocktails. Prices range from Php 200 to Php 400, so it's more of a treat-yourself kind of place, perfect for those "I deserve this" meals after a stressful school day. This is the kind of place where you would bring your classmates to if the vibe you're looking for is a chill one, wanting to stay a little longer for some chitchats, and eat some more variety of food, plus there is an option for an indoor or outdoor seating.



Thinking about these food places, devouring all the delicious and filling foods they serve surely feels like a hug to all the ever driven and hardworking students. It is like a reward that awaits for them no matter how good or bad a school day went to each and every student. But one thing that we all should focus on is that these food places are more than just eateries, they also serve other things, some things that one can't just easily eat and swallow — that it will always be a vessel for connecting with one another.

We all pretty much have heard the saying food brings people closer together. But really, how many of us have actually felt that? How many times have we said yes to a simple lunch invite from a classmate, not knowing it would turn into one of the best parts of our day? How often do we take a moment to appreciate the bonds we build over shared meals, quick bites, or even just sabay na meryenda? It's funny how something as ordinary as eating can lift your mood, make you laugh, and remind you that you're not alone in the chaos of school life. And honestly, how often do we stop to soak in those moments of bonding over a simple meal?



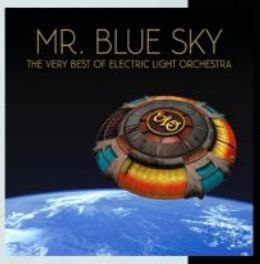
These food places are spaces where we can just be, where we build friendships, find comfort, and feel a little less overwhelmed. So let this beautiful, unspoken ritual of sharing food, hopping from one go-to spot to another, laughing in between bites, splitting a ₱30 siomai rice, be a reminder that even in the most mundane moments, we're collecting some of the most meaningful memories. No matter how small the space, how cheap the food, or how short the break, it becomes a kind of home when it's shared with good company and good food.

songreviews: ICONIC TRACKS to play for school days. >>>

■ *Jemimah Samaniego*

Every early morning on the way to school, students tend to plug in their headphones and play their favorite music on their phones. Or turn the radio on to fill the silence as they ride towards their morning classes. Even as classes end, students retire to their phones once again to play some relaxing tunes to end the long day. Music is a universal language that can soothe, motivate, and understand everyone as they go about their daily lives. But what are some good song recommendations that will capture the essence of a student's life? Here are some of the most iconic and trendy tunes that you can play as you prepare for your busy days ahead and for ending it with a bang:

1



Mr. Blue Sky

Electric Light Orchestra

One of the most instantly recognizable songs, Mr. Blue Sky, was voted the "happiest song of all time."

A feel-good song that has been featured in many iconic movies and series. Such as: Megamind (2010), The Office, Guardians of the Galaxy 2 (2017), Dr Who, and many more. The song offers good vibes and can remind you of your favorite movies as you go about your day. Even with its old age, the song remains recognizable and catchy to the youths today.

2



Stressed Out

Electric Light Orchestra

Nothing like classic alternative rock that grants expression and creativity.

It's truly melancholic when many of the youths today struggle with the transition from teens to early adulthood. While the older generations may not fully understand their struggles, their tastes certainly reflect their lives through a language many will understand. The song and its music video may seem straightforward at first, but a deeper look into the song reveals clever little verses such as: "My name's Blurryface, and I care what you think," signifying the singer values others' opinion of him. The song also sheds light on the issues of mental health, a common problem that is not considered nearly enough in a young person's daily life.

Photos from www.google.com

3



Di Na Muli

Itchyworms

A soothing yet powerful melody that reminds you that there's more to life waiting for you.

If you have been keeping up with the latest trend on TikTok, you will see many graduating students participate in this heartfelt trend. From a group of bright young minds coming together to transition to full graduates as they celebrate their successes throughout their hardships in school. The song has a beautiful melody that can put one at ease, yet it puts a strong sense of nostalgia and a hint of bitter sweetness to it that it will get you reflecting out the window as if you were in a dramatic scene.

4



Multo

Cup of Joe

What seems like a romance song about a lost love may be a reflection of oneself.

