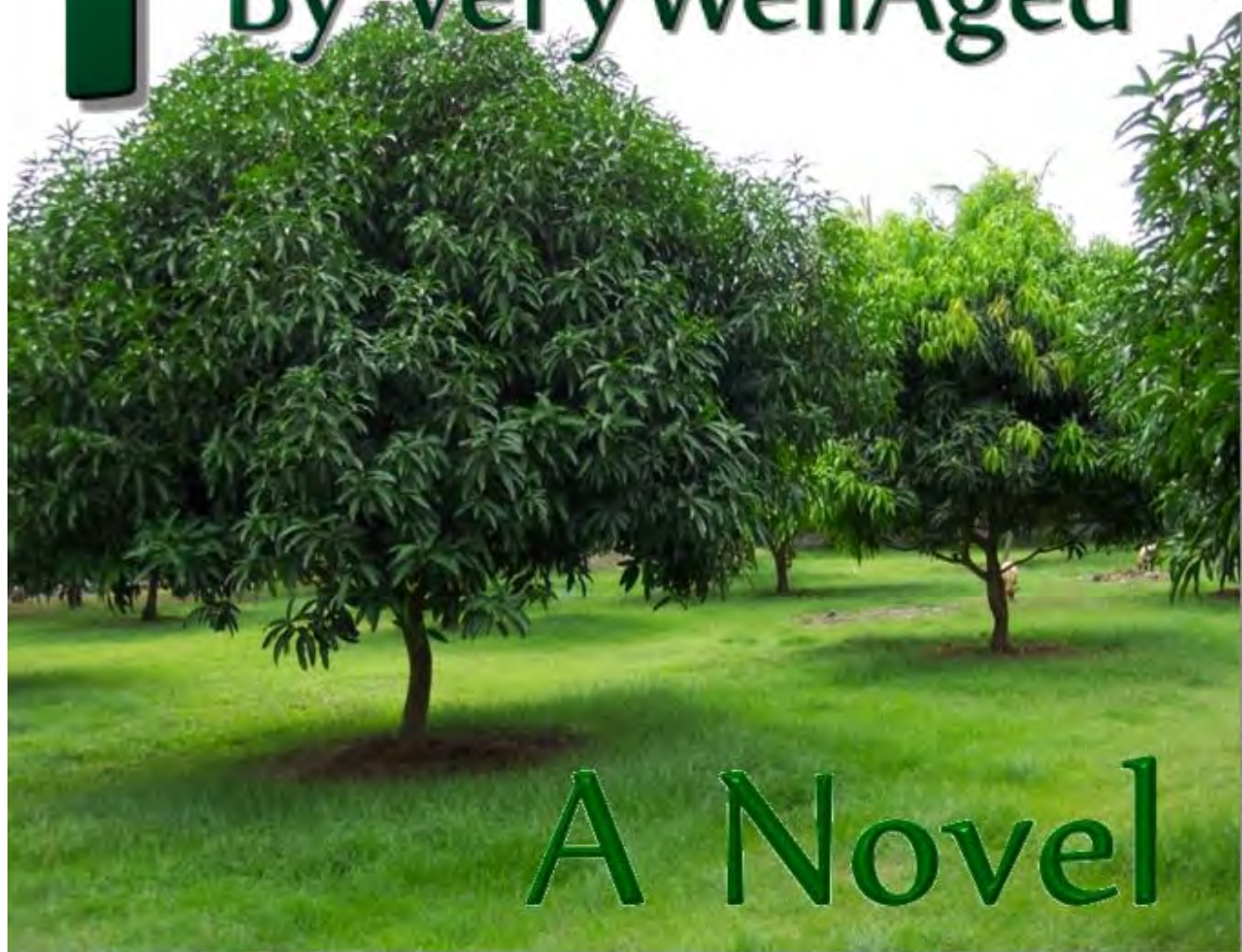




Fifteen

By Very Well Aged



A Novel

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Third Edition*

A journey well planned, and the unintended consequences.

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The complete works of VeryWellAged in all formats can found at <https://www.asstr.org/~VeryWellAged/index.htm>

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In the beginning...

Prologue

I couldn't do it today, no, not here anyway.

Things were different fifteen years ago. The economy here was not booming then. What I have now is stable, but every once in a while, I wonder why. I mean, things have changed. But I guess my companions are mine for life, for as long as I live. However long that will be.

It seemed as if it would always be that way here. It isn't now. Now, today, is January, 2018, and a life like I made for myself here would be fragile.

Fifteen years ago, it didn't seem fragile.

Fifteen years ago...

That was 2003. Me in 2003...

I had some savings. No, that's a lie. I had a fair bit of savings. Plus I had invested in both Cisco and Apple in 1993. That requires a little explanation.

I had inherited twenty thousand dollars, but there was a huge string attached. I was required, via the will whereby I received the funds, to do something very much against my character: to invest the money and not touch it for twelve years. I could watch the money, but I couldn't use any of it until 2005.

I grinched loud and long, as I had any number of ways I would have been happy to spend those dollars right then and there, but that is why I bought the Apple and Cisco stock.

In 2003 the Apple stock wasn't doing much yet, but I still had hopes. The Mac was so much better than Windows. All my friends used Macs. I bought fourteen thousand shares of it in September of 1993 for \$0.7187 per share or \$10,061.80 for all of it.

In January of 2003 that Apple stock was worth only \$0.909 per share. But it had split once in 2000 at 2 for 1. That made all of it worth \$25,452 at the time. I figured I was doing OK.

By 2005, it was my plan to cash out of everything. But, oddly, just as I was ready to cash out this stock, as it wasn't really moving, it started to climb. And then it split 2 for 1 in 2005. Rather than flatten out, it continued to rise in value. By 2014, there was a 7 for 1 split. This stock that had essentially performed only modestly for the first eleven years was making me exceedingly wealthy.

The stock price today is well over \$170 which makes it worth over \$70,000,000 today. I have not sold a single share... yet. But I will tomorrow. And even with all the taxes I will pay this year, I will be more than theoretically an extremely wealthy man, I will be so in cold, hard cash. Much has changed for me in these past fifteen years, but far more so for those around me.

The Cisco stock I bought in February of 1993 for \$0.9841 a share for ten thousand shares was worth \$18.33 per share in November of 2003. There have been six stock splits since then.

But, I sold some of my Cisco shares and now only retain four hundred ninety thousand shares. So what had cost me \$9,353, even after selling some of them, is now worth a measly \$19,938,100 fifteen years later.

If I had held on to all of it, at \$40.69 per share, it would have been worth \$22,972,600. As it is, in November 2006, I sold fifty thousand of the then, five hundred and forty thousand shares (after the many splits), at \$21.7297. The sale of those shares netted me over a million dollars.

I figured that, even if all the remaining shares tanked at that point, I still had done far better than the fool that I would have been has any right to be.

Still, in 2003, I had no idea then that my investments would make me the appallingly wealthy man I am today. In point of fact, I was pretty well worried that the Cisco stock, that was looking good in 2003, would plummet before I could sell it.

And so today, as this body of mine, year by year, fails me in small but real ways, I have accumulated more wealth than I will ever need in what is left of my life.

So... in 2003 it was only the savings I had, not the stocks, only the savings that supported my move to the Philippines.

I had value in my house, but had no plans to sell it. Selling my home in Dorchester seemed like jumping into the ocean without a lifejacket or a way to swim to shore.

Yet, moving from Dorchester and the USA, to somewhere else entirely, seemed like a necessary and cautionary move.

Before it happened, I had more than a premonition that the tech bubble would burst in 2000. It was really obvious. How could it not? I was amazed we were still riding the wave when, in 1999, I had sold the company I was running at the time, and banked the profits, before getting into a small consulting practice.

I stayed with the consulting practice for a few years, but the business wasn't going anywhere and I started to regret the sale of my company, though I really knew it had been the right thing to do. I was feeling frustrated, I guess. The excitement of running the company had been supplanted by a placid and eerily quiet consultancy.

My marriage had fallen apart in 1996, probably because I was working sixteen hours a day and not making a huge take-home income. I was plowing profits back into the company. You can

have a happy marriage or a rock-star startup... you can't have both at the same time.

By the time 2002 rolled around, the consulting practice was not doing much, I had been divorced for six years, and I was just tired — burned out.

Social security would kick in in seven years. I had 35 years of salary already banked in the system and I doubted that any newer salary would push my checks any higher at the end. But the simple fact was that I was scared of ever having to rely on those checks. I had savings, but savings is not income and I just couldn't see a bright financial future if I stayed in the USA. If I was blessed with a long life, with that blessing would be the curse of diminishing finances.

So... I had savings and I was healthy. I ran the numbers, looking at historic US inflation rates, and estimated the drawdown of my savings even allowing for investments whereby I had some liquidity and safety. My premonition that living in the USA was not my best option was displayed on an unforgiving spreadsheet.

I needed a plan.

I had never traveled to vacation spots. Yes, I had been to London, to Hong Kong, and to Tokyo on business, but those trips were from an airport to a nice hotel to a business meeting and back. And sure, I have been all over the USA, but my passport had not been used to explore the world and the options I might have.

I decided that while I could, before old age and social security became my life, I needed to try living a little, even though I would be drawing on those critical savings.

I had a friend in the BVI, the British Virgin Islands, who urged me to give the place a try. So I tried that, but it just didn't feel right. Yeh, the weather was warm, and I liked the ocean, but there was something that was grinding on me that I couldn't put my finger on.

I don't really remember to whom it was I was speaking, but I was sitting at the Mermaid Bar and Grill in Spanish Town on Virgin Gorda, pissing and moaning, when a guy on the stool next to me said I should check out the Philippines.

I knew nothing about the Philippines and said as much. I need a place where I could navigate around in English. I didn't see how anywhere in Asia would work. Even in Hong Kong, where the Brits had held sway for so many years, getting a taxi driver who could speak English was a challenge. I was able to conduct business there, but getting around the city was a real frustration. Tokyo was no better in that regard and actually a bit worse.

Yeh, I know about Singapore. English works there and I like the place, but with my finances Singapore would not work.

The guy insisted that I could get along OK in the Philippines.

That was in 2002.

Back home in Boston, I ruminated a bit and did some research on the Philippines. Magellan didn't do so well there, but I wasn't going to try to bring Christianity to the Islands, so maybe it would be OK. The average exchange rate in 2002 was one dollar to forty-four Philippine Pesos, but I had no idea what a Peso would buy.

The place is really not a place but a bunch of places, a bunch of islands and the economy of each is a bit different from the others.

Researching the economy of each island and its cities was more than a challenge. It was almost impossible in many regards. There was much I just could not figure out. But what I did learn was rewarding.

I was not looking to find a place that was well meshed into the world economy... just the opposite... so almost immediately I struck Manila and Cebu off the list. And while it made my search beyond difficult in one way, it was illuminating in another. The less I could learn about a place, the better it might be!

In general, as I looked at other Philippines cities it became clear that the cost of living was going to work, and I decided to give it a try.

1

At 8:30AM on January 23, 2003, a Thursday, I boarded a jet that would begin my first journey to the Philippines. It was 4 degrees Fahrenheit that morning with clear skies and winds at 16 mph from the west-northwest at Logan International Airport.

The flights were seemingly endless. I was routed via Montreal and then Hong Kong before a final flight to Manila. I was in the Philippines late on Friday the 24th. I allowed myself two days, staying at the Manila Hotel, to recover from the trip before flying off to my final destination, General Santos City. My research had, in the end, told me quite a bit. The biggest thing was that I couldn't learn shit about General Santos City, other than it had a population of almost half a million souls.

Half a million and no significant information. It sounded promising. With that many people, it had to have basic services, but was probably not an economic engine for the nation. Cost of living would be on the low side for the nation and that meant only good things for me.

The US State Department was discouraging traveling to the island of Mindanao. And there were problems on the island, but General Santos City was not part of the problem. Regardless of the relative safety of that southernmost city, it seemed like it was being economically starved for a number of reasons.

The island in general was not attracting investment money for industry because of instability in the Muslim regions in other parts of that large island. That much was clear.

Later, I would learn that the Philippine government was starving Mindanao for another reason I will explain next, and finally, there was no significant tourist income there.

My digging into the Philippine government displayed something very different from what you read in the newspapers. It isn't a real democracy as those in my country understand democracy.

Political control in the Philippines is based on tribes, clans, and warlords, though these warlord clans are called dynasties in that land. It is a national government and not a federation of islands. All tax money flows to Manila, often called by those outside the city, 'Imperial Manila.'

While Marcos was in power, as he was from Leyte, funds would be diverted from Manila to Leyte and that region. But in general, and otherwise, tax money stays in and around Manila.

The legislature of the Philippines is bicameral... in 2003, and for a long time before that, not a single Senator came from Mindanao. Mindanao was getting nothing in the way of largess from Manila in 2003, hadn't in the past, and wouldn't for some years in the future.

If you wanted to find the cheapest place to live, it was the island of Mindanao. If you wanted the safest place to live on Mindanao, it was arguably General Santos City.

That city had one more thing going for it. It seemed that though typhoons regularly ravage the Philippines, none had ever hit that city. It was too far south.

And so, with all that gleaned from my research...

On Sunday I board a PAL flight, the domestic division of Philippine Airlines, from Manila to General Santos City. I have booked a room at the Sydney Hotel.

If the Philippines is going to work for me, I am going to find the least expensive, decent-sized city, to see if it even has a chance of succeeding. The BVI looked good on paper, but it didn't work out that way in reality. But, no sense in writing a place off without really trying. Even with all the research telling me this is going to be a winner, I am far from sure as I sit on my seat in the PAL plane.

My visa is a tourist visa. I have learned I can extend it at the Immigration office in any city where I am staying. And so my plan is to hang out for a few days and see just what the place is like.

If it has a chance of working, I will either extend the visa, or return briefly to Boston before returning for a longer stay. But that is getting the cart before the horse. I may decide to leave after just a few days. We will see.

On arriving, all I have with me is a carry-on bag and a heavy coat I am lugging over my arm. As warm as it is here, it had been frigid in Boston and I will likely be returning there soon enough. This is not going to be that long a stay, no matter what I decide.

A taxi takes me from the airport to the hotel, where I check in and drop my bag before leaving the room. I grab a very late lunch downstairs and take my first walk in the city.

General Santos City is hot.

The sun is beating down and I really am not prepared for it. It is too much of a shock to my system. What I am also not prepared for are the beggars who surround me and will simply not disperse as I walk down Pioneer Avenue that Sunday afternoon.

I don't think I am outside for more than half an hour before giving up and retreating to the air-conditioned bar at the hotel. It is well before dinner time and there are not many souls inside.

I order some Jack over rocks. It is too early in my trip to come to any firm conclusions, but my first foray outside was not auspicious. Still, I need to learn about the city.

The intense presence of beggars is both troubling and good news. It suggests potential evidence that the economy here is in trouble. Rents will be low, help in the form of workmen and maids will be affordable. So far, my English is working within the hotel and worked when I took the taxi. So it's not all negative.

As I nurse my drink toward the end, the rocks remaining but the Jack only a memory, a waitress approaches, asking if I want another. I do.

She departs, gets a fresh rocks glass for me and returns, placing my drink down on a new coaster, before asking, *Sir, why you come to GenSan?*

I am a little surprised and a little confused. And then the confusion clears. GenSan must be her way of saying General Santos City. Yeh, otherwise it is a damned mouthful. I note she did not say Gensan. No, each part receives emphasis. It is GenSan.

In a way, it is none of the gal's damned business and then again, isn't it? I am here to see if this place will work. She is 'of this place' so why not answer?

I am looking to find a place to live. Maybe GenSan is the place. I don't know yet. I just arrived today.

Sir, your girlfriend, where is she?

There is no girlfriend.

I confused. Why you want GenSan if no girlfriend?

I am thinking about cost of living, weather, stability, safety. That's why.

You married?

No.

And no girlfriend?

She is really zeroing in on this. It's sort of cute. *That's right, no girlfriend.*

Sorry for asking, but maybe you gay?

I laugh. I mean, she is checking all the boxes.

No, I am not gay.

You not want a girlfriend?

I am laughing again. I am in my late fifties and no 'hunk' by anyone's definition. Maybe there is some damned broad out there who will want to share my sheets, but that is not a 'for now' issue, and it is not easily achieved. I have been divorced and without a squeeze for seven years. If it was easy I would not be alone right now.

I will figure out if this place works for me; then, if lightning should strike about companionship, glory be, but that's not what this is about.

If this is the right place, and if I get lucky to find a girlfriend, I will be very lucky.

You want place to live before you get your girl? Why that?

So now this conversation is going places that make no sense to me. But, I guess, I decide to start at the obvious beginning.

Why would I want a girlfriend if I decide this is not the place for me?

The girl, she is a girl in my eyes, she can't be over twenty-something if she is even that old, is giggling.

Sir, if you have a girlfriend, you will want to stay. I sure this.

I decide to pull her leg a bit. This is just a silly conversation. But she has no customers to wait on. The other couple, the one that was here when I arrived, has left. It is only me, the barman and this girl.

You're sure of this?

Yes! I sure.

How do you know I am not Muslim and want many girls?

OK, why not? There are Mosques here. It OK.

Really? If I want four girls, no problem?

If you want. It OK. You will stay, see?

And how do you think I should find these gals?

She is giggling again. *You want to try, Sir? See, if you want many, you need a bigger place? Correct?*

And now, like a locomotive engine backing into the train it will pull, in my mind, the crash of the coupling being made hits me. It hits me hard.

Those beggars outside... they are the canary and there is a cage. Economic insecurity, could this fucking nuts conversation be about that?

Tell me, how long have you had this job?

One month, Sir. I have four more months!

Hub? What do you mean, you have 'four more months'?

The contract, Sir. It a five month contract.

And if you do a good job, it is renewed?

No, Sir. Not allowed. Five months and then nothing. I look for another contract.

Also for five months?

Yes, Sir. I do this for a while. But when I reach thirty, I must be married or like that, because no contracts then.

Crash! I hear another locomotive coupling making its connection.

I see. How old are you?

Nineteen, Sir. You think I look OK?

Holy shit. This is no bargirl hooker. She is just a waitress. A cute young waitress, who has yet to tell me her name and who has no idea who I am, where I am from, if I have any money, has no idea of anything, and yet she asks this.

So you think if I have a girlfriend like you, or many like you, I will not leave?

Yes, Sir, I think this.

What's your name?

Evelyn. What your name, Sir?

Craig.

Where you live, Sir Craig?

Dorchester, it is part of Boston in the US.

It nice there?

Right now it is very cold there.

Oh. You like GenSan?

I haven't seen enough of it. It was too hot this afternoon to look around much.

You want to see the city? Maybe I can help you.

How can you help?

I show you what it like at night. And we also go out in the morning before it get very hot. I show you then, too. It best if you with me. It not safe you to be out alone at night. I keep you safe.

And in a moment of clarity I hear and see in my mind's eye the flashing lights between the X sign of an unguarded railroad crossing. In this economically depressed town, I am the wealthy foreigner. It isn't terrorists, drug cartels, or religious unrest I need to fear. It is simple economics.