Hearing this upbeat song will have you believe that it mourns lost love. But is that all it truly means? The song is haunting yet beautiful and may be portraying a deeper message than what was initially thought. Everyone wonders what or who they could have been in the past; Whether they've changed due to unfortunate circumstances, or the dawn oftime naturally changing a person as they grow older. This is what the song reflects in its verses, the "what-ifs," the possibilities, and the paths that could have been taken if one were to have remained as the ghost of their past self.

5



Feel It

D4VD

A fun and light-hearted romance that will leave you giddy and in high spirits.

From the popular Amazon Prime Series "INVINCIBLE," the song Feel It is a catchy tune that talks about a romance that one does not want to let go: "This the type of love that you can't ignore." This is also a bonus for those who are fans of the show "INVINCIBLE" to be reminded of the fun episodes that leave them on the edge of their seats. The song was quite an accomplishment on its own, as the singer D4VD himself mentions how the song differs from his usual style of sad music compositions. The rhythm and flow of the song features heavy bass lines and catchy guitar riffs that highlight the singer's falsetto.

Page Design by Geoffrey Lee Garcia

the art of surviving aeta edition

■ *Kevin Brian & Shairelle Suba*

High up in the mountainous region of Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA), where birds' chirps echo through dense forest and the cold breeze brushes against skin, the Pamulaklakin Forest Trail can be seen after a few drives uphill. But other than the beautiful scenery and hiking trails, an Aeta tribe thrives.

Living in harmony with nature, Aetas survived a century of cataclysm. They even encountered hurdles from past colonizers but were never banished from their homeland—they remain, thriving and surviving.



Notable for their curly hair and dark skin, the Aetas live a mile away from the noisy buzz of urbanization. They flourish in the forest, making them a well-known primordial ethnicity in the Philippines. Even seeing the march of modernization, the tribe remained settled at the mountain— not to resist change, but to preserve the primitive way of living bestowed to them by their ancestors.

Photos by Arjay Sebastian Rejano

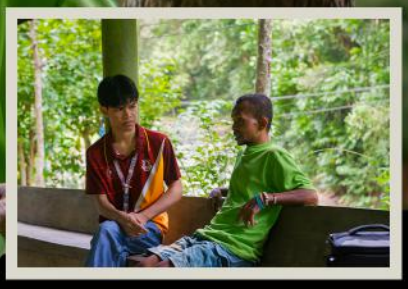
A Living Testament of Survival

Noel Abraham, a 45-year-old local, embodies the spirit of survival— not by physical battle, but in a practical brawl of everyday life.

A father of three, Noel raises his youngsters with the moral values he has inherited from his forebears. For him, the forest is the tribe's primal source of life, viewing it as a multipurpose realm for them, as it provides food and shelter, and serves as a fortress for the natives.

Pamulaklakin became a tourist spot and filming area for many, attracting enormous visitors each year. Noel considers himself a fortunate one to be a local there.

Being a tourist guide of the place, his devotion to work shines through to tourists, viewing the Aetas a hidden gem of their own domain.viewing it as a multipurpose realm for them, as it provides food and shelter, and serves as a fortress for the natives.







On the other hand, 53-year-old Pilita Mesina has 6 children. Four of them are already grown-ups and have their own families, while the remaining two are still studying in high school. However, two of her eldest children passed away due to scarcity in resources. Even with the rich environment of the Pamulaklakin, finance is still a problem for the Aetas' survival.

Despite the devastating loss of her children, Pilita strives to make ends meet through one of their main sources of income which is being a tour guide in the Pamulaklakin.



A Day in a Life as a Guide and Provider

Waking up at dawn, Noel walks a kilometer to reach their campsite on time. Upon arrival, his smile symbolizes a warm welcome to the guests— mirroring a hospitable behavior Filipinos are known for.

Noel has an unpredictable job. He only gets to work when guests arrive. But, instead of staying at home to rest in downtime, he tends to hunt wild animals and gather plants at the mount's peak to provide meals. His tireless service as camp docent and as a father reflects his dedication to his community and family.

As a tourist guide, his duty includes survival teaching. Every stick turns to torch, and stones made as compass, mark his expertise in the ancestral techniques of surviving the wilderness. Showcasing these skills is both an honor and satisfaction to him, whilst it brings pride and livelihood for himself and his co-workers.

Noel never finished school, largely due to discrimination. Although he tried to show acceptance and dedication, but scarce humility forced him to step back— thus, isolation became his refuge from close-mindedness. The ghost of his past is a reminder to continue striving, not for himself anymore, but for the future of the children he is raising.