And, just as quickly, the reality of my needs instructs me that wherever my plan might work, be it here or somewhere else in the world, that same inequity of economic disparity will exist, as will the danger associated with it.

If I decide to bail out of here, I might as well bail out of the plan entirely.

Eve, when do you get off tonight?

Haha, Sir, I not Eve. My nickname is Lyn.

OK, Lyn, when are you off tonight?

I off at eight. You want we go out tonight?

Well, you offered, didn't you?

Yes, Sir, I do this.

I am having a problem understanding. I hadn't been up to now, but I don't know if she has acknowledged that she had offered something or that she has agreed to actually do it. I decide to assume both.

OK, I am in room 504. Will you ring me to come down when you are ready?

Yes, Sir Craig, I remember room 504. Very good. Sir, no more drink now! Wait for later. Now maybe you want to eat?

Damn, she is already changing from a waitress to a girlfriend who is watching out for what is, in her eyes, the perceived best interest of her guy. This is unreal. I am hearing that damned locomotive coupling again. More connections.

OK, well, I agree. I really don't want any more to drink, but I am not ready for supper yet. I ate a late lunch.

It occurs to me that this is the time to see exactly how much shit I can get away with here and where the walls are. Sometimes brave talk is just that, bravado, without substance. I expect the worst that can happen is that any request I make will simply not go anywhere.

When you are ready tonight, bring at least one more girl with you. If I am going to stay, it will be with more than one girl.

You truly Muslim, Sir?

No, Lyn, I'm not. I'm Catholic. But there must be at least two of you.

OK, we do this.

Good, now remember, I am just looking around.

Yes, yes, I know this, Sir. No problem.

And, with that, she removes my, now empty, second rocks glass, wipes the table clean and, smiling, says, *Rest now, Sir Craig. Busy later.*

I haven't been here in town even six hours and I have my first wannabe girlfriend volunteer and she isn't a 'working girl.'

The BVI was sure as hell not like this. Is this a trap?

My passport and most of my cash is in the safe in my hotel room. But, I am getting a bit worried as I rest on my bed, propped up with the TV on to CNN.

It is too damned easy. Far too easy. And yet, I chose this place because of the economics of it. Isn't what has just happened about that very thing?

If what Lyn said about the contracts and the nature of working conditions here is true, then those very conditions might well make for a perfect storm for the likes of me. As she explained in very short form, employment is via non-renewing, short-term contracts.

If businesses cycle through young girls, none getting long term employment (and therefore no long term obligations for the employer such as pensions, health care, and other potential legal matters), and no employment for older women, then each woman is on a desperate search for a man to catch before the world collapses in on her.

Lyn is a cute girl. Short, no more than five feet and probably less, thin but not emaciated. Her hair is straight, black and longer than shoulder length. She had her hair in a ponytail this afternoon and that alone reached her shoulders. There were small pearl studs in her earlobes. I didn't see any rings, but that might be because of work.

I spend some time looking at some of the promotional things on the small writing desk in my hotel room. There are restaurants listed. Something about a festival coming up the end of next

month. It is called a Kalilangan Festival. It seems to be a big deal but nothing I am reading tells me why it is a big deal.

For what it is worth, I don't think I will be here for that.

One thing seems to be coming into focus. Nothing in this place is set up for the tourist. If you are here, it is because you have a reason to be here.

This place seems to be based on fishing and farming. All promotional materials mention tuna.

I am not a tourist. Tourists don't come here. That is why Lyn wanted to know why I am here. If not for a girl (evidently, that might be the third thing the city is based on, after Tuna and farming), then what is my reason?

That I am looking for a place to pitch my tent was a concept that Lyn did not have as 'a reason' based on how this place normally functions. Will this place work for me? Is Lyn right? Once I have a girl, that alone will be the reason I decide to stay?

Huh, I think I am really tired. I turn off the TV and close my eyes.

2

It's dark outside. Have I overslept? Hard to say. If this was Dorchester, it gets dark before 5PM this time of year. Still, the darkness is disconcerting.

Did Lyn never come? I turn on my side and look at the clock. It's 6:20PM.

OK, no problem. I briefly spiff up a bit and take the elevator up to the hotel's Rooftop Grill. For what amounts to \$6, if not amazed by high cuisine, I am OK with what I can order and am well stuffed by 7:40 when I go back down to my room.

If six bucks is the cost of a 'high cost' hotel meal, eating at home here will be dirt cheap.

So far, the economic boxes are all being checked.

The weather is on the warm side, but it wasn't bad tonight on the open air rooftop. That's a lesson. Getting higher than street level in a house may have a real value. If I am down on the street later I can check out that assumption.

But it's not like a stay in Houston where it doesn't cool off at night. If I stay, a place with a second or third floor might be useful.

Additionally, whether there are such places to rent has yet to be determined.

I decide to take a shower and change my clothes. It is possible that Lyn actually shows up and rings me to come down. If she doesn't I will ask the concierge if there is a place I can take a taxi to for some entertainment a little later.

Lyn said she gets off at 8, so I don't expect a call until closer to 9 or later. If I don't hear from her by 10 I will go out on my own. I really have no idea what to expect.

I am just channel surfing when there is a knock on my door at 9:15. I have not called for room service and there is no reason why anyone would be knocking. Leaving the TV on to provide noise to cover my movement, I get up from the bed, walk over to the door, and look out the peephole.

It is Lyn and maybe someone else. I am not sure and maybe this will end badly, but I slip the chain from the door, slide back the deadbolt and open the door.

Sure enough, there stands Lyn and another girl. The other kid is, if such a thing is possible, even younger looking and smaller than is Lyn — her long hair and eyes as black as her partner's. Her feet are in flip-flops. Both girls are bare-legged and wearing simple dresses ending mid-thigh. If they have any makeup on it is undetectable.

Almost immediately Lyn closes the distance between us, kisses my cheek and announces other girl's name is Jana.

Standing back a little after the kiss, I simply say, *Good evening, Jana.*

The kid smiles, nods a bit, closes the distance, kisses my cheek and says, *Yes, Sir Craig, good evening.*

OK, let me turn off the TV and I will be ready to go.

I see a confused expression on two faces and then Lyn asks, *Sir, we have never seen one of these rooms. May we enter and look?*

Once again, I am hearing alarm bells. Am I going to be rolled? But once again, I allow it. *Yes, of course, come in.*

They do, closing the door behind them. Whatever I thought, well, that is not what is happening. They are giving the room a good once-over, checking out every corner before doing the same with the bathroom. I hear Jana saying something about the 'CR' being big and fancy.

I ask Lyn what a CR is, and she giggles before explaining that it's their term for what I call the bathroom. I guess CR means comfort

room. And that is probably even a better a name for it than bathroom.

Jana whispers something to Lyn before Lyn asks me if they might try the bed. I gather that touching things that are not theirs requires permission. I give the permission and both hop up on the bed, apparently checking out the comfort level. More giggling ensues.

Sir, join us! So says Jana. Maybe there isn't any harm in doing so, but I don't want to be rolled, so before I do I turn to Lyn and mention, *Do you mind if I secure the door?*

Sir, I am sorry we not do that! Yes, always! It important we all be safe.

Go figure. Rather than freaking out, they want me to lock them in with me. I guess things can still go bad, but I am not feeling like this is a problem.

Deadbolt in place and chain back on the door I return to the bed and mount it, sitting between the two of them.

No sooner than I have settled between the two, Lyn is unbuttoning my shirt and Jana has her hands in my hair. I put a hand under Lyn's chin and ask her what she is doing.

You will stay if there are two of us. Correct?

You have it backward. I said, if I stay there would have to be more than one of you. I didn't say I was staying.

We will show you why you want to stay, right Jana?

I don't hear a word from Jana. She has not agreed.

Lyn, Jana has not said she agrees with you. Maybe you need to stop.

No silly, she agree. You not hear it. She show me her agreement.

How?

Like this. And with that, Lyn raises her eyebrows twice, giggles and tells me, *See?* ... double eyebrows rise up twice again, *means yes. She do that.*

Lyn returns to her unbuttoning tasks. It may be time to call their bluff, if they are bluffing. I turn towards Jana and pull the girl in for a kiss.

Jana is kissing back. So far there is no bluff. She has her tongue inspecting my molars. Lyn has my shirt as unbuttoned as she can get it and is loosening my slacks, purpose undeclared.

My attention is pretty well locked on Jana, her mouth on my mouth, her hands in my hair. Jana is pushing me to lie back on the bed as she crawls over me, all the while maintaining the mouth to mouth contact.

There is not a damned thing wrong with the girl and I can't say I am not enjoying this. I sure as hell am. What has my head reeling a bit is that they are not here for a bit of cash tonight. They are looking at me for a ride to forever.

I can't say that is my plan. It isn't, but maybe in a weird way it is. If these gals can pave the way to a good living situation, they as my concierges, they might well come along for the ride.

Whether I have this epiphany before or after Lyn has pulled down my slacks and grabbed my cock, is unclear to me. But have me in-hand, she most assuredly does.

Oh, hell. What the fuck. Let's see how far this goes.

I disconnect from Jana, put Lyn beneath me, slide her panties off and, without any more rigmarole, just plunge in. She surely isn't complaining. Her smile is wide, as are her eyes, as I pound her unprotected cunt.

Jana has her hands back in my hair, her lips on my right ear as I fuck her friend.

Lyn is murmuring, *cum, cum*. I decide it is time to switch partners. I pull out of Lyn amid loud protests. I tell her to be quiet as I pull Jana under me. The girl comes willingly and is more than ready to be relieved of her panties.

I plow into her, only to hear her cry out. I am about to stop but she does not want me to stop and pushes me forward. Jana is now right there with me, a big smile on her face. Lyn nestles in and grabs my head, seeking my lips.

I am fucking one and kissing the other. I have never in my life done any such thing before. I am also getting as hard as I have ever been, just as Lyn captures my lower lip between her teeth, biting down a good bit and giving it a good shake.

Releasing my lip, her mouth goes to my ear, and she whispers in my ear that I have just taken Jana's virginity. That must have been the cry I heard earlier.

Never in my life have I ever taken any girl's virginity. I whisper back to Lyn, *How old is she?*

The answer, *Seventeen*, seems to put me over the edge and I flood this young cunt with all the cum I have.

I roll off of Jana and just hold both close to me, as all that has transpired sinks in. It isn't 10PM yet. I have not been in GenSan for ten hours and I now have two wannabe girlfriends. Neither of them of drinking age back home. One clearly jailbait back home.

Just ten minutes into this reverie, Lyn says, *Come na! Get up. We go out!*

Na? What is 'na'?

Jana smacks Lyn, *English, Lyn! ... Sir Craig, 'na' means 'now' in your language.*

OK, no harm done. Yes, where are we going, Lyn?

We go to a resto-bar near here. It nice. Sometime there foreigners there.

Resto-bar? What type of bar is that?

Lyn laughs and offers, *Silly, resto short for restaurant. So it both a restaurant and a bar. A resto-bar.*

Is it walking distance to this resto-bar, or do we need a taxi?

Silly, no need for a taxi. We take a tricycle.

Tricycle? Really? They surely can't mean what I think of as a tricycle. But I don't ask. I will learn soon enough. Now is the time to redress and comb my hair. The girls take a bit longer in the 'CR' before announcing that they are ready.

Exiting the elevator, I get a, *Good evening*, from hotel employees without as much as a sign of surprise that I am accompanied by these two young girls. No indeed, the fact is that the girls are standing erect and dignified. That is being responded to in kind by the hotel staff. They, too, are erect and dignified. No smirks, smiles, or eye rolls to be seen.

I feel like, every moment, it is one new lesson after another.

There aren't as many beggars outside the hotel doors as there were before. There are a few, but the armed guard by the door shoos them away and asks me if I require a taxi. Lyn informs "Kuya" that they only need a tricycle. I see a momentary surprise on his face and then he moves into action, signaling for a little device that is a motorcycle encased in a small metal shell to come to us.

The shell has an extra wheel attached to the side opposite the rear tire of the motorcycle. And so, here is the tricycle! I get it. What I don't get is how I will fit into it. It appears to be made for these diminutive Filipinos. But I do fit in, if but barely.

I am sitting in the front on a seat to the right of the driver, my legs jammed in a bit by the tight, foreshortened flat bottom and the angled rise in front of that tight space, allowing room for knees and little room for feet. The girls are in the back across from each other on small benches.

Lyn calls this man 'Kuya' also and tells him something in their language. We go down Pioneer Avenue and turn left on what I will learn in later times is Magsayay Avenue to the resto-bar.

The cost for the three of us is twenty-four pesos, or about 55 cents US. If this is standard Filipino transportation, I will just need to get used to the cramped quarters. The cost is well within the acceptable range.

The tables are in the open air, though there is a roof above, shielding us from the sun that has long ago gone down and from possible rain that is not currently threatening.

Lyn asks if I want more Jack, she is not sure they will have any here, or maybe I want a beer tonight. I think she is trying to keep me sober. I don't say anything regarding my concern, but I agree that, yes, a beer sounds good. Lyn orders two beers for me, and Sprites for Jana and herself. She also orders a plate of something she calls pork sisig, a plate of bistek, some calamari and three portions of rice. I am not consulted on this. I guess it will be my obligation to pay, but all else, all the decisions have been appropriated by Lyn. Once again, I decide to hold my tongue.

Once again, she calls our waiter, 'Kuya.'

Lyn, are each of these guys really named 'Kuya'?

Oh! Sorry, you not know. Kuya mean brother. It what we call them. They are all brother... they all Filipino.

Another lesson. A racial identity. They are all family. I am a foreigner and therefore will never be Kuya. But, in some ways, I am a prize. I am their prize, if they can keep me.

The beer arrives. It is the same as I had in Manila, San Miguel Pale Pilsen. In Manila it was served along with an ice filled glass. There, I didn't use the ice and asked that I just be given a clean glass. The bottles are cold and, even if they weren't, I don't want ice in my beer.

Here, in this place, it is just served in the bottle, no ice. That works for me. In both cases, Manila and here, a small napkin covers the top as if it is a type of sanitary cover for the uncapped bottle. In a way, Filipinos seem far more respectful of their customers' need for cleanliness than are folks in the USA.

The food is more than I need, having eaten this evening already, and then I have another moment of understanding. These girls might have not had much to eat today. I am their meal ticket, literally.

I try the calamari but the offering is overcooked for me and far too rubbery. I tell the girls that the dish is all theirs.

The bistek is a beef dish. It turns out that that it is basically a stew meat cut of beef, but cut into small slices. It is prepared so well that it is both tender and tasty. I pretty much monopolize this dish finding an appetite I didn't know I had.

I am not sure I would have even tried pork sisig, if anyone had told me what was in it when served. But all the girls said is, *It is good. Try!*

Yeh, well, it is good. Just don't ask what it's made from.

Both the bistek and the sisig pretty much require rice and so all the rice is finished, as are all the platters as well as my two beers. The gals have now ordered some non-alcoholic coconut drink that has been served in coconut shells. They are having a fine time. I am on my third and fourth beer. A platter of French fries has appeared as has a platter of something that sort of looks like spaghetti but has chunked up hotdogs in it, and the thing is sweet.

I leave the noodle thing for the girls and munch on the fries, which have been seasoned with some type of artificial yellow cheese powder. It tastes a little overwhelming, is salty as all get out and stains my fingers yellow with the sticky cheesy powder. But most assuredly, it makes the need for beer fairly intense.

Others join us at our table for a bit. There is a fellow from Belgium and his girlfriend. I gather he is married to another Filipina, but he

has split the sheets with the wife and now bunks with this girl. He seems nice enough.

She, the girlfriend, says that the wife has a tight grip on her rosaries and is something of a pain.

That piece of intelligence is more information than I need. But I suspect the targets of that edification are my two girls rather than for me. I don't think it was for my benefit. It seems to be a warning to the girls not to forget what is important and what will trip you up... a caution to not lose track of your man in your search for salvation.

In that, I hear the crash of steel on steel. Another train making a coupling.

Jana mentions that the Belgian speaks all their dialects.

I guess I look a little confused. So Jana proceeds to explain about the national dialect and how it is different from the ones these girls grew up with at home. These things don't sound like dialects to me. They sound like different languages. The Belgium guy confirms my suspicion.

That couple moves on. Two other girls ask to join us, but my girls tell them they are not welcome. I am about to ask why, but Lyn must have guessed that I needed an explanation.

Sir, they are prostitutes. Not smart to add them. If you want more, we get good girls for you. Not them.

OK, so bear with me for a moment.

These two who jumped into my bed and fucked like rabbits see themselves as good girls, as distinct from prostitutes. I am wrapping my head around that as three girls and two guys approach. These are old school chums of Lyn. They are excited to see her and ask for introductions.

We sit with them for about fifteen minutes before Jana nudges Lyn and, I gather, tells her she is being rude to me because I don't know

what is being said at the table. They are all speaking their mother tongue.

Lyn says something to these folks, and they say in response, *Nosebleed!* and promptly leave.

The gals inform me that the term refers to those who are uncomfortable speaking English. It gives them a nose bleed.

Jana asks, *Go na?*

Lyn turns to me and asks if it is OK to leave and go back to the hotel.

It is midnight and I am all for calling it a night. I settle up. The four beers costs me less than a buck seventy-five. The total bill including all five dishes, the rice and the drinks for the gals cost under eight dollars.

They insist on riding the tricycle back to the hotel. I am not worried about the cost. In total, once again all three of us will only cost about fifty-five cents in equivalent US currency. It's just that I don't figure I need them to ride shotgun. I tell them I am OK getting back to the hotel on my own. But then, I am missing an important element. They aren't leaving me tonight.

No, Sir, they are going to stay with me in the hotel room. I gently complain that the hotel will need to be notified. Once again, I am about to learn a lesson. The hotel assumes they will be staying with me. No notification is needed.

I ask them if they need me to get them some toiletries from the hotel. I am informed that they have everything they need in their bags. I learn later that this included a change of clothing.

And so, as my head hits the pillow this very first night in General Santos City, I am not alone. Rather, I seem to have two 'good girls' who see themselves as mine. I have never agreed that they are to be my girls. Yes, they have volunteered, but I really haven't accepted them. ... Have I?

This will take some time to digest, but tonight all I want to do is sleep. OK, well, that was the plan, but I have never in my life slept between two girls. One seems to be happy to sleep, but the other is stroking my pride and joy. She whispers in my ear. She wants what Jana got earlier. She wants cum from me.

It doesn't take long for Lyn to get me hard. I mount her, missionary position, and fuck her good and long. For a while, I think Jana is sleeping. She isn't. She is watching us. I reach my hand out toward her. Balancing my arm by her on my knuckles, I push my thumb into her cunt and start thumb fucking her as I fuck Lyn.

I am not sure how much pleasure Jana gets out of it, but she isn't complaining and eventually Lyn does get my cum.

Having two girlfriends might well be the death of me if fucking oneself to death is possible.

3

I am last to get up. Hell, I didn't even want to get up. I am up because the girls are shaking me.

Craig, my love, get up! There much to do today!

Huh. The 'Sir' is now gone. I guess fucking erases the 'Sir.' And it has been replaced with 'my love.' Same reason? Does this place really run on completely different rails or am I being played?