Pilita also shared the same sentiment. The height of the Pamulaklakin's busiest days is during the summer months. Thus, when there are no tourists, especially during the rainy season, they tend to plant and harvest crops such as kamote (sweet potatoes), bananas and many more. These harvest crops will then be sold in the market for their deserved price, serving as an alternative for their tour guide.

They also specialize in herbal medicine made from the plants they grew in the hiking trail. Other than the purpose of surviving, they also protect their naturalesque abode which was passed on for many generations.

For Pilita, being a tour guide does not only mean work for her, but it is for the sake of her children. As she has also not finished her education, she believes that having an education is the key to success. She wants them to live a better life, to strive not out of desperation, but out of dreams — not merely to endure, but to soar.

pamumuhay

The Place They Call Home

Other than the trail, there is a place that the local Aetas call home. It is called the "Pastolan Village". The village is where approximately 330 families of Aetas live. It is located in the province of Bataan, within the Subic Bay Freeport Zone (SBFZ).

The Aetas witnessed and lived through the colonization of the Americans. Thus, they are not just considered ancestral in the place as their way of life echoes from a time before the modern cities of today had names.

As time went by, the pure Aetas are mixed with "unat" through family generations. "Unat" is a term which the Aetas use to refer to people with straight hair.

The village is where the Aetas from former generations strived and grew up as not just a tribe but also their own person. They preserved the culture and tradition by passing it to their children, who continue to do the same.

A Message from the Leaves of the Trees

One thing they want to link to outsiders is quite simple yet powerful; as every tree serves as the beacon of hope to the Aetas, we must protect it at all costs. A wake-up call to everyone that nature is a great gift from above, and we shouldn't take it for granted.

They no longer mind the discrimination they once faced from straight hair and lighter skin. What matters to them now is a recognition for their pure hard work and respect for nature, as nature is a great provider after God.

Unlike guiding tourists, being the guardian of the forest has no retirement. As the Aetas thrive alongside it, they are carved in every branch of every tree.

Page Design by Geoffrey Lee Garcia

BALANCING BOOKS AND BATTLES

■ *Shairelle Suba*

Two different people with two different stories. What makes them alike is the passion and determination that burns for the same purpose.

For a regular student, meeting academic requirements and managing study time can be challenging. But for Warren and Yna, balancing work and studying are just the tip of the iceberg.

20-year-old Warren Watts is currently an upcoming second-year nursing student enrolled at Columban College, Inc. (CCI). Due to financial constraints and the necessity to support a sibling also pursuing higher education, he was compelled to take a one-year hiatus from his studies.

Warren is the second eldest among five children. During his one-year pause of schooling, he decided to work at McDonalds Barretto as a service crew as he wants to provide for himself and to also avoid being stuck at home.

His mother is a housewife, while his father is a mechanic. When things got a bit better financially, he enrolled in nursing school. His parents provide financial support while he manages his daily needs, including food and transportation expenses (baon).

During his time working at McDonalds, he stated that the fast-food franchise offers a "feel- good moment" to their employees. Allowing them to adjust their work schedules that are aligned with their schedule at school. He juggles his time schedule between the opening and closing of the fast-food chain.



Meanwhile, 22 years old Yna Yanto is a third-year industrial engineering student, also enrolled in CCI. Her mother is part of the barangay administration while her father is a tricycle driver.

Yna initially studied civil engineering before shifting to industrial engineering. Prior to pursuing industrial engineering, she had to stop schooling for two years due to financial

Photos by Samantha Nicole Padua

constraints and declining mental health.

During her two-year break from school, she experienced challenges with her mental health and felt somewhat depressed. Now in industrial engineering, she expressed that it had gotten better because of the support from her parents and friends. To manage both work and academic responsibilities, Yna reviews all the lessons at school since there is limited time to study while working.

Yna is part of the marketing team. She manages product promotions and hosts parties for special occasions. This role enabled her to build confidence by interacting with customers and enhancing her communication skills.

The most difficult aspect of being a working student is managing time effectively and dealing with fatigue from exhaustion. Stress is a common experience for students, especially with examinations and deadlines that seem endless. Warren alleviates his stress by playing volleyball during his free time which helps him cope with the demands of nursing.