OK, but why? What is so important to do today? I do not have any itinerary.

We must look for your house! It too expensive to stay here. We must save money now.

I am not convinced. The cost of the room is minimal. I am spending about \$34/day for the room. I could stay here more than a week for the cost of a room for one night in Boston. I decide to keep my skepticism to myself and allow them to show me why I am wrong.

OK, but breakfast first and then we will look.

Yes, yes, upstairs we get breakfast. Hurry!

And we do. The fact that there are three of us instead of the one I was paying for has me worried. As we walk into the grill, I mention the change to the server who assures me that it has already been adjusted, a minor change to the bill... *No problem, Sir. They are good girls. You are lucky, Sir.*

I say not a word more. The breakfast is a buffet and soon enough, we are well fed. It is a silly thing, but the eggs here taste better than do the eggs back home. It is really a weird thing to note, but at the same time the difference in the taste is startling.

During the meal, I mention that I would like to find a place with at least two floors and a second floor balcony. The girls ask why. I

mention the breezes that do not appear to be available at ground level. Higher is better.

When we get back downstairs, I don't even ask about a taxi as a tricycle is called for and arrives within seconds. Instructions to Kuya are given by Lyn and we take off away from Pioneer Avenue. I think this is the direction from which I came into town yesterday from the airport. But I hold my tongue. I will wait and see.

I am right and wrong. We do go back in that direction for a couple of miles (kilometers here) before turning 'up' into an area the girls tell me is called City Heights¹.

The heights are truly 'up.' This area is more residential than the area we had been in, down by the hotel. The driver has been told what we are looking for and he seems to have some ideas.

Most of the homes are modest bungalows. Some nice and some rudimentary. But as we climb higher in the Heights I begin to notice a few two story dwellings. Some of these are more 'modern' in design. They have none of the Spanish colonial influences and are more geometric with more unadorned glass and steel. But we are just passing by each one. They are nice but not available.

And then, on what must be little more than a back alley, there sits a three story home in front of which the tricycle comes to a stop. Lyn leans forward and asks me if this is the type of place I might be interested in.

It is, but is it available and what will it cost? For Christ's sake, the place is huge. Even with the difficult economy here, will I be able to afford it?

The driver will take you so you cannot be seen. The driver is sure it is available. There is only a caretaker here now. I will go and ask. If I go alone, I will get the best price. Best they not see your white face! The price will be great if that happen.

¹ The name of a Barangay, or political subdivision. These exist both within cities and outside them. General Santos has a number of barangays within it.

I know you don't want me to show my face, but I need to see it to make a decision.

Craig, you have a small camera, correct?

Yes. I do have a Minolta DiMAGE X. It is a small unit that fits in a shirt pocket. It is only three-fourths of an inch thick. I am surprised she noticed it.

OK, give it to me. I take photos and show you.

And that is what happens. The driver takes me off a ways, out of the sight-line of the house, while Lyn and Jana seek out the caretaker.

I am waiting, just me and a driver, who has no English, for a good thirty minutes before the girls return.

*Jana hands me the camera and says only one word, *Look*.*

She must have taken more than thirty pictures. I look through all of them. The place is nice, but I am confused about how many rooms, and I am sure it's more money than I want to spend.

How many bedrooms?

Six.

CRs?

Three, one on the second floor, two on the third.

How much will it cost?

You must sign a contract for a year. You can do this?

Maybe... How much?

Four thousand five hundred each month, plus you pay water bill and electric bill. It OK?

Four thousand five hundred pesos each month? Do I understand that right?

Yes, why, that too much? ... Sorry I will try to ask for less, but I not sure she will do it.

No, it isn't too much. It's a tiny bit over \$100 per month. I can get a six bedroom house for a complete year for \$1,200. Damn.

Hell, yes, that works.

It is even better than I thought I could find. Even if I have to bail out of it, no harm done. I was prepared to spend eighteen days in a hotel for \$35 per day. That would have cost me \$630, and even if I am paying for water and electric, eighteen days compared to three hundred sixty-five days?

Shit, yes, the girls were right. The hotel was far too expensive.

The gals go back to the house and close the deal. There is a rental agreement pre-printed by the owners, who are evidently working overseas in Dubai. They have already pre-signed their part and had it notarized. It only needs our part notarized and we can have it.

The girls have gotten the name and address of the attorney. We travel there via the tricycle. And once done, we travel back to the house, with three notarized copies (one for us, one for the caretaker and one for the owner) plus enough cash for two months plus a security deposit. All in all, under \$260.00. One night's stay in a decent, but not great, Boston hotel.

We are given a set of keys and are told the caretaker will be out in under three hours. We can take occupancy after that.

The house, God bless, is furnished. I am suffering whiplash!

I haven't known Lyn for even twenty-four hours yet.

It is barely a little after lunchtime. Yesterday at this time I had yet to enter her bar.

I am thinking about that as Jana notes that we have not eaten any lunch. Might we eat now?

Lyn suggests a 'Chicken Hauz' down on the highway and off we go.

Nothing like this happened to me in the BVI. There, I was seen as a tourist and nothing more. If I was considering staying on, I would have been seen as yet one more ‘sorry-ass sonofabitch’ hiding out for some reason. Another loose end with a backstory no one would care about.

Here, I am a prize. I am not sure I want to be a prize. But the difference between the BVI and here could not be clearer. And the difference between here and Dorchester? Yeh, well, these places don’t belong in the same Venn diagram. ... Maybe with the exception of Catholicism. Both are bastions of the Church, though Dorchester’s flavor is Irish Catholic and here it is pure Rome.

Lyn and Jana? Are they pretty? Yes, very pretty. Are they too young? Yes, but it doesn’t seem to matter to them, so why should it matter to me? Do we three share life goals? No, of course not, but once again, does it matter?

I think about Lyn for a second. She would be out of a job in four months, and then what? Another five month stint somewhere. I just signed a contract for twelve months. Twelve months of stable housing that she doesn’t have to pay for. And maybe, just maybe, if she plays her cards right, even longer. Same goes for Jana, and Jana doesn’t even have a job right now. She was struggling. She isn’t struggling today — is she?

We might not share goals but for each our goals are being met. Is it symbiosis? Or a type of mutually beneficial parasitism? These girls will cling to me, as I provide all nutrients and they ward off all danger to them and me. Is that closer to the truth of it?

And yet, this is the very result that my plans could have foreseen, if I had thought it all through. I hadn’t.

I was only thinking about me as a single person and my financial needs. I failed to understand that the conditions I had set out might well produce what I have now.

OK, so if I accept I seem to really want this now (I know on one level I have to be an idiot to even ask the question) ... but as this

was not what I set out to have, is it required that I decide that I want to keep it, knowing that it was not the plan?

I should also be honest here. As anyone who knows me knows, I don't play well with others. Never did. I am just difficult, I guess. I don't try to be, but it seems that I am wrapped wrong.

I read that humans spend a great deal of energy justifying and supporting their group. Even very bright folks. It seems that, to belong to a group, the individual will find ways to intellectually justify why what the group thinks is right, is indeed correct, even if left to himself, he would find it wrong.

But I just don't, or can't. Why don't I do that? It means I am always apart, separate, with a reputation as an asshole among many.

But, for some reason, I can't. All I end up seeing is why each group is wrong and then I am always foolish enough to open my mouth and point it out. Like I say, I don't play well with others.

Given that, why do I think I can get along with two sub-twenty-year-olds in a foreign land? Is my current libidinous success clouding my good judgment?

Ah, I think I know the answer. Because they do not see themselves belonging to my group. They see themselves as belonging to me. There is no group. And they are not my group. Yes, they will be my girls, but no one expects consensus.

Maybe, just maybe, this will work.

Have I been in my head the entire time traveling to the Chicken Hauz, the ordering, the serving and most of the eating? I do that way too much!

The fried chicken was damned good. I am stuffed.

The girls suggest I go back to the hotel and settle up, paying through tonight's stay, though we will not be there tonight. They will go back to their rooms and get all their stuff before meeting me at the hotel; we will take a taxi to our house.

I think they will need a taxi, at least to move their things to the hotel, but they just laugh. I am told I don't understand. I am sure I don't.

I go back alone to the hotel via tricycle. The girls have taken a second tricycle towards their rooms. As I get out of the conveyance, I get a bemused look from the hotel guard.

After collecting my things, emptying the safe and making one last circuit around the room, I go downstairs and check out, leaving my bag with the concierge. I go to the bar to wait for the girls.

As I sit down, a pretty waitress comes to my table and, unprompted, asks, *Sir, will you want your Jack on the rocks this afternoon like usual?*

Is it fair to ask if I am well beyond surprised? I sure as hell am. I have never seen this girl before. I was only here once and the barman was a different guy as well.

How do you know I like Jack on the rocks?

Sir, you have it yesterday when you meet Lyn. We all know this. Lyn very lucky she meet you first. I wish it me who is first.

Why is Lyn lucky?

She yours. This not true?

What is your name?

Nelmelyn, Sir. But you can call me Mel.

OK. ... Mel. How old are you?

Eighteen, Sir.

And you really want to be mine? Why? You don't know me.

I dream of being the girl of a gwapo foreigner!

I am sorry, but what does 'gwapo' mean?

Sorry, sorry! It mean handsome, Sir. You are gwapo, Sir, truly!

Uh-huh, like I said in the beginning, I am far from handsome. No one in their right mind should be calling me handsome, but this teenager just did.

So you want to be the girl of a gwapo foreigner? That's it?

Yes, Sir! This is my dream.

How many months have you been working here?

Four months, Sir.

And in these past four months, there have been no handsome foreigners?

Some, Sir, but they already have girlfriends, just like you now.

And in one month you must leave this job where you have a better chance of meeting foreigners?

Yes, this is true. I am sad. Kawawa!

Again, I am sorry, but what does 'Kawawa' mean?

I am not sure how to explain.

Just a second, I have a Tagalog to English pocket dictionary. I will look...

No, Sir! It not Tagalog. It Visayan!

Visayan? I don't have that. I only have Tagalog and Cebuano.

Yes! It Cebuano. Same as Visayan!

I look it up. What do you know, it means 'alas'! Alas, indeed.

So, how far can I push things? Might as well find out now. Better now than later.

Maybe you will not say kawawa. I am not only with Lyn, but with another, Jana. They are both mine. So you see, Lyn does not have me alone.

This true?

Yes.

You OK with more than one girl?

Yes, I prefer it. So you see, I am not a foreigner you really want.

Why you say that?

Well, do you want to join Lyn and Jana and be my girl too? Really?

You allow it?

You be good and no problems with the other two?

Oh my God! Oh my God! Yes! Yes! Really, you allow me?

I will, if and only if you go get me my Jack on the rocks!

Oh! Sorry! Yes! OK, I go. Yes!

She runs to the bar to get my drink and would have run back if she wasn't worried about spilling it.

Sir, the barman say you must pay because your account here is closed. Why that?

I leased a house here today. I am moving in this evening.

How I find you?

You can ask Lyn when she arrives. She will give you directions.

You will tell her now I am joining? Truly?

You want this, don't you?

Yes. But I am afraid Lyn will be angry.

I am not. She will give you the directions.

Two orders of Jack are disposed of as Lyn walks into the bar. Mel sees Lyn and signals to her. Lyn signals back as she sits down next to me.

Jana is with our things. You ready to go?

In a minute. I need you to tell Mel where she should come tonight.

You add her?

Yes.

OK, wait a while I will talk with her.

I guess things can go badly, but I am not expecting them to, and I am right. The two hug and kiss each other's cheek. As they talk, they hold each other's hands. This is not looking like a problem at all.

Ten minutes later, we are out of the Sydney Hotel. I will never return there as a guest. I don't want to tell you how many nights in hotels I spent in the BVI. The BVI is geared for tourists. GenSan is not.

In the thirty hours I have been in GenSan, I have secured housing for a year for next to nothing and filled it with three girls, all under twenty years of age.

The taxi wends its way up Roxas Blvd., left onto the National Highway, and a right hand turn by the Fair and Square Pharmacy. This street is no more than a two-lane potholed track, a little less than a real road but more than an alley, past low roofed shelters built of coco lumber and cheap galvanized corrugated steel roofs, up, up into the heights. Through it all we are the only four wheeled vehicle. Everything else is a tricycle, motorcycle, or bicycle.

The travel is slow, as there is little room to pass and, even if we could pass one of these slow contrivances, there is another slow vehicle immediately beyond.

If I was on a motorcycle I could weave more effectively through the conveyances on this road, but the potholes are an ever present danger. I will lay odds that many such riders pay the price for attempting to thread through at a higher speed and are then betrayed by the road surface itself.

The slow advance leaves my mind free to consider my current situation.

Much of the time, we are just dealing with life as it presents itself. Choices, turns, yes or no, right or left, good or bad, which do you want, now or later... these we navigate all our lives, all day long, every day.

Living is deciding, valuing, and in the end, doing or not doing. Reflection is infrequent and on occasion confused with enjoyment. We do savor things on occasion, as reward for a choice or decision we made, but that is not reflection.

No, reflection is the hard thing. It is the system checking one's self for our own flaws and contradictions. It is looking in the mirror, not a funhouse mirror, and seeing what is real. It is something we really don't want to do. It means denying the right to excuse. It means seeing us as others do or will. That is never comfortable.

We don't do that often, do we?

And even now my mind willingly wanders from that to what I can't say to others when I return to Dorchester.

If I walk into the Eire Pub on Adams, and tell the boyos about this, this life I will possibly lead with Lyn, Jana and Mel in a beautiful three story house I am renting for a single Franklin a month, someone must assuredly call for me to be placed in a padded cell for my own protection. Clearly, I have gone insane and am completely psychotic.

In truth, it seems that way to me and I am living it. How can this be real?

Am I still sleeping in my room in the Sydney hotel following that hot walk when I first arrived? Is this all a dream? It would make a pretty sweet dream, and just maybe far more sense. It feels real. Still, I am having a problem processing it.

I, just a few minutes ago, told a girl, three years too young to drink in the USA, that if she wanted to, she could join two other girls, similarly too young, and be added to my bed. That has to be as crazy as it gets.

And yet, and yet, she is happy to be added. If this is not a dream, just what the fuck has happened? How can I make sense of this? What will my life be like? And as sweet as this sounds, is this OK? I mean, can I do this? Is this a life I want to live? Will I be OK?

Just what the fuck is happening to me?

4

The taxi pulls up to our new home.

For me, it is a bit of incredulity. This place might well be worth half a million dollars, or more, if in Boston. Yet here, a stay of thirty-four days at the hotel, at the low-low cost of thirty-six bucks a day, is not really cheaper than this place is for an entire year. I am having a very hard time integrating this into reality without wondering when the other shoe will drop.

For the two girls with me and, I suspect, the one who will appear later, they must feel like their ship reached a safe harbor. And in this port city whose bay opens southward onto the Pacific Ocean, the metaphor is apt. They are giddy as they take the bundle of keys from my hand and determine which opens the manhole².

Once the manhole is opened, the bags, (my carry-on case and their plastic 'garbage bags' plus backpacks filled with all their belongings) are brought inside the walled enclosure before the manhole door is closed and securely shut.

This act, this entering into a secure enclosure, clearly has a meaning to them that only now do I see. This is safety. This is a safety they have never had before.

Yes, when they are in other places on occasion, like the hotel, with the armed guard at the door, there is safety, but it is not they who pay the guard. All their lives they have been, in a real way, unsafe. The only reason why they had any hope of protection was that they had nothing of any value other than their bodies. And here, bodies, it would appear, are cheap.

That is what I represent to them. It is not my looks. It is not the actual size of my bank account. It is not what I will buy them, so

² A door-sized opening in a perimeter wall or gate to allow a pedestrian through but not a vehicle.

that they can flaunt such to others. It is the safety of these walls in which, I, in a matter of hours, have surrounded them.

Getting through the manhole in a real way is more important than what they are about now, divining which keys open the door to the house.

The front door has both a lock on the knob and a second deadbolt lock. I suggest working on the deadbolt first. I get a confused look but they accede to my suggestion while continuing to struggle. There must be close to twenty keys on the ring.

I will learn why there are so many in a few minutes after entering the house, but now, I ask and they hand over the bundle.

Most of the keys are for five-tumbler locks. The key we used to get into the manhole was a seven-tumbler lock. I see four more seven-tumbler keys. My best guess is that two are for this door and two are for a back door.

My guess is paying off. The second key I try opens the deadbolt. Going back to the first one I had tried on the deadbolt without success, I find it opens the lock on the doorknob. The door opens.

The place is clean and I see no problems. The reason for the many keys becomes clear. Every bedroom has not only a keyed entry, but a dead-bolt as well. That accounts for twelve more keys. Each bathroom is also keyed. And so, inside the house there are fifteen locks. The front and back doors account for four more, a lock for the big gate and the one for the Manhole, yet another one. Twenty-one keys, so far, but there is another key. There are twenty-two keys on the ring. Exactly where that last one goes remains a mystery. But there is one thing that isn't a mystery.

It is safety. Personal safety.

And here is the conundrum.

Before, the girls were in some ways safe from danger simply because they weren't seen as having anything of value. So there was nothing to lock out.

Now, here, their presence in this house announces value to the bad guys of the world. This house and those who live within it will be a target. Therefore the locks. Locks upon locks.

Can't get through the manhole? Climb over the wall. Find broken glass shards on the top of the wall? Throw some fabric over the shards. Can't get past the house doors, pry off the steel grates in front of the windows and open the windows and break the glass. Now you are inside the house. OK, steal what you can from the common rooms on the first floor, but the occupants are behind locked doors on the second floor, where getting to the grates on the windows is harder and on the third floor where there are no grates on the windows, but how to get up there?

No, it isn't perfect security, but for the most part it works, and if there is a handgun in the nightstand by the bed, entering into the bedroom might be a death sentence for the bad guy. Best to not try!

Welcome to the third world. It is different from your world. It is coarser. It is more brutal. It is more honest. It is a Hobbesian world.

These girls, a few meters from me, as I stand in the entryway, with the bundle of keys in my hand, are the yin and yang of the truth of it all. If before they were safe, it was because they had nothing. Now that they are here, they are less safe and the keys are needed to keep them safe.

Yet, for them, all they believe is — keys make you safe.

As the weight of all the keys makes an impression on my mind, I realize the practical need for a number of duplicate sets.

The girls are investigating the kitchen. They announce that tomorrow morning they need to go shopping.

I am curious. *Lyn when do you need to go back to work?*

Craig, I quit. No way to work and care for you!

I see. OK.

Yes, I do see. If I am staying, she may well be right. But I have not made that decision yet. She is gambling. *Look, we also need to make duplicate keys and some of these keys are special and not easy to duplicate.*

No problem. There a guy down on Pioneer, he do that. We see him tomorrow also. Not far from palengke.

Lyn, what does palengke mean?

It the public market. We shop there for fruit, vegetable, fish, pork... better than supermarket I think. It not far from your hotel, Craig. You know, that where the city begin... down there. That why everything we need close to there, really.

It makes sense. That's where the bay comes to shore. These 'heights' grew up from the city as it expanded up from the bay.

Wealthier folks, along with more simple but employed individuals, moved up from what has become, in some ways, a more squalid place, surrounded by the businesses, and by products of their trades, along with the effluent of human activity never foreseen in the original settlement.

The formal downtown survives, but its streets are a thin veneer hiding that which sits right behind it.

In these few hours I have been here, that much is coming into focus. This house and its multiple locked doors provides me with a lens through which I can see what I had not seen before. It helps me better understand the girls, too. It helps in that it provides me with a window into their way of seeing the world.

This is not the world I knew. This is a world I must learn about. This is most assuredly the only world they will ever know and its rules, boundaries, limitations, and options are the ones I will be

functioning in... if I stay. And yet, this part of their world is new to them, too. Yesterday they lived 'at risk' lives. Not so now. At least, not so if I stay and keep them. Once again, they are gambling on me.

Once again, the question is front and center in my mind. Do I stay?

Without a doubt, I now believe the girls very much want me to stay. They are betting that, if they treat me right, I will stay. For them, I am a real answer to their lives here. But are they and this place the answer for me?

Quite clearly, my safety is not assured here. That has become crystal clear, right along with the heft of these twenty-two keys. I will have to be careful where I go. I will need these locked doors. My money, as I have it, will suffice, so that will no longer be a problem. It is the problem I was looking to solve. But there are some hurdles.

This house is nice for now, but if I stay in this city, I will eventually have to leave this house. At some point, the owners, now overseas, will return. So, if I plan to stay, I will need to investigate getting my own place.

I am holding a tourist visa. I will need to investigate what options I have to get a different visa.

I have my life in Dorchester. People, though not many, plus my things. I have a house there. I can lease it out, or sell it. Selling seems far too final. I am most assuredly not nearly ready to be that final in my choosing, no matter what I decide to do here, for now. So, if I stay here, leasing sounds like the best option.

Craig?

Hub? Oh, what, Jana?

You hungry? There no food here. It OK if me and Lyn get something from Malakas? Food stores there. Maybe we get some bbq pork for you, we buy a kilo of rice for the cooker here, we get some beer and buko juice?

How far is it?

Not far. We close. You not see it because it up the street more. Maybe three minute by small tricycle.³

How much do you need?

It OK if you give two hundred pesos? That OK, Craig? We promise we bring back your change.

What they have asked for is about \$4.50 to feed the three of us and that includes two beers for me. Just try to feed three people in Dorchester for that much money. OK, maybe a few slices of baloney and a loaf of white bread. But really...

I give them the money, but before they leave they caution me to keep an ear out for their return, as they will have to call for me to open the manhole for them. Security. The doors must stay locked.

While the girls are gone, I wander around the house a little. The master bedroom is on the third floor and it does have a balcony. And the balcony door has a lock. That's the twenty-second key.

I can see a fair bit of the street from the balcony. It isn't exactly private. Is that another lesson? Do Filipinos not value privacy like we do in the States?

It is actually cooler up here on the balcony than it is downstairs. I have not turned on any air conditioner yet, so this nice, breezy and cooler air is a welcome change to what being outside, up to now, has meant to me here. It is actually cooler than it was on the roof of the hotel. Being in the heights has real value.

I need to get a chair or two onto this balcony. There is nothing here now. I am just leaning against the wall, looking out over rooftops

³ There are two types of tricycles operating here. The ones we have taken already and smaller units. These smaller ones have smaller motorcycles. The passenger seating is smaller and they carry far fewer individuals. They are not permitted to operate city wide and are relegated to smaller areas. They are also less expensive. For what it is worth, I cannot fit in them.

and between trees. I see activity in every direction. Not hurried activity, but purposeful. The activity of those living out their lives.

All around, clothing hangs on lines. All around, I see dogs, chickens, and small children. There is a fecundity here. You can feel it. Everything grows, breeds, moves and in some cases crawls. Yes crawls, as I watch a lizard on the wall of the house.

It has been three quarters of an hour since the girls left. I see them now as they emerge from a tricycle. I call down to them, both startling and entertaining them. I will come down and let them in.

One thing is perfectly clear. Filipino bbq is radically different from any bbq I have had in the States. That is not to say it isn't good. It's wonderful. Just really different. The girls got me around ten of the diminutive bamboo skewers of bbq pork. They, it seems, have skewers of bbq chicken entrails. I decide to never try these things. There are just some places I am not going. It's that simple.

We have some black colored, watery, dipping sauce that came in a small plastic bag. It's good, though I don't have a clue as to what it is. One thing is certain, it bears not one bit of any connection with bbq sauce we use on our plates in the USA. There is nothing sweet nor savory about this.

The white rice is good with it, though I do miss my fries, beans and slaw that I usually have with bbq.

I haven't mentioned the rice here. It is ubiquitous and it is also radically different from how we know rice in the States. And no, I am not referring to Uncle Ben's. No, I mean that I was always told that rice should not clump. Properly cooked rice should allow each grain to be distinct.

Not so here. And that is not by accident or because they cannot afford good rice. They want the rice to be starchy and clump. The traditional way to eat rice, I am being told tonight, is to eat it as they are doing now, making little balls of the stuff with fingers and then popping the rice into the mouth via those same fingers. The girls are not using any utensils. Everything is by fingers.

How we do that, if it not stick together?

And this rice is not long grained. It is medium, if not short grain. They have never seen long grained rice. The rice they eat is grown here, right here. Here, on the outskirts of town, I am told. They are quite sure that this is the best rice in the world.

See how soft, Craig? Lyn asks as she squeezes a clump. Imported rice and cheap rice, it is hard, not soft like our good rice. Our rice taste better too!

Does rice have flavor? Can't say I noticed it. I guess I should try from now on. There are things in this world that have passed unnoticed. Another lesson.

Is Lyn's insistence that her rice is better true? It is true for her and how her culture eats rice. That is all I can say. Better is not an external concept. It requires context.

In the world Lyn inhabits, some rice is better than other rice. The rice preferred in restaurants with top Michelin ratings would be rejected here... and vice versa. That, my friend, is one of the reasons that truth is hard to know, and it may be why there is no eternal or external truth.

Truth requires context.

We are finishing our meal and I note that a sizable number of the chicken laden skewers are untouched and a significant amount of rice also remains. I ask if this will be for breakfast.

No, we go out to get breakfast tomorrow. This for Mel. She will be here tonight. Me and Jana know we need to feed her.

I am putting what little I have in a couple of drawers in our bedroom. My passport sits atop the dresser as Jana comes in.

Oh! You need to hide that. Dangerous to leave it out, I think.

It's true I don't want to lose it, but I am not sure how it is valuable to anyone else. But assuming I am clueless and she knows something I do not, I simply ask, *Where do you think I should put it?*

You need a safe, I think. But for now, is there a pocket in your suitcase? Maybe put it in there.

I am not sure about the need for a safe, but the suitcase makes sense to me and I put it in the outside pocket on the bag. I think I will need it soon enough.

I have been thinking that, if I plan on staying long enough to see if this will work, rather than extend my initial stay here and then go back, I should go back within the twenty-one days of the visitor's visa, and get my place in Dorchester ready for leasing. Close up things there as much as possible without completely shutting all doors and burning all bridges.

I will need to deal with my bank, too. I need to see about opening a bank account here before I leave. There is no way I want to live here without a local bank account. The cost of using the street-side currency exchange operations is far less desirable than using bank to bank transfers; Transfers between banks gets me a better exchange rate, far more to my advantage.

As I noted earlier, I don't play well with others. One of the ways that shows is that I spend far too much time inside my own head rather than with the things around me.

Right now is a prime example. Jana is sitting on the bed and, I guess, waiting for me to engage with her. My failure to do so has caused a small hiccup.

Craig, it OK I am here? You not sorry it not only Lyn or maybe Lyn and Mel?

Why do you ask that?

You not talking to me. You not touching me. I am here on the bed, but you ignore me. I am too young? Too ugly? Too silly? What?

Are you experiencing whiplash? I am, but only for a moment.

See it through Jana's eyes. My position is secure. She is the supplicant. In all likelihood, it's backward from your experience. It is backward in mine, but I get her point.

I stop what I am doing, take a good look at this pretty teenager. I give her as much of a smile as I can muster, while at the same time feeling incredibly sad for her and all the girls just like her, who have the desperate need to find their own prizes.

Jana, I am happy you are with me and you may not leave. Is that clear?

Truly, Sir?

Yes, truly. It is also true that I have much to think about if I am staying. I have a whole life back in the USA. You put all your things in that plastic bag in just a few minutes and were done. I can't do that. My life is far more complicated.

You leaving?

No, at least, not for long. I will have to go back and shut some things down, but I will come back.

I scared you will not return, if you go.

Before I leave, for a little bit, I will try to do some things to prove to you that I will come back.

Like what?

Oh, opening a bank account, buying a motorcycle, buying a chair for the balcony so I can sit out there.

You get a motorcycle? Really?

I think it is better than using those tricycles all the time.

Yes! Very good. OK, you do that and I will believe you will come back. The bank account and the chair, that I am not sure of, but the motorcycle... yes, that.

Banks mean nothing to her. Little plastic chairs, common here, are cheap. But a motorcycle? That is proof of economic stability and status. To own such a thing has significance.

5

Where you want me to sleep?

Here, why?

I think maybe just Lyn here.

You are equal to Lyn... and if Mel works out, you are equal to Mel. No difference.

But they are older. Most important!

Yes, a little bit older, not much. Maybe to you they are more important, not to me.

So are we really all sleeping here?

For now, I haven't really given it any thought. Maybe not tonight depending on what happens with Mel, but yes, this is our bedroom unless you want something else. Do you have a preference on how I should do it?

Me? No, I not! OMG why you ask me? Better you ask Lyn. But this is your house. We do as you say. Simple.

You do anything I say? Anything? Really? I don't think you really mean that.

Yes! Why not? Why you not believe me?

Because there are evil things in the world and if I asked you to do an evil thing, you will say you won't do it.

I not care if it evil. I not think you will do that, but if you do, I do.

I am just not sure what to make of all this. It is true that not one thing I have asked for has been denied me. Is that part of what Jana is saying now? She is a really cute kid. But she is a kid, and as much as I find the whole concept as unreal as it can get, I want to kiss her, knowing she will say, yes, absolutely.

Jana, can I get a kiss from you?

She launches off the bed and into my arms. She is attached to me as completely as she is able. Her mouth is connected to mine. Her breath is in sync with mine. I actually feel her heart beat, her chest against mine.

Will this last? Does it matter if it doesn't? Will there not be another Jana should this one graduate from here? We have had unprotected sex. What if she or one of the others get pregnant?

I am engaged in a 'does this scratch my itch' game.

It is not a game for them. It is life for these girls. I am being remarkably cavalier with the potential of fucking these girls over and giving them possibly more than false hope, in the form of offspring.

Jana is still in my arms and making demands on my heart I am scared to accept. Am I really ready to leave all I know and have held dear?

I know I said that is the plan, but was I kidding myself? Can I really do it? Do I belong at the Eire Pub, remembering this as a dream?

I feel Jana's desire. It is real. It may not be love, but the need and desire, that much is real. She wants to feel my desire, my need. I have the desire. But the need? Do I have the need or was I just kidding myself?

She may not think of herself as a prostitute, but if this is desire and not need on my part, if I walk away later, is it not prostitution in which she is engaged?

Jana has a hand on my clothed crotch. She is hoping for far more than what she is getting right now. If Mel was not expected a little later, I would give Jana what she so clearly wants from me physically. But the timing is not propitious.

Maybe I will give her a little. My hand moves to her clothed pussy. She is wearing shorts. It wouldn't take much to drop them to the floor if that is what I want. No, scratch that. It is what she wants, as

her hand briefly moves from my crotch to her shorts, unbuttons and unzips them. She wiggles her ass as the shorts fall to the floor. Her hand regains purchase on my crotch.

My hand is touching the thin, well-worn panties. There is little the fabric hides from my touch. I feel her warmth. I feel her moisture. I feel the coarse stubble of a shaved pussy that needs another shave.

Jana is pushing her cunt into my hand. She is pulling my shoulders into her. Her tongue is everywhere in my mouth. Her breasts squeeze against me, with her heart pounding rhythmically against my abdomen.

I slide my hand up enough to find the elastic of the panties and slide my hand under it. My middle finger now parting her labia.

She gasps, moans and, if possible, ramps up her assault on my mouth and crotch.

Am I a monster? Do I have any damn business ravishing this teenager? Ought I to know better? Father Dan at Boston College High School might want to beat the ever-living shit out of me right now. Wouldn't you, Father?

I came to this island to find a place I could live comfortably based on my finances. Period. It had not a damned thing to do with underage girls. It had not a damned thing to do with the hot juices flowing over my finger. Nothing to do with the mouth firmly attached to mine. Nothing whatsoever to do with the hand stroking my now rampant cock.

Dare I ever confess again? Dare I ever take communion again?

Oh, Lord Jesus, how can this be so wrong with a girl of such a good heart who only wants love, commitment, and safety in my arms? I truly do not understand.

I do not understand as Jana unbuttons my slacks and lowers the zipper.

I do not understand as Jana reaches in under the briefs and secures her hold on that rampant member, now pumping it gently, as my finger continues to work her cunt.

I most certainly do not understand as Jana takes both her hands and yanks my slacks and briefs down before pulling her panties down, kicking them away and pulling me down on the bed on top of her.

And finally, I do not understand why I slide into her and fuck her with all the energy I have. Fucking her hot, wet, tight cunt until she cums a river on me, and the bed, and I, for the second day running, plant seed in what might well be a fertile cunt.

Fuck.

Are you trying to get pregnant?

I hope.

I see.

I do see. I am not angry with her, not frustrated with her. I guess I am beginning to understand her. She does not want me to be a one or two day thing. The thought that I might impregnate her and abandon her, which she might well want to consider, is not present in her brain. She is earnestly trying to create a family with me. She wants a forever thing.

Yesterday, I was worried if I was being played as a patsy in a scam of some type that might well end up quite badly for me.

In a way, this is a scam too. But in it, Jana is playing for keeps.

Seventeen-year-old Jana wants her foreigner guy and his baby and a life of safety with him and her child. Yes, it is a scam. Am I not complicit?

I lean over and give Jana a kiss, not one of passion, nor one of dismissal. It is a kiss of caring, I guess. Her scam might well be working.

We are dressed when Lyn walks in and asks, *What is my bedroom?*

Don't you want to be here with me and Jana?

Oh! OK. Yes, this is good. What we do with all the bedrooms?

I have no idea.

Jana smiles and says, *Maybe ... one for a nursery!*

Lyn says something in their language. Jana responds, *No, Ate, no secrets from our Craig. Better that way. English only.*

Lyn turns to me and says, *I say to your Jana, be careful. If you get pregnant and he leaves, what you do?*

Hub. And she called you something. What was that?

Oh, she calls me, Ate. It mean older sister... like Kuya for boys.

I like Lyn. She is no fool. She knows what she wants, but she also knows the risks.

Ate, yes he will leave but he will come back. He will buy a motorcycle before he leave.

This true, Craig? You leaving?

Yes, I must. This was just a trip to see if it was possible to stay here. I never planned to stay without at least returning once. To stay here, I must return and end things there.

When you go?

In sixteen days.

Why then?

My visa expires.

Extend it. The Immigration here on the highway.

Yes, I know, but staying longer before I go back or going back now is a matter of money. I am better off going back now. It will save me a lot of money, if I am going to be living here.

Why it costs you? It is more expensive there, true?

Yes, but I have a house there. I need to move my stuff out of it and lease it out. Allowing the house to sit unused costs me a lot of money, and it is dangerous. It is very cold there. If the heater fails and the water pipes freeze, there could be huge damage. Next I need to work with my bank there to transfer money to a bank here. I have to do the bank stuff in person. I have to cancel services and subscriptions that come to my house there. I can do some of it from here but not all of it. I want to get my medical workup from my doctor there so I have it for a doctor here. Do you see now?

OK, yes, I think it like us. I think it just pack a bag and go.

I know. But like I told Jana earlier, my life there is more complicated.

You really coming back?

Yes.

How we know?

And here Jana breaks in. Why you think he tell me he will buy a motorcycle before he return? Because he trying to teach us he will return. Why waste that money just to lie?

Craig, is Jana correct?

Yes. She is exactly correct.

How we get along when you are gone? We have nothing without you. I quit my employment.

Yes, you told me. While I was not happy with that, I accept it. I will provide you allowances to take care of everything until I return.

How we contact you?

Tomorrow, we will buy two phones. OK?

Yes, good but why. I have. Nice you buy for Jana, but why?

So we can stay in contact.

We can chat every day you are gone?

Yes.

OK. Craig, ... there is a problem.

I thought you just said OK.

Not about that. About Mel.

If she doesn't want to come, it's not a problem. Tell her it's OK.

No. It not that.

What is it, Lyn?

She not want to come alone.

You mean she needs a chaperone? Really?

No, no, you not understand.

Clearly. Explain better.

Her sister live with her.

Her sister wants to join too?

Craig, her sister, she fifteen. Too young to be alone.

I don't think this is a good idea.

Mel say her sister say, if you refuse to let both, then she will run away and Mel come alone. Mel afraid her sister really do this. Mel want you to not allow her to come alone. She want you to make sure her sister know you not allow Mel to come alone! Mel want to come but she need you to allow because she needs her sister to be safe.

Jana, what do you think I should do?

Really? You ask me?

Yes. What do you think I should do?

Ha! Remember what we say before? I say be evil! Do it! Tell Mel to tell her sister, Mel only allowed to come here if her sister is in your bed. Ha! I bet the sister say she not want that. Then they both not come.

Jana, what if the sister says, OK?

Then be evil. Their choice.

Lyn? You want to tell Jana how wrong she is?

No. My love, I think this is best.

Oh, Father Dan. What do I do now?

Craig, what you want me to tell Mel. She waiting for my text.

OK, text her exactly what Jana said. Her sister must say she wants to have sex with me, or neither can come. Tell her that if the sister runs away, Mel still can't come. She is only allowed to come if her sister comes. ... Lyn can you call her rather than text?

Yes, but then my load is gone.

How much for a new load?

Thirty pesos.

I give her a five hundred peso note and tell her, Load up that damned phone, you and I need to text a lot.

OK. I call her now.

And off she goes. Jana is laughing. I look at her and ask, Why?

Well, Lyn has low bat on her phone. That why she not holding it I think. And... no one ever give her five hundred pesos for load in her life. I sure of this. And... OMG, what will happen with Mel and her sister!

I grant you, that is quite a bit to laugh about, I guess.

The threat does place the burden on the child to knock the shit off. If this was the USA, I would not be in this situation, but for

argument's sake, if I was, what we are doing would definitely work. No fifteen-year-old in the States would jump into my bed. Will it work here? I have no idea. Be evil, indeed!

I just sit back down on the bed. This life better settle down. So far it is just nuts and, just now, I am beginning to think it is unsustainable.

Jana snuggles in to my side and I put an arm around her. It is not sexual. It is just comfort.

We are like that, not talking, when Lyn returns.