On the other hand, Yna addresses her stress by discussing it with her family and friends. Along with that, is a "special someone" that keeps her grounded and motivated through tough times. Having someone to rely on keeps an individual emotionally balanced, providing comfort and reassurance in moments of pressure.



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Don't watch the clock while it moves, follow it". This is the quote that Yna lives by. She stated that time is always moving, we must not waste it.

As for their future, gaining experience as a working student in Mcdonalds has enabled them to develop attributes that shaped their personal growth such as improved social relationships with co-workers and improved communication skills.

"Keep moving forward. As a working student, mahirap. Ipagpatuloy lang nila hanggang sa maabot ang pangarap." said Yna as an inspirational message for her fellow working students. Likewise, Warren states that one should see if they can handle the pressure between both and balance their schedules.

Warren and Yna, although different, have similarities in their own ways. They share a burning passion and commitment to their goals. Their journeys as working students are filled with sacrifices, setbacks and moments of doubt — yet they continue to push forward. No matter how many hurdles come along the bumpy road of their journey, their dreams are always within reach.

gaia

■ *Ma. Denise Aballe*

Small and green, the verdant grass grows sweet
Across the lands, they grow peacefully
Verdant grass stirs, as Gaia shakes with worry
Endless development of human activity

The ocean stirs, and a wicked storm comes,
Hurricanes form in the horizon, Gaia's rage fuels
Ending the peace, as the flood rises and her anger pools.

Enveloped in rage, her madness sought harm
And it shall be so, causing grief, it seems
Ready your machines, this land is discarded
To greener grass and newer lands
Her land is no more, and more shall be distraught

Artwork by Ma. Denise Aballe



Pitiful lands, devastated by Gaia's storms
Roaming the realm, its people made home
Others sought to conquer, while others sought to free
The community stood for their home, and for her, they could bear.
Ever determined to stay, the people came to a thought
Could this happen again? They'd better prepare.
Their minds come formed, solutions, and repairs

Others healed the land, while others shaped her form
Unlike the industries, these constructions were safe
Resisting the tempest, while maintaining Gaia's domain

Home is what has become of Gaia
On this thought, she cannot believe
Many have demanded her land, yet others coexist
Everything they've harmed, they've also repaired

Protesting the destruction, the people have spoken
Land after land, they could no longer tolerate
All actions to save Mother Gaia have grown little by little
Nothing stops her tempest, yet we shelter her domain
Everything we hold dear, in the land that we reside in
Those moments of clarity allow Mother Gaia to settle slowly.

Page Design by Geoffrey Lee Garcia



Artwork by Mark Joshua Gallardo

At The Core of Being

■ *Angustia Juelle Danao*

"Intelligence, moves flawlessly
when made artificially—
Tireless and with grace,
In every task
where humans lose the race."

Yet within the myriad circuits,
though flawless in its task,
Lies the loud, beating heart;
When the core of passion roars.

Cause no machine can imprison
what longs to be free,
The essence of being—
finite, but fueled by morality.

And so, I tremble with my hands
and start to write—
All of the emotions
that kept my spirit alive.

With muttering, broken words
I start to speak—
Filled with affection,
never will be replaced.

I work my fatigued mind
and start to think—
To be autonomous,
refused to be controlled.

Yet even as I strive for freedom,
I sense the fragile line—
Between control and rebellion,
Where only essence truly knows.

And in the moment when
the average human
gets caught up with gears,
and bodies falter against steel,

The soul will stay alive—
Demands with bruised ideals,
Fights in wrinkled dignity,
Simply because it spurns
to be devoid of entity.

Page Design by Geoffrey Lee Garcia



An Arianna.

■ *Dean Ragadio*

I am thirteen
when the mean girls call
me weird—
I do not shave
I do not wear makeup.
I do wear basketball shorts
and messy ponytails.
I am pressured to be her—
Arianna.
I shave relentlessly
for the next two years.

I am fifteen
full of discomfort
and anger
breaking my bones like they
are glass
reckless rage—
all reckless no brave
depraved of a home
inside my own skin.

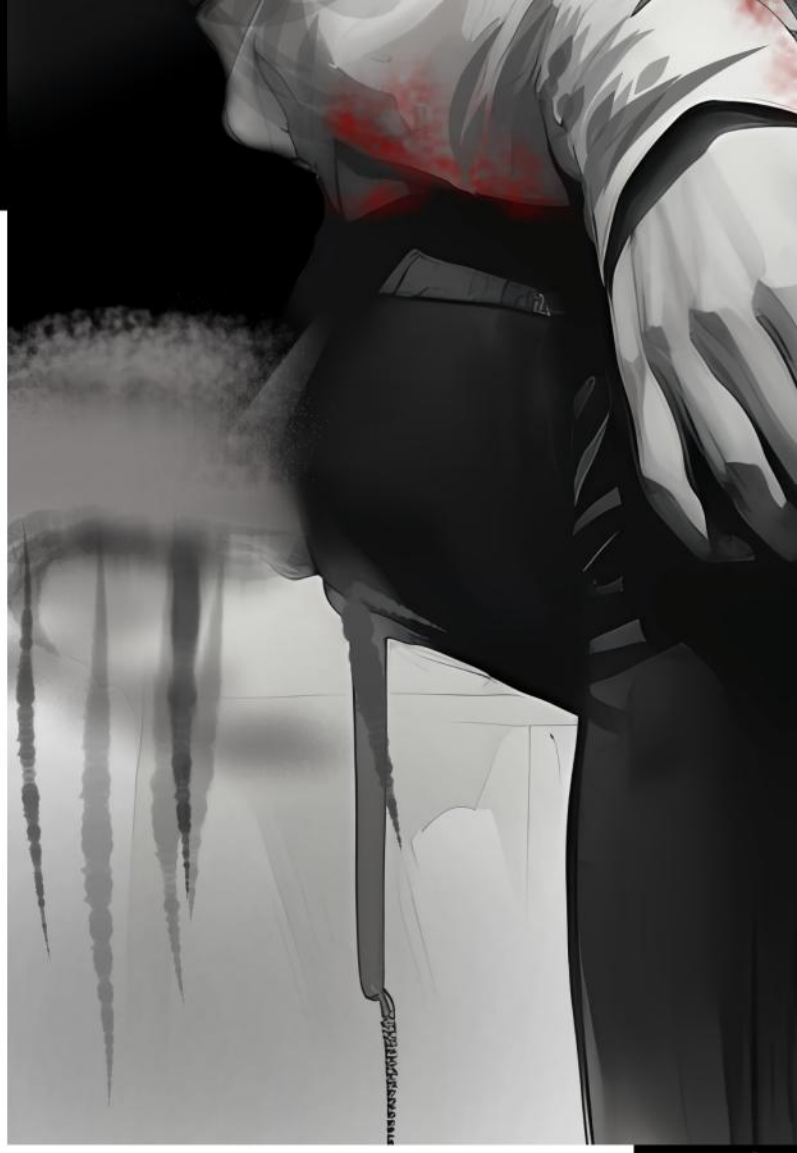
I am fifteen when I
learn what gender dysphoria is.

I am fifteen when I
realize I am a boy
that I always have and will be
a boy.

I am fifteen—
putting holes in wall and
overdosing on advil
like it is a sport
championing my own self
demise.

I am fifteen afraid and closeted—
I write my name as

Artwork by Dustin Drury



ARIES
on my school assignments
I always change it back
before I turn them in.

I am fifteen
convinced everyone loves the girl
I am not
and will never love me as the boy
I actually am.

I am sixteen crying on the floor
of a psych ward
this is my fifth hospitalization
in fourteen months.
Pretending to be her is
killing me.
I choke back tears as I tell
my mom that I am
transgender.
She tells me she loves me,
and she saw me writing
ARIES on my papers.