I tell her exactly what you say. She say tell Lexi. So I do this. Lexi is yours or Mel not allowed to come. It not matter if Lexi run away.

I gather Lexi is the sister?

Yes. That true.

What did Lexi say?

She ask if she can meet you before she make up her mind.

Really?! OK, well what did you say?

I say, come now. We will feed you. ... Ha! She surprised.

What?

Yes, she surprised I say, come and they eat here.

I am confused. Why?

Feeding someone is an act of respect, of good manners. So the message is, if you are here, you are like family. See?

Yes, I do, and one part of me wishes you had not offered to feed Lexi. I understand why you did, but maybe it would have been better if you have not.

Now, Sir Craig, it me who confused. Why you say that?

Because, they will stay, Lyn. Because they will stay.

Jana snuggles back in and says nothing at all. Lyn sits down on the other side of me. I put my arm around her and she leans in. It was my fault today for inviting Mel. Completely my fault. I was seeing how far this thing could be pushed before things pushed back.

I was being an egotistical ass when I ask Jana what she would do if I asked for something evil.

Now what? I was pretty sure, OK not sure, but hoping, the kid would be repulsed and that would be the end of the kid and of Mel. The two that are here are quite enough, truth be told.

I really don't think they are short-timers. I was not looking for any 'timers' at all but I have them — if I live here.

The economics of it all argues that this is actually the best place to hang my hat. The matter of security is a concern but, on review, any place that offers the economy I need will come with security problems. It's a two-fer. Need one, get the other.

Lyn jumps up and announces she needs to make more rice.

Jana jumps up and announces that she will be right back. Three minutes later Jana reappears with two all-weather plastic chairs you might see at an outdoor venue.

Craig, will you open the balcony door?

A minute later, we are both out on the balcony on this completely pleasant evening, enjoying the breeze and the activity around us. I guess I am staying inside my own head and not there for Jana. But the girl needs me with her out here and says, *This is cool.*

It is cool.

For me there is a great deal more to it tonight, than it just being cool.

I have not been in GenSan for forty-eight hours. In this compressed time of activity I have a home and two sweet girls. Try doing this anywhere else in the world. It just isn't going to happen.

And I guess I am back in my head because Jana sees them before I do.

She does nothing other than tap my arm and, with her head, indicate activity below us.

Those below are not looking up. Jana is not wanting them to; I agree. The two exit the tricycle, and pay the driver, maybe sixteen pesos. It looks like Mel is texting. Shortly thereafter, Lyn is out by the manhole ushering them in.

Let them eat first. I will stay up here. I am about to impart that decision to Jana, when she announces, *Craig, after they eat, I will send Lexi up to you. Mel should stay downstairs. You be evil with Lexi. Make sure she willing to do all or send them away. I not care if she fifteen. I know you will not hurt her if she stay. It be OK. But if she a problem, send her away.*

OK. Thank you for the advice.

You're welcome, Sir. I go downstairs now. OK?

Yes.

Sitting here feels good. The fact that I will never have to shelter inside for months at a time feels surprisingly good, too. My winter coat will get possibly just one more workout before it enters perpetual retirement.

Yes, this feels good, but downstairs there is a juvenile who is deciding if she will become a mistress among other mistresses to a man she has never met.

The kid should simply not even be in this house. I know why she is here. All in this house know why she is here. All in this house, except for me, are sure of one thing... I am not evil.

6

I am the only one unsure of that. And I am unsure for a very good reason. I should never have accepted Lyn, much less tell her she had to bring another with her. That was the first mistake.

The second mistake was feeling sorry for Mel and figuring, oh, hell, what's the difference if we add one more. Let's see how far I can push this.

All of this is on me. All of it.

You can justify it by saying these girls are making a reasonable and informed choice given a bad situation. And given that, am I not a rational actor?

Maybe. Maybe it is a reasoned and correct choice on their part but, can you be sure? I can't. They think they are making a reasonable choice, but people convince themselves of all sorts of nutty things.

No, I am not exaggerating. Remember all those folks who literally drank the Kool-Aid in Jonestown? Didn't they think they were making an informed decision?

Yes, sure, I can see the economic rationale as well as they seem to and, yes, we are coming at it from different places, so maybe I am beating myself up way too much. It just feels so damned wrong.

And still, is my being a rational actor in an irrational setting an excuse? It seems a bit self-serving, doesn't it?

There is one thing that doesn't seem to bother me oddly enough, in and of itself.

I haven't considered if I can afford four girls. There is no need. With the economics here, yes, I can.

The math I did, before I even got here, included needing a maid and a groundskeeper. And in later years I figured I would need a

nurse of some type. This might actually be less expensive and safer. Go figure.

This place, its economics, the expectations of its inhabitants, everything, makes assumptions based on the moral, ethical, and social organization of Boston, or any US culture, quite meaningless. That is the maddening thing that makes my decision making tortured as I proceed right now.

As I look out on the activity in the near distance, from this balcony, what I do not see is strife or anger. I see normal people living lives as best they can.

There is noise of a type I am not used to. Roosters crowing, karaoke singers, lots of motorcycles, all seemingly without mufflers, producing the unending acoustic background to these lives. No one seems to care or maybe even notice, what to me is noise. Do they even hear it? Take notice of it? Once I go inside and turn on an air conditioner, I doubt I will hear any of it. An acoustic Band-Aid for foreign ears.

There are now are voices from inside the house that reach my ears. I wonder, what is transpiring.

No more than ten minutes later I hear the bedroom door opening. I get up and enter the room myself to find Jana alone looking at me. She isn't saying a word.

Well? What is happening?

Mel asks Ate, why Sir made the requirement. Ate say, 'Sir Craig make it hoping you both will not come. That why.' ... Mel, she get angry. She ask, 'Why he tell me I can come today?' ... Ate tell her, 'Because he not know about Lexi. You that foolish? Truly?' ... Mel, she now confused, 'So if he not want Lexi, why he say she in his bed?'

Jana is not used to long narrations and she pauses a bit.

Ate, she frustrated. She say, 'If Sir Craig know you have Lexi, he not invite you. But he invite you not knowing. Lexi then tell you she will run away from

you if you not come here. That make Craig angry. He does not want that to happen. He says you must always be with your sister. That must be. So either you both in his bed or both not. You choose, she choose. Up to both. If Craig choose, he choose you are fed and then go home.'

Now, Jana makes a face of frustration, and I gather it is with Mel, as she continues.

Mel ask, 'That it. I must be with my sister?' Ate say, 'Yes, but he think Lexi have bad attitude. It make him angry with her. So, she do exactly what he say or both must go.' ... I think Mel agree. Lexi, she have bad attitude. But Lexi, she say she just not want Ate to lose a chance at happiness because Ate feel she must protect Lexi. Lexi say she love Mel so much, that why she do this. Then both Mel and Lexi, they cry.

Are they going home?

No.

Hub? Why not? Clearly Mel does not want Lexi in my bed.

Hard to explain.

What are they doing?

They getting Lexi ready for you.

Who?

Ate and Mel.⁴ You must make her behave, Sir. This one has a strong will. She not do what her Ate tell her. That a problem. But it is also true her Ate, she should hit Lexi and make her behave.⁵ Mel not do that. Both wrong, I think. You must make her behave or she trouble here.

Things are going from bad to terribly bad. Just how am I supposed to make this kid behave? What does behave even mean under the current circumstances?

⁴ Confused yet? Exactly who is "Ate" changes from speaker to speaker. [At this moment...] To Jana, Lyn is Ate. To Lexi, Mel is Ate. [However these assignments can change and broaden. There can be multiple individuals referenced as Ate. Welcome to the Philippines!]

⁵ Physical punishment is common and seen as appropriate even for teens. You might disagree but this reference is not unusual for the culture.

Bring her up when she is ready and then leave. But her entering is proof of nothing. If I come down and tell you she is accepted then she is. If I don't come down and she does, they must leave.

OK.

And Jana goes.

I can't see how hitting a teenager gets you anything other than a pissed off teen. But this is a very different culture. So what the fuck do I know? A fifteen-year-old, in the States, would not be getting prepared for what this one is in for tonight. So, once again, what the fuck do I know?

I am pacing around the room.

Maybe some guys would take this in stride, or think it is all fun and games. It most surely isn't to me. Never in my life have I ever had sexual contact as an adult with any teen. And as a teen I never had any contact with a girl so young. I'm not saying I was a saint, as Father Dan well knows, though he surely won't tell. I had my moments of carnal sin.

But this is different in so many ways. Yes, OK a kid seventeen is underage, just barely. There is nothing just barely about Lexi, now, is there?

I am not even sure I can 'perform' following the time spent with Jana earlier. I am no cripple, but I'm no spring chicken any more, either.

The door is opening and Jana is walking in. Is she alone? She seems to be for a moment and then Lexi walks in and Jana withdraws.

I'll say this for her. Her looks will stop your heart. She is a fine looking girl. No doubt about it. The looking part will not be hard to do. But that's just the beginning of it, right?

Leaving her standing, I sit on the edge of the bed and smile at the kid. She smiles back a bit.

Do you understand me?

Yes, Sir. I am OK with English. A brief smile, followed by, Maybe a little better than my Ate.

You mean Mel?

Yes, Sir. That who I mean.

Lexi, I am told by both Lyn and Jana that you have a strong will. All here say that you do not obey your sister and maybe you will not obey me. Are they wrong?

If I do not do as you say I must do, you throw me and Ate out?

Yes, I will.

Then, Sir, I be good. That must not happen.

Did you hear it? I just did. A locomotive coupler smashing into a train car.

You protect Mel?

Yes, Sir. I love her, but she too nice. She make bad decisions. I try to fix them when I can.

She was going to make another bad decision tonight?

Yes! Sir, she not going to come. That a big mistake. We need you.

Let me be clear with you about one very important thing, Lexi. If the two of you stay, you must not protect her any more. That is my job. Your only job is to obey me and my requirements of you. I think this will be hard for you to do. You don't trust anyone to protect your sister. Isn't that correct?

You are correct, Sir. But, Sir, may I point out why your rules work for me?

Go ahead.

Sir, I give up control to you and behave. You protect my sister. Those are your rules. But, Sir, you say, if I do not obey, we both out. So if I think you are not protecting my sister, all I have to do is not behave and we are both out and I

can protect my sister again! I not see the problem for me. I think this is very good. I can relax and not worry all the time. If something really go bad, I know what to do.

You are a very smart girl. That is clear. But, I don't think you have thought everything out; you don't see everything. There are things that will cause problems you have not considered, but those things are for later not now.

Sir, it true I am a bright girl. What I miss. I never miss things. Are you brighter than me? Maybe this is true and I not see the danger.

Lexi, I am probably not nearly as smart as you. I am older and sometimes that is an advantage.

What I miss? Please tell me! If it a real problem then my plan is no good!

Fascinating! She has based her acquiescence on the knowledge that her plan gave her the absolute failsafe out. As soon as I tell her she has missed something the kid is panicky. Good, maybe I can unwind this, and end it, even at this late point. It's not that what I will tell her next is really going to happen, though it very well might. Rather it's a way to show her that her plan doesn't work as well as she thinks. OK, here goes nothing...

Lexi, I am going to have unprotected sex with you every time we are together and we will be together often. I will also have unprotected sex with Mel. I am going to get both of you pregnant. And Lexi, no one is going to take my children from me. So if you behave badly, if neither of you are pregnant, I kick you and Mel out but your children stay with me. If one of you are pregnant, you stay until the child is born. And once again the child stays with me. Are we clear on this? And Lexi, since the unprotected sex begins now, you may be carrying a child as early as tonight. How does your plan look now?

How many children do you want from me?

I don't have a set number in mind. Why?

I just want to know. ... You are right my plan is no good.

You want to leave now?

No, Sir, you show me I not able to protect my Ate. You show me, I need you to protect her. You will have no problem with me. I will be good. Just, Sir, protect us. I always scared until now. Now please you be the one. ... Sir, I am ready for my first baby.

That didn't go like I expected. The kid crumbles. She makes one mistake in her plans, one thing she didn't foresee and she raises the white flag and surrenders unconditionally.

I bring her to me, holding her gently, I kiss her forehead and ask,
Are you sure you want to give your body to an old and ugly man like me?

You are funny, Sir. You not old and you not ugly. ... Please, we do this?

I put a single finger under her chin and lift her head up to mine. A simple kiss comes next. Lexi is trembling. I pull back.

Are you scared? Do you want me to stop?

No! I afraid I do it wrong and you throw us out! I doing OK?

Yes, if you would please stop trembling, everything else was fine.

I find her lips again. The trembling is still there but I try to ignore it, and as I do, the trembling subsides and Lexi engages.

You can teach Math. You can teach English. You can teach basket weaving. But you can't teach intimacy.

It is innate. Your body just knows what to do. Yes you can teach techniques, but the basics are baked in and Lexi finds it within herself. Our ages fall away. Our cultures fall away. Our mother tongues are of no consequence.

We exist with each other, mating, loving, needing, desiring, hoping, and knowing. You, I, each of us knows this, or sadly we have never truly been intimate. I am not saying anything the rest of you don't know. At such moments, I am not concerned with the length of my dick. She is not thinking about how she will fake an orgasm.

Our eyes lock on the other, searching for something unknowable. I feel her body in a way that is to wear her and she is as equally

wearing me. We are appendages of each other, rutting, pushing on, juices flowing, sweat mingling, fingers grasping.

And then there comes a time both far too soon and having taken far too long, as the semen enters, and biology will either succeed or fail, totally out of our control. We have done the best we can do this time. All that is left is hope or fear of conception depending on who has just coupled.

I hold Lexi gently. I am breathing hard, and she isn't quite as worn out, but there is a smile on her face. *Sir? You are good to be with. I hope we do this again soon.*

Yes, we will. Now I need to go downstairs and inform the others that you and your sister are staying.

May I do this, Sir?

No, this is for me to do. You stay here. I need to do this. In a little bit Jana will come up and get you. Then you can go back down.

Yes, OK, Sir.

I put on slacks and a shirt and walk down two flights of stairs to anxious eyes.

Mel, you have a very special sister. She loves you very much. You are both staying.

Jana cannot contain herself. *Sir, did she behave?*

Oh, Jana, she did more than that. She relinquished her role as protector of her Ate and ceded it to me. She accepted she can no longer be in control. I have accepted her and am happy to have her. Go up to her and bring her down. She is waiting for you.

Jana is stunned. I can see her absorbing the meaning of what I just proffered. I see Jana look over at Mel as Mel begins to cry. Lyn is just looking at me in disbelief.

And what am I thinking at the moment, looking back at Lyn?... I am thinking, Yes, welcome to my world. It isn't a world I inhabited

two days ago, but it is my world now. I just took a fifteen-year-old teenager and promised to protect her sister.

So I guess, one thing has become crystal clear. My decision has been made. I am staying; these are my girls; this is where I will live for a while. Everything else will just have to be worked out as we go.

Mel, you will spend the night with me. I am not going to make love to you tonight... Lexi has taken all I have at the moment, but we will find a time. But before we do any of that, I suspect that you will want to spend some time with your sister. Correct?

Yes, yes, very much. Thank you, Sir.

Lyn, I really haven't seen the rest of the house, will you take me around and show the rest of the place to me?

Lyn, once again, gives me a look of complete surprise. Still, she pulls it together, gets up, extends a hand to me and guides me to a back room she knows damned well I have seen before.

OK, Craig, what happen?

Lexi says it is she who watches out for her sister. Mel makes bad decisions and Lexi is there to protect and fix. I don't think she will be a problem, but she has to stay here. So we are now five. I now have four of you. That is enough and, this house is big enough. I am staying. I have made that decision. I do have to go back and fix things in Dorchester, but this is where I live now.

You sure?

Yes. So now, are you sure? Is this what you really wanted? Or maybe you just wanted the excitement of a foreigner for a few days, weeks or a few months.

You ask if I will stay? As in, forever?

I guess so.

OMG! Yes! Yes! How this happen to me! I am very lucky. Yes, very lucky. Last week no rice for me. Now this? Wow, yes!

Lyn, I am putting you in charge of this house. I expect you to figure out, who is the best cook, how cleaning is done, what needs to be purchased. Can you do that?

You make me the boss?

You want to suggest someone else?

No, there no one here for this.

That is why I pick you.

Maybe you want someone older to be the boss?

Four is probably too many already, so no.

Maybe you wrong. Maybe there more than four. That a problem?

What are you thinking? Are you trying to add another?

Maybe, no. But hard to see the future, I think.

That is true.

Economics. It's a wonderful thing. It doesn't seem sexy as it is taught, right? I mean, think about it... who takes a degree in Economics? Nerds, right? All those with strong libidos, they are into sports, media, art, film... am I missing something? And yet, if you want a house filled with lovely sweet girls, nothing beats understanding economics, nothing.

And once again, I feel like the outsider. I am here because I didn't follow the crowd. I didn't go to the 'hot pick-up' places. I went looking for the best place I could make my money work.

And here I am. I may end up being more loved, with more stable relationships, and a more satyr-like existence than any of those who acted like lemmings. I have no idea how the crowds I was never comfortable with, will make out, but my guess is it will be poorly.

Following the crowd means there is less on the table for you.

Not being able to play well with others has brought me here. There is no reason to fight it.

What it all entails...

1

There are a number of things to do here before I go back, and go back I must.

I need a bank account here. Bank to bank wire transfers get the very best exchange rates. The handling fee is higher, but if the amount transferred is great enough, it is well worth it. Though I have not done this yet here in the Philippines, life experience with business banking issues has taught me some simple facts of life when it comes to money.

I don't need to go to Immigration this time as I will not exceed the visa I have, but I do need to investigate what my options are. I decide to drop in to the local Immigration office and see what I can learn. It may be a wasted trip, but so what? It can't hurt.

I need my own transportation. My limited experience with tricycles has left me rather unimpressed. Filipinos might be OK with them. I am not. I have always enjoyed motorcycles, but in Boston, much of the year, they were of no use. Not so here. I don't need a powerful one as there are no Interstate highways. The roads are two-lane affairs, badly paved, and going is slow.

So, while I don't want to be underpowered, excessive power seems like both a waste and something that can get you into a lot of trouble. I am not looking for some huge thing to put between my legs to compensate for feelings of inadequacy and to protect my ego. There is a Yamaha dealer downtown I saw as we were driving around. I will look to see what is available.

But that is for tomorrow. Lyn is being patient. She hasn't left my side as my mind ran down alleyways. She has just waited for me to return to the present.

Where do you go? You here, but not here.

I was just thinking.

That good? I worry.

I'm not sure how to answer. I guess sometimes you would call it good. Sometimes maybe you would say it doesn't matter. Maybe sometimes you would say, why do you think that? I was thinking that in a very short amount of time, one, two or three things have happened. — Either: I captured you and the other three; or you and the other three captured me; or we captured each other because this is for the best for all. ... And, I was thinking that it is just because maybe I was not looking where other men look that I ended up here like this. ... And, I was thinking about bank accounts, motorcycles, and visas. So, is that something to worry about?

That it? That where you go?

Yes. That was where I was.

Why it matter about us? We good for you, you good for us. Same, same. Correct?