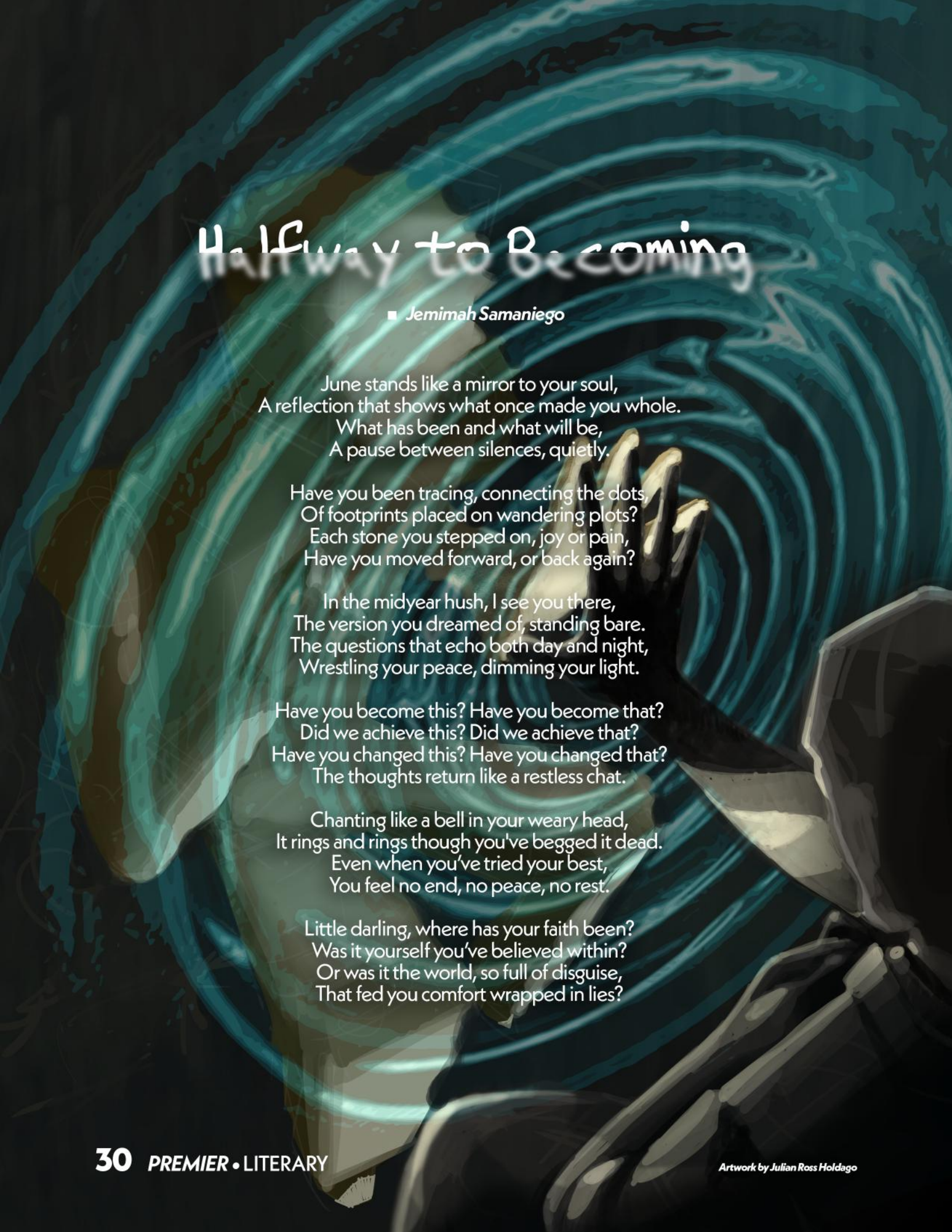
It will take five years
for her to let her daughter go.

I am seventeen when I am shoved
to the floor in a men's bathroom
slammed and slurred across the tile—
It will not be until six months into
Hormone Replacement Therapy
that I use the men's public restroom.
I am eighteen when my moms boyfriend of the
time pulls me aside
and tells me I am making a mistake.
He would wear his mothers dresses and heels,
hiding in her closet
all of this is to say
this is a phase.

When people say that this is a phase—

I am sixteen
sobbing on linoleum floors
covered in cuts
wanting nothing more than death
if I have to pretend to be her
for more than one second longer.
I am nineteen hopeful
and naive.
Voice cracking and hair sprouting

I am coming into my own body.
I have learned that there
are things much worse than needles.
I am twenty out of the
ashes of abuse and trauma
I am finally becoming
the man I have always been
meant to be



Halfway to Becoming

■ *Jemimah Samaniego*

June stands like a mirror to your soul,
A reflection that shows what once made you whole.
What has been and what will be,
A pause between silences, quietly.

Have you been tracing, connecting the dots,
Of footprints placed on wandering plots?
Each stone you stepped on, joy or pain,
Have you moved forward, or back again?