Yes, it seems that way to me.

Good.

I reach out and bring her to me. I don't have to pull. All that is needed is the encouragement of a gentle touch and she is connected to me.

There is something about Lyn that I find soothing. She is not a hot babe. She is not a fool, nor a scold. She watches, she listens, she knows what to do and, without fanfare, she does it. There are no hiccups with her. She brought me Jana without complaint and she didn't complain about Mel, but was smart enough to know Lexi, as we learned about her initially, presented a problem she didn't know how to solve. She didn't try, she just presented me with the facts and allowed me to figure out how I wanted to proceed. Right or wrong, the way she operates works for me.

I would just as soon spend the night with her.

But now is probably not the time. It is the time for me to repair back to my bedroom. I have an assignation with Mel tonight.

Once back on the third floor, I push open the heavy, solid wood door with its double locks. I am expecting to either be alone in the bedroom or perhaps to find Mel here.

Mel is here, but so is Lexi.

I am sure there is a reason for this, just as I am sure I don't have a clue as to what it is. I am not going to ask. Let them tell me.

There are no chairs in the bedroom, though I guess I could bring them in from the balcony. But, no, let the chairs stay where they are. That being the case, sitting on the bed is really the only option. I get on the bed, prop up with my back against the headboard, and wait.

It is Mel who speaks. *Sir, we want to be together with you tonight. I know, nothing happens this time because you already have Lexi. It OK, we just want to be close.*

I see. Did I say that nothing would happen later, or in the middle of the night or in the early morning?

Sir?

You heard me, Mel.

But I thought...

Yes, I gather you clearly did think I was done for a good twenty hours or so. My question was, did I tell you that was the case?

No, Sir, you not say that.

OK, would you like to reconsider your decision now?

There is some unspoken communication occurring between these two. I really don't care how this resolves. As long as they

understand what may well happen, it can be played however they want it.

They have decided and Mel informs me, *It OK. No change.*

That works for me. In a weird way it may be working for me more than I thought it would. I bring the two of them to either side of me and give them each a serious kiss. Mel first, and then Lexi, before returning to Mel and taking her in my arms.

I tease her lips with my lips. I run a hand over her ass, grabbing a globe and squeezing. She really was not expecting this! The kissing continues as I roll her on her back and slide a hand up to her crotch. She has a skirt. I am now under the skirt and I push her panties to the side as I finger her cunt.

She is a bit panicky as she pulls her mouth off mine as asks, *Now? We do it now?*

I guess so. And I press on her clit. *I guess I need to undress and so do you.*

Mel looks over at Lexi but all Mel sees is a big smile.

I get with it, shedding my clothing, but Mel is a little slow and Lexi is just sitting there fully clothed. I turn to the girls. *Get your clothing off, Mel, and you too, Lexi. If you are here, you had better be naked. Move it.*

That does it. Both girls are on the bed and naked in no time. I take Mel back into my arms and take her lips again with mine. Once again, my hand finds her cunt. She might not be flowing, but she is wet.

But I have another hand, and it finds Lexi's cunt. Knuckles on the mattress and thumb in the cunt each of the sisters, I extend one finger underneath each, find their rosebuds and snake the finger in.

I am between them, holding each as if my grip is of a two-fingered bowling ball. I hear no complaints. I slide the finger in Lexi's ass deeper. Still no complaints, and the thumb in Lexi's cunt is getting a real bath.

Repositioning, I pull my hand from Mel and put her below me. There are no complaints and no complaints as I run my cock onto her cunt while one of my hands is deep inside her sister.

No, no complaints. She is urging me on. That's nice, as I am hard and glad I am giving her a good ride, but there is no way I am going to cum right now.

Lexi is still getting attention. I still have a thumb up her cunt and a finger up her ass.

I am just watching Mel, as I continue to fuck her. Her legs are locked around me. Her hands are on my arms, the fingers digging in tight. She is staring at me and I am, for want of a better expression, staring back. She and I, locked in this thing. Fucking without consummation. Me giving, she taking. A contract between the two of us. Each stroke sealing and resealing an agreement.

And then her eyes snap shut, her back arches, her legs wrapped around me push down on me, and her cunt spasms on my cock. She gasps, and then all her muscles release at once.

I kiss her forehead and back out of her, still hard. Mel moans softly.

I pull my digits from Lexi and move over her. Her eyes have been closed, but they open now as I mount her. She is also watching now, just as her sister had before.

I am slick with her sister's fluids and Lexi is slick from my thumb. There is no impediment as I push into her. I fit here nicely. This is the second time tonight I have been here. It is something Lexi was not expecting; the fact that I didn't expect it either, she will never learn.

Lexi is ready for me from the moment I slide in, and she is letting me know in many little ways. She does her best to tilt her pelvis up for the best penetration. She drags a finger between my lips, gathers my saliva and returns it to her mouth, where she sucks on her own finger.

God almighty, are all fifteen-year-olds like this? Lexi is the very definition of a sexual being, and everything in me is being drawn out by her actions.

If I didn't think I was ready to cum before, I am not nearly so sure now. There is an urgency in my loins that was not there just a few minutes ago. But Lexi has already received my cum. I jerk back, pulling out of Lexi, mount Mel in a damned rush and pound the girl in a way she was sure as hell not expecting, bringing forth a new orgasm just as my cum enters her cunt. And in that knowing moment, yet again, something passes between us.

I can't name it, but it matters and will last.

Lexi leans over and says, *Take a shower, Sir. Cool off and then come back to us. We know, we yours now. I know. Ate, she knows too. We will take care of you.*

A shower seems like a good idea. They don't seem to want one, but they sense I do. How that is, I do not know. A shower and then sleep between these two girls.

Right now it is 10PM here; It is 9AM in Dorchester... Nine AM at the Eire Pub. There are men already drinking beers there, pissing and moaning about what life is like for them.

Yes, and here I am between two impossibly young girls who seem delighted to be mine after each of them having received a deposit of cum.

So, here's a simple truth. The world is not fair.

It just isn't. There are winners and losers, and the winners are not always the ones who you were thinking were going to be the winners.

Here's the next truth.

Nothing is ever going to stay the same. Everything changes. I am lucky tonight. I really don't know about tomorrow. I don't and you

don't. Sometimes shit happens. Sometimes it is all roses. You don't have to roll the dice. All you have to do is breathe.

Morning comes quickly. It seems I just shut my eyes and open them to find the sun is up.

I have slept only two nights in this city. One night in a hotel and one night in a place that is now my home. The first night I had two girls. The second night I had four. This is only the morning of the second full day I have been here... and yet, this is now my home.

Things have happened in a way that I surely was not prepared for. I can think of endless metaphors from a vortex to a chemical reaction between unstable compounds. They all fit. But now is not the time to get lost in my thoughts, though it happens all too often and not by preplanning.

I have limited time on this trip and I have to get things done before I leave. Of the number of things I want to do, getting my own transportation will make the rest all far easier. And so, it is time for a motorcycle.

Lyn tasks Jana and Mel with stocking the kitchen.

Sitting down with Lyn, I go over what we need to purchase and what the related costs are. Based on that, I provide four thousand pesos.

Lyn thinks it is too much, so we have another conversation about what we need to run the house efficiently. The concept of efficiency as opposed to what can be afforded this day, is something she never considered before. She was never in possession of the money to consider what might be more efficient.

The concept that she can now purchase a 25 kilo sack of rice which will cost about one thousand pesos rather than buying every day or so by the kilo is a revelation to her; she begins to understand why the money I supplied might be more right than she thought.

As the lesson sinks in a smile emerges, replacing the earlier frustration she was feeling.

And as new frustration creeps in and, now, as the concept of controlling how much to give those who are making purchases becomes a question of not ‘what can we afford?’ but, rather, ‘how much do we need to complete the list of things we need?’ her job has become that much harder!

Before, she took all she had and got what she could. Now we can get everything, but don’t want to be carrying more cash than is needed.

I gather Jana and Mel will be making multiple trips. The rice vendor is one, the palengke is another. A trip to a supermarket will be a third. There they will get canned goods, more cleaning supplies, and other things not available at the palengke.

Lexi is to start with the laundry. She is provided some pesos to purchase soap and such from a neighborhood store they call a sari-sari.

Lyn comes with me to the Yamaha dealer via yet another tricycle. The tricycle we choose dies half the way there and we have to flag down another one to complete the trip.

The Yamaha dealer has a boatload of underpowered rides but few with anything like what I want. I don’t want a rocket, but for crying out loud, I don’t want a tiny put-put. I really want something more powerful than what we put on a lawnmower back in the States. I was hoping for a 350cc engine. That seemed a sensible engine spec.

This place doesn’t have one. But they do have an XJR400. I buy it using a Visa credit card. I have to call the international number for the bank to authorize the payment but, though it adds 30 minutes to the deal, it is of no real significance.

I now have a ride and can operate the bike on my Massachusetts license while I am here during this trip. Once I return I can use it

again for another ninety days before getting a local license, of which I am told will be no problem.

I never would have considered a 400cc bike as a big one, but Lyn comments that she has never been on such a big bike. And then she hops on behind me without any fuss as we ride to the bank she recommends, BPI, Bank of the Philippine Islands.

I do something this day that, if I were a later arrival here, would no longer be possible. I open a bank account with only a tourist visa⁶. But on this day, there is no problem, other than the mountain of paperwork and the number of signatures required from me. In any case, I now have a passbook savings account.

Lyn and I have burned through the morning and grab a lunch at a restaurant on the national highway, not far from the Immigration office, my next stop. But I have an extra task for Lyn. I give her the keys and ask for five sets of the seven-tumbler keys and two sets of everything else.

She tells me this will take a while and I will be done long before her. She suggests that I might want to check out the supermarket in the mall, pretty much across the street from Immigration. Maybe there are things I want to eat that Mel and Jana would not know about. I figure, why not try.

But first, the Immigration office.

Immigration isn't all that helpful. These are process people, not information folks. If you need something done which they can do, you are in luck. But asking for guidance, not so much. I will have to do my research in other ways.

Lyn's suggestion of the mall ends up to be a brilliant idea. I do meet two expats and from them I get a bunch of useful information regarding visas. I also learn that the visa office here is staffed with

⁶ In later years, an ACR-I card (alien certificate of registration) is required.

corrupt individuals. Once again, in later years, this changes, but as of now, the place is a problem.

I learn of two long term visa options. One requires marriage and, while it has real benefits, it also creates real problems. The second is a retirement visa. There are also limitations with it, but it does not create the drawbacks the marriage one presents.

I can also just stay on a visitor/tourist visa, renewing every sixty days (which is a hassle) and having to leave and come back once every year. I decide to just think about the options for now.

The other reason the Mall is a good idea is that I find ground coffee, a coffee maker, paper filters, and a bookstore. Life just got better.

I also purchase two cheap cellphones with prepaid SIM cards for one of the local cell service providers, plus loads for the service provider that will carry me and Jana through the time I am here this trip.

I know Mel has a phone and I don't know about Lexi. I will deal with their needs once I figure more of this out. Lyn already has the extra load based on what I did yesterday.

It seems to me that communicating between the five of us is critical.

I had written down Lyn's cellphone number and now I text her with my new phone.

This is Craig. Just got this phone at the mall. Done now. How are you doing?

All OK. Done soon I think. There a Dunkin Donut. I will meet you there when I am done.

OK. I know where it is. See you there. No hurry. I have a book to read.

When I do see Lyn she warns me that I will not be happy with how much the new keys cost us, but when I learn of the total, I only

smile. It's fine. I get another one of those undecipherable looks from the girl, before she gets up and orders a donut.

Our tasks complete, it is time to go home, try out the new keys, and relax.

Moving through the roads here on a motorcycle is far easier than riding in a tricycle. We are able to move about town quickly, and getting home takes maybe a fourth as long. This bike has more power than I really need here, but better to have a little more than needed rather than not enough. Yes, sure I was worried about a bike with too much power. Those are not sold here, from what I can see.

Soon enough we arrive at the house, with Lyn holding onto the coffeemaker, coffee, filters and two books. The bike might fit through the manhole but I opt for the big gate. We are home.

2

Distributing the keys actually takes a fair amount of time. The most important keys, the ones each of the girls need, are the two to the front door, the two to the back door and the one to the manhole. Inside the house, if you are in a bedroom or bathroom, you do not need a key to lock from the inside. And so, for now, one set of those keys is mine to protect, but not always carry. Lyn has the other set. A key to the big gate (the lock is only accessible from the inside of the gate) is placed inside the house near the front door and I have a key for it on my ring.

Once that hoo-hah is complete, I get a chance to get my coffee maker ready, which requires vinegar. The girls bought vinegar today, but as with a number of things they bought, it was a small size. That both caused a small problem and a revelation, as they had just used all of it for the supper they were making. ... And, it identified the reason why there was so much money left over from the shopping today.

We talk about buying larger sizes of things they will use all the time: vinegar, soy sauce, white sugar, brown sugar, salt, laurel leaves, cooking oil, Tide bars, dish soap, etc... And then there were things of which they just needed to buy more quantities: canned tuna, canned beef loaf, evaporated milk, condensed milk, Eden cheese, noodles (bihon, pancit, misua, spaghetti, macaroni), lumpia wrappers, and the list goes on and on.

They are resistant to buying so much. I ask, *Do you think canned milk, canned fish or noodles goes bad?*

I get blank looks.

OK, here is the rule. I really don't care that you do not want to do it. I require that we never have to say we don't have something and need to make a special trip to get it. Always have enough here. If it does not go bad, purchase more than you think we need. Clear?

They are not particularly happy but agree. They just don't see the sense of it.

As to all the things on the list... I actually don't know exactly what some of these things are, but as we work through each thing they purchased, for each thing that is not perishable, I ask, how many times will you use this before you need to replace? Any time the answer is two or three, I tell them that they need to increase the purchase by doubling it. Many times their answer is 'one' and there I tell them to increase the number purchased by three, for a total of four.

I understand why they were doing that limited purchase crap, but it is a habit that needs to be changed. I hope that, as we go along, they begin to realize it, too.

I make a suggestion. For everything that doesn't spoil, (I don't think non-perishable is a term that will resonate with them,) we should not have to replace with a new purchase more than once every two weeks. So if we find that, no matter how much of something we purchased, if we need more within two weeks, we need to purchase a larger amount the next time. I am getting stares of incredulity ... we will just have to see how that goes.

Sure, for the fresh fruits and vegetables, we have to shop every couple of days at what they call the palengke. But supermarket shopping doesn't need to be more frequent.

The concept that they only need to go once every fourteen days is causing real discomfort. They can't fathom how that can be.

Oddly, there was one thing that I thought they had purchased an over-abundance of: eggs. There are three flats of extra-large eggs totaling 60 eggs. Just what we are going to do with that many is a mystery to me.

This is just the first of discussions that represent the divide between the world they have come from and the world they now inhabit with me.

Each of these four girls was poor. No, not poor in the sense that we think of it in the USA, where you might be eligible for food stamps. Poor in the sense that what and when your next meal would be was always unknown. That type of poor.

Not a one of them had ever purchased a new piece of clothing in her life. If I was a little freaked out by what they told me was in the sisig, after I ate it, to them it was wonderful and what part of the pig it came from was immaterial; it was from a pig.

If ugly me is a prize, then consider the why of it. I am a prize for a damned good reason. I know it. I want to believe they know it. I want to believe we know each other knows it. Surely, there is no lying about it. No one is hiding. It is in the open. But each tells me I am 'gwapo' (handsome) and swears she is speaking the truth. And that, I am having a hard time accepting.

When it comes to the change in economic circumstances, consider... how radically the mindsets of these girls, require readjustment, in a matter of hours, going from what their life was to a life with me. Their entire life assumptions and expectations are being so dramatically realigned.

Economics, baby, economics. Just pour yourself a drink of anything you like: Tea, coffee, beer, whiskey, rum, brandy... it doesn't matter, just get it. Stop reading this for a good ten minutes and think. Really think about what happens when you have nothing. I mean that, nothing, and anyone you might even consider as a mate also has nothing, and everyone around you either has nothing or would just as soon use you and spit you out, and then, in the matter of hours, your life changes and you are essentially the equivalent of landed gentry. Just stop reading and think about it. I'm not going anywhere.

Do it.

Are you back? Do you maybe have a glimmer now? Do you, maybe for the first time, understand why even Lexi is happy to take my seed?

So this discussion about shopping for food is less about food than it is about who they are now. That is why there was discomfort. No one had been scolded. They were, each of them, realizing that a glass slipper fit their foot, along with the implications of all that.

As that discussion ends, supper is served. This is my very first 'home cooked' meal. It looks humble but tastes better than fine. I am really enjoying it.

Mel tells me it is chicken pochero. Lyn says, *This not the pochero*, she knows. That gets us into a discussion of the differences between Ilonggo cooking and Visayan cooking.

Evidently, the Visayan version uses a tomato sauce base. This Ilonggo is a cabbage broth thickened with what is called Saba banana, which I gather is their version of plantain.

I like it and will be happy to have it again, but tell Lyn I will be happy to try her version as well.

It doesn't seem any feelings are hurt and I dig back in to the pochero, as Lyn mentions the bike being so big. Lyn told me before she thought it is really big, and while I don't, I also didn't think the size was something that warranted much further discussion.

The other three girls have not seen the motorcycle yet and want to know if I think I can take them all on it at once. If, for the past couple of days, I hadn't been seeing entire families on a single motorcycle, I would have thought they were kidding. Now, I am not sure they are.

It would not be legal even to carry two passengers behind the rider on a bike in the USA. Here it is commonplace. I have seen three adults and two children on a bike, as well as five kids plus the rider.

The girls tell me that they have seen a wooden board across the seat with four on each side of the board plus the rider and another passenger going down the road. I really never want to see that, but I do believe them.

As a matter of physics, I don't think all five of us on the bike is possible, but it might be possible to take three of them. I don't want to find out, but suspect they do.

Maybe I would have tried it as a teenager, but I am far from that these days.

Thinking about my teenage days gets me thinking about high school again, which gets me thinking about Lexi and Jana.

Lexi, how far did you get in school?

In school now.

Isn't today a school day?

Yes, but I am here.

You need to go back tomorrow. Does your sister need to go back with you and explain your absence?

No, it be OK. I go tomorrow.

And you, Jana. Are you still in school too?

Ha! No. I graduate last year.

How?

School end. I complete all ten grades.

Really, school ends at tenth grade?

Of course.

I see. In the USA it goes to grade twelve.

Ob! OK, not here.

So, Lexi, you are in grade ten?

Yes, that is correct, Sir.

When does your school year end?

This year it ends April 8th, Sir.

So, this is January 28. You have a little more than two months to go. Right?

Yes. True.

This year is the last? What do you want to do after you graduate?

Sir?

Do you have any plans? And Jana, what about you. You said you graduated last year, correct? Do you have any plans?

I am getting panicky looks. I decide that I need to also ask the other two.

Mel, did you graduate?

No, I stop at grade six. We need the money.

And you, Lyn. Did you graduate?

Yes, Craig. ... Sir, what you mean, plans?

College, trade school. Some plan to further your education.