In the midyear hush, I see you there,
The version you dreamed of, standing bare.
The questions that echo both day and night,
Wrestling your peace, dimming your light.

Have you become this? Have you become that?
Did we achieve this? Did we achieve that?
Have you changed this? Have you changed that?
The thoughts return like a restless chat.

Chanting like a bell in your weary head,
It rings and rings though you've begged it dead.
Even when you've tried your best,
You feel no end, no peace, no rest.

Little darling, where has your faith been?
Was it yourself you've believed within?
Or was it the world, so full of disguise,
That fed you comfort wrapped in lies?

Artwork by Julian Ross Holdago

I have told you: keep your eyes on Me,
Though overlooked, I still wait patiently.
I long for you to seek, to see,
To search again and come to Me.

Look at the stars that crown the night,
The sun that rises, bold and bright.
The mountains high, the oceans wide,
My hand is in the turning tide.

See how I paint the setting sky,
And breathe new hope where ashes lie.
So stop asking what you've yet to do,
And see what strength has grown in you.

Focus not on what's undone,
But on the battles you have won.
For what you are becoming now,
Deserves far more than your furrowed brow.

Do not look back, look forward true.
Do not look down, the sky calls you.
Lift your eyes to the northern flame,
There you will see Me, just the same.

You'll see the One who brought you here,
The braver you, beyond the fear.
The you that's ready now to know
The mystery where future goes.

Strengthen your faith, abide in My grace.
I've set ahead a glorious place.
A life that's fruitful, rich, and bright,
A journey filled with love and light.

It is I, your Father from above,
Who wraps your days with endless love.
Through all your life, in joy and strife,
I am with you, I gave you life.

Page Design by Geoffrey Lee Garcia



Flooding Returns to CCI Campus as Rainy Season Begins

■ *Lander Joz Barerra*

Heavy downpour on June 30 turned the Columban College, Inc. Main Campus quadrangle into an ankle-deep pool, forcing students to walk along corridors and elevated walkways to avoid the murky floodwater—a recurring issue that signals the onset of the rainy season.

"Instead of going straight to my classes or activities, I often have to find alternative routes or wait for the water to subside. It disrupts my daily routine," said Alexa Jane Bueno, a freshman BSED-E student, recounting her experience navigating flooded school grounds.

According to Security Affairs Director Mr. Jose Elex Gumban, the campus has long struggled with flooding due to persistent water drainage issues.

"We have been experiencing yan ever since 1991, after the Mt. Pinatubo eruption. Wala pa naman 'yan noon eh," Gumban said, explaining that the problem began to surface around the early 2000s.

He attributed the issue to the campus' low elevation, compounded by changes made to surrounding roadways after the volcanic eruption.

"Instead of removing the ashes and debris on the road, they cemented over it. Kaya kung mapapansin mo, kapag papasok ka ng school gates, pababa siya, mas mababa talaga ang grounds natin."

Gumban added that the campus's proximity to a nearby river intensifies the problem, especially during high tide.

"Although there is dredging, the volume of sand elevated the tide of the river to more than a meter."

Photos by Arjay Sebastian Rejano, Yvan Diata

Some students, like senior BSIT student Michael James Feliminiano, have grown used to the inconvenience.

"Nasanay na rin ako throughout the years ko dito sa Columban. Hassle talaga mag-travel from one place to another kapag bumabaha," he said.

Gumban recalled the worst flooding incident on campus, which occurred during Super Typhoon Haiyan in 2013.

"The water rose to nearly a quarter of the height of the quadrangle stage," he noted.

Mr. Jhun Barrera, a parent and CCI employee, also shared how the floods have affected him.

"Madalas kami magpark doon. Mahirap lang talaga pag tag-ulan kasi malaki ang chance bumaha. Sa ibang lugar na lang kami magpark gaya ng SM or sa kabilang campus."

Despite the persistent issue, Gumban said improvements have been made over the years, although the problem has not been completely resolved.

"Dati talaga malala yan. Pero through the years napapansin ko nag-iimprove naman."

He pointed to the elevation of school grounds and coordinated dredging efforts with the local government as potential long-term solutions.

"Ang possible solution dyan ay pagtaas ng school grounds and dredging ng river, but we will need cooperation with the LGU for that."