Sir Craig, how we do that? We not have the money to do such a thing.

OK, are any of you poor now?

Sir?

Lyn, use your brain. Are you poor now?

You mean because we live here?

Yes, that is what I mean.

We not know, Sir. Maybe we are still poor. Yes, you have money. Yes, you give us money for food for the house, loads for phones... but, Sir, you not give us an allowance. We have no money. So we still poor I think.

I see the others agreeing with her, and I see her point. This concept of an allowance is something that is not part of my world, but they

see themselves as needing a specific remittance of funds as supplicants of my largess.

I was just expecting to establish a household budget and we as a family would work from that, but that is not their world.

OK, I will establish allowances for each of you. But aside from the allowance, how much does college or a trade school cost?

Sir, maybe ten thousand pesos a semester. Maybe more.

Well, Mel can't go to college, but three of you can. If I pay the tuition, do any of you want to continue with your education?

It takes a bit. There are glances between the girls. They seem almost embarrassed, but finally Lexi speaks up. Yes, she would like to pursue a course of study to teach English. Jana volunteers she might be interested in business accounting.

I look at Lyn. She has not said a word. *Lyn? What are you interested in learning?*

I am embarrassed, Sir. I not want to say.

For a girl who I have fucked in front of her own friend, I fail to see why this should be embarrassing. What are you interested in?

Engineering, Sir. I always dream I can be a Civil Engineer.

Do they teach that here in GenSan?

Yes, Sir. They do. But I think it a five year degree and will cost a lot of money to complete. Even if I graduate, if I not pass the licensure exam, I cannot have a job as an engineer. It is said only one out of four pass the exam! The test, it difficult.

Can you retake the exam if you do not pass it the first time?

Yes, but this costs more money!

When does the next semester start for college here?

June, Sir.

So enrollment is in, what, April? May?

Yes, May, Sir. That is correct.

OK, Lyn, tomorrow you check on enrollment requirements for you, Jana and Lexi. I want you to learn, what are the costs, and requirements for each of you.

Mel, are you still employed at the Sydney Hotel?

No, Sir. I call them. I tell them I quit. That OK?

Yes, it is fine. Are you OK being our cook? Everyone will help with the housekeeping, and Lyn will organize that, but we need a person who is here to cook the meals. Are you willing?

Yes. That is good. Sir, you help Lexi get this college education! I do anything you ask. I not care what it is. I do it.

Lyn, let me ask you again, what I asked you before. Are you poor now?

No, Sir. We four not poor. Maybe it take time to understand what it mean to us. Maybe we need to think about it. But, no. We not poor now. You make us not poor. It like you snap your finger and, the world, it different now. Sir, I always hope I find a foreigner to love me because I be safe, I think. I not think I not be poor. Maybe there will be more food to eat. But I not think this will happen. I agree with Mel. I not care what you ask. I think we all do it.

There are three of them and, if I understand correctly, a year's college tuition for each will be between \$500 and \$750. Assuming each of them needs \$750, my yearly spend is \$2250 a year, or under \$200 a month. And, in the end, all three will have something to do for the rest of their working lives.

If you think about it, I don't need the four of them just hanging around the house all day every day. That just isn't going to work. So even if one of them flunks out, or burns out, at least two of them are busy, and getting a degree, and the third might just need a different course of study.

Having a career gives meaning to a life... at least that is the way I see it. And if at some point they decide to move on... so be it. I

never needed four girls. But in the meantime, I get to enjoy them and I am not complaining.

It seems to me that being college students will keep them so involved in their studies that it will help them reorient their minds to see themselves as not poor any more. Just hanging out here, all four of them, creates a harem of concubines with little to do other than keep the house clean.

I do need the house clean, but I don't think being students will prohibit that. If I am wrong, I will deal with that later. In any case, the next semester is three months away. That's plenty of time to get a handle on what it takes to keep this house in order.

Mel, how much load do you have in your phone?

Nothing, Sir. I run out.

Lexi, do you have a phone?

No, Sir.

Lyn, where did you get your load last night?

No need, I can send Mel some load from my phone. We get her more load tomorrow at the mall. And we get Lexi a phone there too.

Right. Oh! That reminds me. Jana, we got you a phone today. Lyn, will you give it to her. I am told that a 300 peso load will give you thirty days of texts and calls so long as you all use the same cell service. Is that right?

I see agreement via raised eyebrows.

So make sure that all the SIMs are the same company and all get a new 300 peso load every thirty days. While I am gone, I want all of you to have a 500 peso load, since international texts will cost extra pesos. Right?

There are giggles. They know I am telling the truth, and the fact that they are going to be texting internationally has them giddy.

I leave them to their excitement, sharing Jana's new cellphone number and transferring loads.

I pour myself a beer, a benefit of their shopping but, as I do that, Mel sees me and walks over to speak with me privately. *Sir, I not buy the Jack Daniel's today. It is expensive. Maybe you will try rum or brandy. It what we Filipinos drink and not expensive, I think.*

How much is the Jack?

I see it for ₱1,600 for a liter.

How much for rum?

Tanduay Dark is very good, I think. A liter is ₱93.

Ha! I see. OK, I might as well try the rum.

Yes, Sir. I am glad you say this, because I think I am in trouble, but I buy a bottle today. You want to try now, maybe?

Sure.

OK, I put some on ice for you.

The girls see Mel getting me the rum and giggles ensue.

I guess the cellphones can wait. Getting me some rum is more important. I look at the girls and I wonder. *Is anyone else wanting some rum?*

There are more giggles, but no takers in this group.

What Mel actually does is pour about a double in a glass with ice and put the bottle down by me with a bowl of extra ice. I guess I look at her confused.

Sir, I know, foreigners not do it like this. I see that at the Sydney bar, but this the way Filipino men drink. Maybe you will be more like Filipino now?

Maybe. We will see. But, whether I do or not, thank you, Mel. This is very nice.

Yes, Sir. Sir, I think it true, we all confused why you so nice. We know you not have to be so nice to have us. Yes, we know this.

Mel, I am not a nice man. Never think I am. I can be rude. I can get angry. I can be difficult. But you four are mine. I expect you to care and protect me. I will care and protect you. We will do this for each other. Do you see now?

Sir, that like marriage. That what Filipino marriage require. But we not your wives.

In a way, Mel, you four are my wives. And that is how I expect we will treat each other. It is for the best.

She doesn't say a damned word. She can't. She is crying.

I have been sitting, sipping my rum. But now I get up, take Mel in my arms and kiss her on the cheek. Her arms encircle me and in no time my shirt is damp with her tears.

You know, I told her the truth. I am not a nice man. No one who has ever known me would call me nice. Honest? Yes. But not nice. I am not being nice now. In a way, I am buying allegiance.

Anyone want to raise their hand and tell me I am an S.O.B?

Maybe I am. ... Maybe I am.

3

This has been a busy day. This has been one hell of a week.

Thursday the 23rd I fly out of Logan.

Friday the evening of the 24th I arrive in Manila.

Two nights in the Manila Hotel, but only one full day in Manila, I deal with some jetlag.

Sunday the 26th I fly to GenSan

On that same day I collect Lyn and Jana.

Monday the 27th I rent a house, and collect Mel and Lexi.

Tuesday, today, the 28th, I buy a motorcycle, open a bank account, meet some expats, buy shit and all the rest.

Tomorrow, Wednesday, January 29th, won't even make it a week. I haven't been gone a week yet and my life has been turned inside-out, in some ways no less completely than have the lives of these four girls.

My 21 day visa takes me through February 13th. I need to fly out by then. I actually have a return ticket for the 12th and will have to leave GenSan no later than the 11th. So there are not even two more weeks before I am at the airport. In all probability I won't make it back again to GenSan before May or June.

So, for four or five months, these girls will have to hang in here and wait for me to return, without freaking out. Can they do that?

I have a lot to do when I get back to Dorchester. One question I need to resolve is what I want to do with my stuff before I lease out the house there.

I had been thinking I would put all my stuff in storage at least during a trial run of things overseas. But heated storage facilities no

larger than 25x10 feet will cost me about \$500 a month or \$6,000 a year. I think I need more than that size for all my stuff. Maybe I should still do it, but if I am really staying here, and I think I am, why store things there? Why not bring it all here, or just sell it? Or, do a little of both... Sell and dispose of some of the stuff and maybe ship stuff in a 20 foot cargo container.

I have some nice stuff, things I have accumulated over the years. Even if there is no room for all the stuff I might bring, maybe I can store some the stuff, here in this house now, in one or two bedrooms we won't use, and make room for my stuff.

You know, I haven't had access to the Internet since I got here. I wonder if it is even possible to get it here. I have a DSL connection in Dorchester. Do they even have it here? ... Tomorrow. This is something for tomorrow, not now.

My head is filled with a jumble of things that need to be done, figured out, put in a to-do list. I know I am going to forget things, or at least forget them until it is past time to do the thing.

Everything is happening way too fucking fast. I have spent years, not just months, thinking about making something like this happen. I had all the time in the world, or so it seemed as I schemed and reasoned, built spreadsheets, researched economies, and ran scenarios. All done in an orderly way, slowly, cautiously.

And now?

Nothing is orderly, or slow — and caution? ... hell, that went out the window on Sunday afternoon. I don't even have a clue who I will lay with tonight, or with how many of them.

I was never a monk, living a celibate life. But, I sure as heck have never fucked as many females in such a short time, at any time in my life and, of that, I am sure. I am equally sure that, as much as I had fantasized about two girls at one time, I have never had that until Sunday. Now, for the love of Pete, I have doubled down on it in the span of two days.

There are only fourteen full and uninterrupted days between now and my departure. How should I fill them?

Damn, I have been inside my head way too long. Mel is still clinging to me. I think I have been stroking her back this entire time. Does she know my mind had slipped down a rabbit hole?

She doesn't seem to be aware that I was 'not here.'

Mel? Are you OK?

Why you say you not a nice man? Why? You the nicest man I ever meet. No one ever do what you do now. No one. If I let some man have me, he not do this. I sure this true.

Mel, tell me, what nice man takes four women?

Sir, my father, he not poor like me, but he not have much money, not like you, and he have two wives. Maybe it be three but my mother refuse to join the other wives, so I poor because my mother poor. Maybe it better if I with my father. Sir, what you do, it OK. It not Christian way, but we have old tradition here. We have other ways. This not wrong to me. See? You nice.

Never argue with a convert.

OK, I am nice to you. I will not be nice to others.

She giggles. *That good. I like that.*

Good, now if it is OK with you, I will get back to my rum. My beer having been depleted right along with the Pochero.

Oh! Oh! Sorry! Yes, of course.

But, as I sit down to the rum, Mel whisks the glass with the now-melted ice in some rum away and fixes me a new drink. I have always been a Jack Daniel's guy. I never cared for the taste of rum, but this rum is actually pretty good. It is very different from the Ron Rico and Bacardi I get in the States.

Mel tells me that the rum is preferred over beer when Filipinos get together at night. At under one hundred pesos for a liter compared

with twenty-two pesos for what isn't even eleven ounces of beer (320ml), I can see why.

Sir, will you get drunk tonight?

No, Mel. Are you worried that I will?

No, Sir, not worried. Just want to know if we sleep with you and where you sleep. If you drunk, maybe the stairs will be hard. And some drunks we must leave alone.

You mean, when drunk they can get mean?

Yes, I mean that.

I see. No, I am not going to get drunk. I am not sure what the sleeping arrangements are tonight.

Oh, Lyn say we all with you. You not agree to that?

What Lyn says is fine. If Lyn says something, then you should believe it.

Yes, Sir. Thank you, Sir. I will clean the dishes now. OK, Sir?

I smile. How in the world did so much power get invested in me that she needs to ask permission to leave my side and wash some dishes?

As she walks away, I take a few moments to appreciate her fine figure. Mel is a lovely girl. Damn, I am way too lucky.

I look over at Lyn, and note she is looking at me. She also gets a smile from me. She is something else. There will be five of us in my bed, at least, based on her decision. That's nuts, and I am not sure I would have ever suggested it. It will be interesting, however it works out.

Lyn carries a couple of serving dishes to the kitchen and comes over to me, sitting on a chair by my side.

Craig, see? I was right. If you have us, you will stay.

OK, but how did you know?

We see it. Men come. Sometime talk big. Look for sex and say they are leaving after that. But then even if they leave, many bring the girl back with them. Some stay.

Lyn takes hold of my glass of rum, takes a sip before putting it back down and continuing.

Not all, but the ones who not keep the girl, or not stay, they not like you. They mean and rude. I hear some of the men say, ones that stay, that we Filipinas are special. No other girls are like us. See, maybe that true.

I don't know about the 'no other girls' stuff. I think there might be girls somewhere else, but there are reasons why you are special. I don't think I understand all of those reasons, but I do think I understand a few. So, yes, you are special and you were right. Once we were together, I wasn't going to leave.

What I didn't say was that there may come a time when these Filipinas aren't so special. Nothing stays the same. Not a damned thing.

Lyn, why did you decide that all of you will be with me tonight?

You not want?

I didn't say that. I asked you, how you came to that decision.

I think, you have us. Why not be with us?

OK, thanks.

You want me to change this?

No, it is fine.

Craig, why you want us to have professions? You not have enough money in the future? You need us to support you? If yes, this is a good plan! We can do it.

I'll be damned. I was thinking that, as they got their degrees and entered into the professional world, they might decide they didn't need my largess.

No, she is thinking the opposite. She is envisioning there may come a time when they need to support me! She, the head of them all, is saying that my plan is good because it assures us, as a group, long term financial security even when I can't provide it. I never would have seen my decision being so interpreted. Never. Yes, it makes sense, if on their side, they are bonded to me. Are they?

Anything is possible, I guess, but I don't think I will run out of money. Of course, when I die, I do not know how much I will be able to leave each of you. So you having professions offers you financial safety.

You sick?

No.

Then no talk about dying. It bring evil spirits I think.

Once again, we have stepped out of Christian teaching and into something older and more deeply embedded in Lyn's view of the world. They may profess to be Roman Catholics, but there are other beliefs right there, even on the surface. No need to go digging.

Given that Lyn has these views of our life together, even should she be a civil engineer, do the other three see themselves as grafted to me? I suspect Mel does, but she is the only one who is educationally stuck, and therefore economically stuck with me.

Lexi... I suspect if Mel stays, Lexi may stay as well.

That leaves Jana. I have no idea about her. She wants to be an accountant. I would never have guessed that. Maybe she can run the books for Lyn's engineering practice. It's an odd thought and probably a silly one.

I have finished three fingers of rum. I am well and done for the evening. I am about to carry my glasses to the kitchen but Mel grabs them from my hands, gives me a brief kiss on my cheek before heading for the sink.

The two flights of stairs, each flight rising over thirteen feet for a total climb of over twenty-six feet, is probably good cardio exercise. I decide to take an early shower and then, with only shorts on, sit out on the balcony. No one from below can see what I am wearing, or not wearing, and many men here go shirtless at night.

I doubt anyone will even look up to see me. The shower is needed. I got fairly sweaty today with all the traveling about. It wasn't as hot as was Sunday afternoon, and I was pretty much either inside an air-conditioned building or traveling on the Yamaha all day. Still, I had plenty of opportunities to perspire.

The cool, but not cold, water feels good. Once done, I don't worry much about toweling off. Let the breeze outside take care of that. I pull on a pair of shorts without briefs and exit to the balcony and a chair, only to find I will not be alone.

Enjoying the evening, sweet Jana?

This is special. We are special now. All my life, I see wealthy Filipinas. I think, what that like? Never I think I be one. Never I think I sit on a balcony and look down on people. You make us special. I not have to worry about getting a job at the new KCC mall where maybe my job is put cans of sardines on shelves. Now maybe I will be an accountant. Ha! Maybe when I am an accountant, I am your accountant, Sir. You need an accountant?

Probably not, Jana, but the future is unknowable.

Yes, this must be true.

Sir, you not cold?

I have to laugh. It's a warm night and I was just thinking about saying that, *'It may be a bit warm tonight but it's great and I have the benefit, dear Jana, of being able to go shirtless. It is the benefit of being a man. Women must cover their breasts.'* Evidently being without a top would amount to freezing to her.

No, Jana, I am not cold.

I am actually pretty comfortable.

Would you like more rum, Sir?

No, thank you.

Beer, water, coke?

Jana, I am fine. I don't need anything.

Sir, Lexi, her school is far from here. Will you take her in the morning?

Has she asked you to ask me?

No, she asked me to ask you for money for the tricycle. I know you be fine with that, no problem. But I think, maybe it nice if you take her.

Hub, yes, I can take her. ... Jana, do you know what the Internet is?

Of course yes. You like the games, Sir?

Excuse me?

There places here to play Internet games. It is a big thing. There talk maybe a new law about when school kids allowed into the Internet cafes to play the games.⁷ I hear it a big problem with the school kids now. I not have the money to play. But it sound like fun I think.

It is possible to get Internet here in the house?

I not know. If yes, maybe very expensive, I think.

OK, I will dig into it tomorrow.

Craig, about the allowance. Maybe you give each some tomorrow. We have to pay for tricycles and buy things. I think it bad to ask for each thing.

Good point. I will do it in the morning.

Thank you.

I guess, I should say 'thank you' to you, Jana. You made good suggestions.

Maybe one more, Sir?

⁷ Jana was pretty much right. A [city ordinance](#) was passed later in 2003.

What is it?

I not want to get Lyn angry with me.

It's OK, what is it?

Sir, Lyn she say we all to be with you tonight.

Yes, I know.

That not a good idea.

And you have a better idea?

Sir, Craig... maybe just Lyn and Mel tonight. Me and Lexi tomorrow? I think Mel need you very much and Lyn, she also. Be with them. Me and Lexi, we OK tomorrow I think.

Have you spoken to Lexi?

You angry if I do?

No, I will not be angry. I just need to know.

Me and Lexi talk and agree to this. She think it right.

OK, I will tell Lyn that it is my idea.

Thank you again, Sir.

You are welcome, Jana, you are welcome.

For a good thirty minutes we sit in silence, just enjoying the night. Eventually, sounds from inside the bedroom end our time out here.

Lyn, Mel, and Lexi are in the bedroom when I enter from the balcony. Walking over to Lyn, I give her a heartfelt and prolonged kiss before breaking off and kissing Mel in much the same manner. Both girls, for reasons that have nothing to do with my looks, my magnetic personality, or my debonair style, seemingly melt in my arms as I kiss them.

Lyn, I appreciate your decision that all should be with me tonight, and maybe you are right, but I want to make a change. I have asked Jana if her feelings

will be hurt with the change I am to make. She says she is OK with it. If someone else has hurt feelings, we will do it your way, but it is my preference that I am with just you and Mel tonight. Tomorrow night I will be with Jana and Lexi. That is if, Lexi, you are OK with the change in plans.

Before Lyn can answer, Lexi is ready and offers, *Sir, I like this plan. It good for me.*

OK, Lyn?

Yes, OK. Mel and me have you. Better for me I think.

OK with you, Mel?

Yes! Of course, but it not matter. If it what you want, it what we do.

Jana and Lexi are about to leave the room when I stop them.

Lexi, would you like me to take you to school tomorrow?