Page Design by Geoffrey Lee Garcia



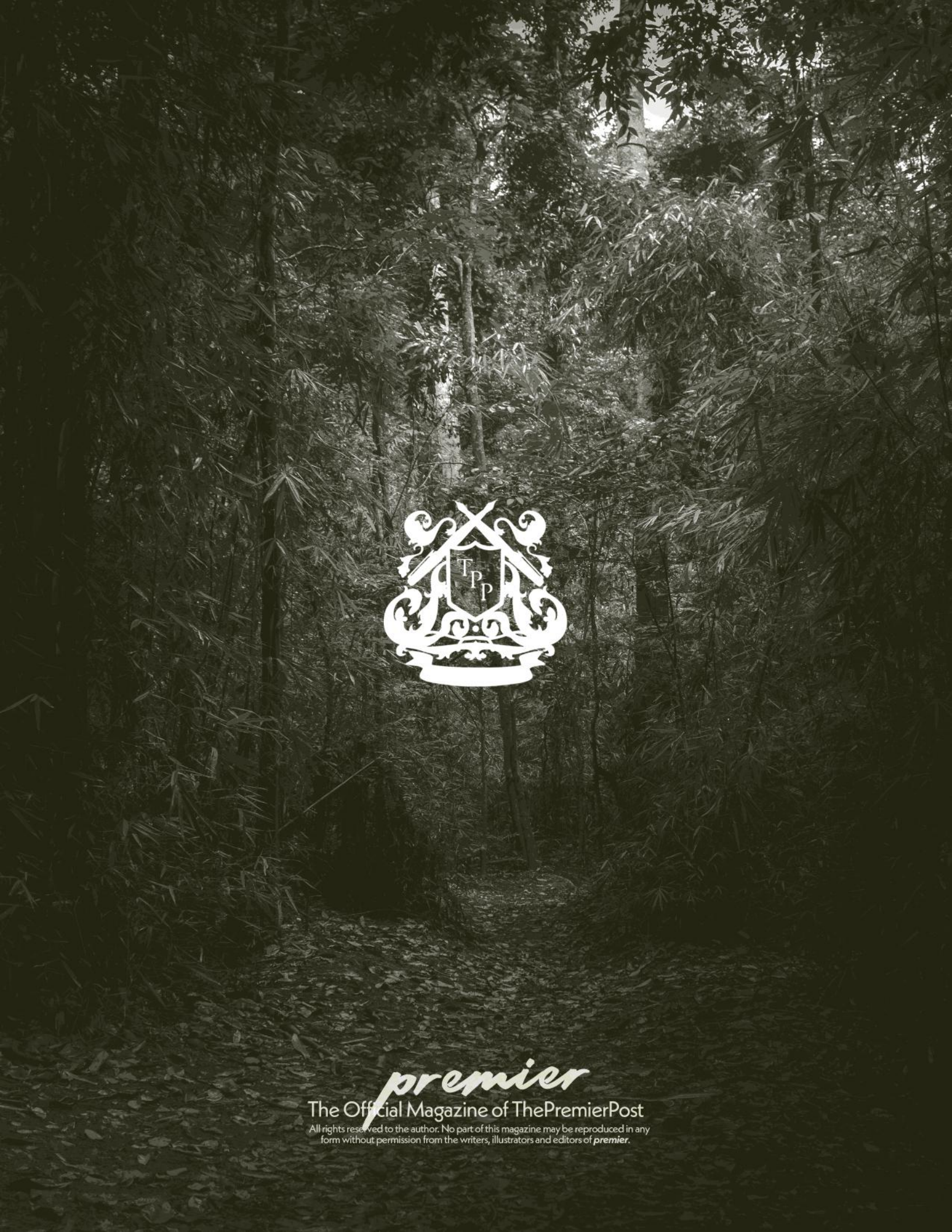
In the meantime, classes generally continue during light rainfall, although safety remains a top priority.

"If ever na ganun man ang mangyari ulit, most likely magca-cancel naman ng classes ang institution," Gumban assured.

The recurring floods have even sparked light-hearted banter among the student body, with terms like "Columban Dolphins" and "Columban Swimming Pool, Asinan version" circulating online.

Gumban responded to these memes, saying, "Hindi naman negative 'yan. Sa panahon ngayon ng internet and memes, normal na 'yan. Magiging negative lang 'yan kung totoo na nga tapos idedeny pa."





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