You want, Sir? It not needed. I can take tricycles.

I know, but I would like to see where your school is. Is it OK if we do that?

Yes, I like it.

Good. Also, tomorrow morning I will give each of you an allowance. If it is not enough, we can discuss what you need. Agreed?

All do agree before Jana and Lexi take their leave of us.

OK, you two, are we sleeping or fucking first?

Lyn laughs before saying, *Why you talk like that?*

I actually do not have a good reason to offer her. But here we are, two girls not even twenty years of age, and me. While I actually understand why this is happening, in so many other ways it makes no sense.

I have already showered tonight. Do either of you two want to shower now?

Mel has no need but Lyn does. As she exits the bedroom, while Mel and I are getting into bed, she pleads, *Wait for me!*

We won't be done when Lyn returns, but waiting is not on the menu.

Now on the bed, naked and under the sheets with Mel, I pull this young girl to me and enjoy for the third night running the pleasures of a teenage body more than willing to be mine.

The trim shape these girls are in has nothing to do with their going to the gym or being careful to watch their diet so as to not over eat. Here in 2003, you just don't see many fat Filipinos at all.

To be fat means you have money. These girls didn't, and most of the population of General Santos City is in the same condition. Sex freely given to a white foreigner may seem to the outsider, to the First Worlder, as little more than prostitution but, in each of their hearts, they honestly think, even at this moment, that they are 'good girls' and would be horrified if anyone might suggest anything other than that.

And so, as I pull Mel close to me, she comes willingly, joyfully. She playfully suggests that she is cold and I should warm her up. I caress her back, her flanks, her arms, and she wiggles while voicing a complaint.

Stop teasing! Do it!

The joy of savoring her delights will have to wait for another time. She wants me inside her and she wants that right now.

I don't need to put her on her back. She rolls that way and pulls me up onto her. This small, young teen is incredibly strong, but I am big, heavy and harder to move than she thought.

I do mount her and, in doing so, am rewarded by a smile from her. This is what she wanted. There can be no question about it. As my cock sinks deep into her cunt, it is she who seems happiest.

It's not that I don't want to be deep in her, I do. Oh, yes I do. I feel her heat. I feel her need. I feel her legs as they clamp around me. I experience the joy of knowing that this is a two way street. I am not

taking from she who allows it to happen. I am sharing in this. And maybe, just maybe, it is she who thinks she is the one getting the better of the bargain.

If it is the case, I don't mind. I don't mind at all, feeling what I feel right now, so deep inside her and knowing I can be back here over and over again.

Her pert breasts poking up toward me. The small beads of perspiration on her lower lip, her hair, a black mess against the white of the pillowcase. The smell of her like nature's perfume.

I am not close to cumming, but I am hard and I have no desire to end this as I continue the rutting.

She has cum once or twice. I can't be sure. I am still not close. And then, I sense a change in her look. I think she is experiencing discomfort. I may well have fucked her raw. She looks over on the bed to Lyn, who has joined us and is being patient.

Mel needs a break. Her cunt just can't take much more. She didn't get sore yesterday, but yesterday I didn't ride her as long as I have today.

In porn stories the girls don't just want to stop because their pussy never gets irritated, but it happens in real life, and it is happening right now.

I back out of Mel, giving her a kiss as something of a consolation prize. As much as she is glad I am withdrawing, she also knows I have not cum, and that is troubling her. She says as much, mumbling about the lack of cum from me.

Lyn doesn't know that I haven't cum until I pull out of Mel and she sees my still stiff cock but, it doesn't take long for her to do the math as I move over to her, pull her into a proper missionary position, plunging my cock deep into her.

Now it is Lyn's face that lights up in true happiness. Two more, small, pert breasts point up at me. Two arms grab my arms and two legs encircle me.

No words pass between us. There is no verbal communication whatsoever. It is her passion meeting my passion. Her need for completion signaling me and a new, real need within me surging forward. A need to release what I have, now, and into Lyn.

When the cum hits her, she knows it. It shows in so many ways.

4

My time here, each day now, is precious. I feel the need to savor and count each one less they slip away unappreciated.

We are up early, at least by my normal standards. All are assembled and ready for the day long before seven. I give each two thousand pesos. I would have given more but Lyn has cautioned me against that. This, I am told, is plenty. But even with this amount, there is a problem. Lexi is freaking out. It is way too much!

We resolve it by having her take sixty pesos with her and keeping the balance in a cabinet at the house.

Lyn and Jana will be checking on what they need to enroll in college. I gather they will be leaving after I leave with Lexi and before I return from her school.

Mel will be taking care of washing the clothing and cooking.

Sometime after I drop off Lexi, I will investigate if it is possible to get internet into the house.

So begins the seventh day of my adventure. It is January 29th, 2003.

The General Santos National High School is far from our house. We are in Brgy. City Heights. Her school is in Brgy. Calumpang and that is one heck of a drive. I really don't think this is going to work, but Lexi says, *Just two more months, Craig! Then it is done. Next year I in college! No problem.*

As I ride along, I am getting an idea for how large this city really is. It is far larger than I thought. In a way I knew it, but I guess I wasn't paying attention. My dear Boston is two hundred and thirty-two square kilometers. GenSan is over four hundred and ninety-two square kilometers. It is more than twice the size of Boston!

Calumpang has got to be a real 'low rent' area. Pesos here are dear and few. It's obvious just by what I see as we ride along. Here, my

riding up with Lexi causes a stir for all sorts of reasons. But, coming to school, on a what for them is a really big motorcycle behind a white guy, in this most depressed of areas, is prime among all the reasons.

For me it is unreal in another way. These kids are all wearing a uniform. All the girls are in deep pink skirts, which typically come down mid-calf, with white ankle-high socks, black leather shoes, and white sailor shirts with pink piping. Not every girl is pretty but good lord almighty, plenty are.

Yes, plenty are and I am surrounded by them. Lexi is ‘showing me off,’ as it were. I don’t understand a word of what is being said, but it is clear that the conversation is about me. I hear her mention City Heights and that causes a stir.

As I am about to leave, Lexi gives me a kiss. I am not sure that is a smart thing to do. We do have an audience. Still, it is done.

I hear a number of girls saying ‘Goodbye, Sir’ as I get ready to leave. And on those faces I see something that is just plain sad in one way and lecherously exciting in another. I see faces of girls who are sad that it is not they with whom I am connected. These kids are thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen. Say that to yourself and look around where you live. It just isn’t possible, right?

Those faces shake me a bit. How many were willing, no, not just willing, but anxious to climb aboard? Too many. It is clear to me that I should not make a return visit while I am here these next two weeks. By the time I return, in May or June, the school year will have ended and Lexi will have graduated.

I start up the bike and roll away from them. I figure I can get back to the house without losing my way. Yes, losing my way... that concept is front and center in my mind and not because of the directions I must take on the bike. There are other ways to lose your way ... and those faces...

It takes a good forty-five minutes before I am home again. It's a long way and I am feeling pretty crumby for what I have done to Lexi.

I mention it to Mel, who tells me it's no big deal. Lexi will ride a jeepney to where she will get off, at the Fair and Square Pharmacy, and take a tricycle up to the house. The total cost of the transport will be under twenty pesos. As to the time it takes, Mel just laughs and tells me to not worry about it. I guess it's just something I need to recalibrate in my brain.

A trip downtown with Mel plus three hours of investigating brings the information that DSL Internet is available from the telephone company. It won't be fast, but it is not expensive. I can only get a 512KB connection and that will just have to do. I won't get it until I get back, but it is nice to know I can.

Following that, and before we return home, we have lunch of fried chicken, and I decide to spend the couple of hours at an Internet café. ... Mel gets her introduction to the net.

All in all, things are falling into place. And, in a weird way, things are slowing down. Things have been nonstop until this afternoon.

I gather there are some people I need to meet now, and so it's not like I can sit at the house and chill for seven days. That isn't going to happen. I will have time to chill without Internet and, as the TV is only local channels and they are all in Tagalog, there is nothing to watch.

I do have a few books I picked up at the book store yesterday and so I have something to do with my idle time. But I want to see more of the town and, like I said, there are people I am told I need to meet.

Mel has said something that I need to get my head around. She started to talk about her family. I had understood that it was truncated to just a poor mother, which was the reason that she and Lexi were on their own, though I know Mel's mother exists somewhere. Still, she has not been mentioned but once. When she

mentioned her father, it had seemed like she had nothing to do with him.

Now I am getting a different read on the matter. Mel's father and others of his contingent are coming Saturday to meet me. We will need to feed them. It seems like this is going to be a party. I am not going to be roasted; they are going to be honored guests. She said we should expect about twenty of them! Yes, I need to wrap my head around that. But that is not all.

Mel's mother is coming on Monday, two days after her father.... And Mel is making noises to the effect that she will be staying. I have not agreed to this and I don't say a word. I may have misunderstood and need more information.

Mel has also mentioned that some of Jana's family want to visit. I ask her if Lyn's family was coming, but she has no information to share related to that.

We have gotten back home. Mel wants to start cooking and sex, even should I want some right now, is not on the menu. Mel is evidently a bit sore from last night's activities.

It's warm outside. Too warm to sit on the first floor terrace or the third floor balcony. There is a sort of parlor on the first floor and an 'in-the-window' type air conditioner. I turn the thing on, grab one of the books and settle back to read the Red Rabbit. I have always loved Tom Clancy books. This one came out last year and I never got around to picking it up until now.

I get only about ten pages finished when Lyn and Jana come exploding through the door and land on top of me. Evidently their day searching out what is needed to enroll in school must have gone well. But, rather than tell me about their day, they are asking me about mine. I am the important one, don't you know?

It's sweet and I have no doubt that this is just a phase that will wear off in a while. For now, however, it's...

How was your day? You find you can get the Internet? Maybe it too much money? How much? When you get this? How we use it? Did it go OK getting Lexi to school? What you do the rest of the day?

It takes quite a while to get through all these questions to their satisfaction before I learn about their day.

Both of them can get degrees from Mindanao State University and they proudly tell me that, while they could have gone to Notre Dame of Dadiangas University, MSU is much less expensive! It is better for us! Lexi can attend too! They have an education degree for English instruction.

I am taking this in and hearing how great this is as all three of the girls will be able to go back and forth together. Mel is listening in for a bit before smiling and saying, *Craig, ask them where is MSU.*

I think I am about to learn something important. Maybe Lyn and Jana have no clue why the question carries weight, but it seems Mel has a reason to insert herself at this moment.

OK, Lyn, where is MSU?

You know where you go this morning with Lexi?

Yes.

That the way to the airport. You remember this, correct?

I have to laugh. It seemed familiar but, no, it hadn't clicked for me. *OK, and?*

A little more to the airport. That where MSU be. Maybe if we have a motorcycle we all ride together to school, Lexi too! What you think?

A motorcycle?

Now Lyn is laughing. *The money we save for you not going to NDDU ... that more than the cost of a motorcycle, Craig. Truly.*

We will need to move. It is too far from here.

Why that. It OK. We like this house.

Do you agree, Jana?

Yes, Craig. This best.

I am not sure about Lexi. Are you sure she will attend MSU with you, too? Mel, what will Lexi's choice be? Will she really want that long ride each day next year?

Maybe, yes. You ask her tonight.

I am not sure I want the three of them on a bike five or six days a week. It just seems far too dangerous.

OK, so Lyn, Jana, how much do you three need to do to get enrolled in MSU for the next semester?

Craig, we have to take the SASE exam. For me and Jana, we do all we need before this, today! It done! Lexi need to do some things. She can talk to her school guidance counselor.

Explain. What is the SASE?

It mean Systems Admission and Scholarship Exam.

So enrollment is not guaranteed?

No, but I sure we will pass. Today we give them the proof we graduate high school, we give them the two photo IDs, we pay the one hundred and fifty pesos testing fee and we fill out the application form. It done, Craig.

When is the exam?

It next month.

Sweetheart, next month is in three days. When next month?

February 12. It a Wednesday. It good we do this now!

That's the day I fly back from Manila. We chat a little longer. They ask about the book I am reading but, as I have just started it, there

is little I can tell them. After a bit, they excuse themselves to go clean up before supper.

They are not gone for more than a few minutes, and I have only gotten a couple of more pages read when Lexi appears. There is a big smile on her face as she parks herself on my lap and asks me,

How was your day? You find you can get the Internet? Maybe it too much money? How much? When you get this? How we use it? Did it go OK getting back here from school? What you do the rest of the day?

Maybe I should have recorded the previous discussion and just played it back.

I go over it once again before mentioning the college plans of her co-mistresses. She takes it all in. Then, without a word from me asking if it OK if she wants to go the MSU next year, she tells me how great it will be that the three of them can all go together.

You sure you want to do that?

Yes. Then I not be lonely. Yes, this is best.

I get a kiss and she leaves to change out of her school uniform.

I must admit, I am a little surprised. From all I have read, it rains here a lot. Travelling on a bike the distance they will have to travel in the rain seems a pretty dumb idea, but they don't seem to be daunted by the concept at all.

I am the clueless foreigner, and so I guess I'll let it go. I don't know enough; time will be the teacher.

This time I get fifteen pages read before all assemble for supper.

The meal is good, if not recognizable in my index of foods I have ever eaten. It works well with the mountain of rice which they have piled on my plate. Once again, I decide not to ask questions. Let time unravel the mysteries.

The conversation seems to be involved with something they are afraid I will hear, because it is in their language and I am getting furtive looks.

What are you talking about?

Silence.

Lyn, what is this about?

Nothing, Sir. It is not important.

I don't care if it isn't important. What is it?

I shy to say.

Tell me.

Not want you to be mad. Not want that. Better we not say.

Lyn, I am getting angry now. Tell me.

OK, OK, Sir. ... Sir, we wonder — maybe sometime we will have a karaoke machine. We know we not to ask now. This embarrassing. Sorry, Sorry. We already stupid to ask for the motorcycle. We not want you to be angry with us.

I get the fear. It is true that I was taken aback a bit earlier by the request for a bike, though it does make sense. And so, to ask for this does seem a bit too grabby, too much like the sugar-daddy's money tree needs a good shaking.

On the other hand, I saw karaoke at the resto-bar we visited the first night. I have heard the neighbors here with their karaoke. It seems to be a national vice of sorts.

How much does this thing cost?

We not sure. Maybe it OK if we check? Nice to have before we have visitors I think.

There it is. Yes, indeed, there it is. That was the rest of the conversation I never got to hear.

You mean Mel's father?

Yes, that what I mean. Many come with him I think. What we do if no karaoke? Maybe we rent one? That cheaper.

These things can be rented?

Yes. It true.

But maybe there will be more than one party, right, Lyn? ... and then, having to rent many times? So maybe it's better to buy one?

Yes, that what we think, Sir.

Lyn, are you expecting any of your relations to visit?

No, Sir. They not come.

But Jana's family may come?

Yes, I think it true. They want to meet you.

Who? Her mother and father?

Them yes, plus the others.

Who?

Jana have many aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces. Many will want to come.

This is not what I am ready for. Are they going to string me up? OK, maybe not Mel's father. He has two wives. But I don't know shit about Jana's family.

Jana, does your family know that I am with four of you?

Yes, I tell them.

What did they say?

They ask if you treat me good and with respect. I tell them you do. I tell them about college. They say then this is good and they will come and celebrate with you.

I see. How many will come?

Maybe thirty. Not sure. I only chat with them today.

When will they come?

They say they come on February 8. That OK?

Mel, your father is coming this Saturday, February 1st, correct?

Yes. Correct.

So two weekends in a row there is a family party. Do I have that right?

Mel is squirming. Mel, I know you mentioned your mother. You did not say anyone would be coming with her, correct?

Yes. This is true.

And you don't know exactly which day she will come? I thought you said Monday.

Maybe not. She want me to tell her when to come.

OK, I will speak with you tomorrow about her. Not now.

Yes, Sir. Thank you.

As to the matter of the Karaoke, please get me some pricing tomorrow. Is there anything else we need for a party?

Sir, you not be angry if we tell you how it done here?

I will not get angry. Please tell me.

We need a lechon. This a roast pig. It important. Also best if we get dirty ice cream.

Dirty? What do you mean?

That what we call it⁸. It made with carabao milk. It good, it not expensive and we all love it. It come in big container, but we have to order it.

What else?

Just extra food from the market and the supermarket. It not too bad. I think we can do this with our allowance money.

No, I will pay for it. Do you have time tomorrow for all of this, or do you have other things you need to be doing?

We OK to do this.

None of this is how I planned to spend my time here, but I am getting the feeling that these gals come with family attached. It is best to make nice. It is just another thing I had not considered as I never considered gathering even one girl, and now I have a harem.

No matter how well developed a plan is, there are always unintended consequences.

⁸ It's not dirty and, though every Filipino calls it Dirty Ice Cream, if you type that phrase into Wikipedia, the stuck up folks who guard Filipino respectability have removed the name and point you to [this](#).

5

I am in the bedroom with Jana and Lexi. Jana is not paying any attention to me. She has been engaged almost nonstop via her new cellphone with her family regarding the impending party. This is big stuff.

I am alternately wondering if I am ready for all this. Have I made a huge mistake gathering these four girls? Is this going to turn out very badly? Lyn, Mel and Jana have all assured me that there are no problems. These will be happy occasions and I will have fun.

I sure as hell hope they are right. If this was the States, I would be running for the hills right now. No family would think this is OK, but then again, if I was in the States, I would not have these four girls with me.

Jana being busy gives me an opportunity to speak with Lexi and that is something I very much need to do.

Your sister says that your mother wants to come and maybe stay with us? What do you think?

I think this a bad idea, Craig. But, Sir, you know this. Correct?

Well, it seems to me that your mother was opposed to joining your father, so she will be opposed to both of you being with me.

I think, almost, that true. She will say we can both be here but only one yours.

Yes, and your mother will stay to make sure that is the way it is?

That what I think.

So having her here is a bad idea. Correct?

Yes, I think this.

Your father is OK with the two of you being here.

And here I get another surprise.

The father of Mel not the same for me.

Your mother is the same but not the father?

Yes.

But even with knowing that, Mel's father is OK with this?

Yes, he is happy for us. Mel tell him everything.

OK. I think I know enough.

What you do?

Your mother can come on Saturday but she cannot stay.

But that the day Mel's father is here.

Exactly.

Oh... OH! Hala?! She have problem with Mel's father if she make argue.

Exactly.

Good plan. I not think Mel know why you will want this.

This is why you look out for her?

Maybe, yes.

Fascinating. OK, now do you think we should ignore Jana and make love?

Lexi is giggling. Jana is complaining that she only needs a few more minutes, please. I think the whole damned thing is nuts. But what the heck... OK, Jana I will give you five more minutes and after that we aren't waiting. ... So, Lexi, what was said at school today after I left you?

Ha! They want to come visit. They excited to see you again. I tell them I not think you will allow it. And the girl laughs.

She knows she is having fun with her friends, teasing them but keeping what they want just out of reach. It works for me, and Lexi

⁹ Beware or Watch out. In this case it refers to her mother's need to beware, as I have laid a trap for her.

is getting some rockstar attention from her schoolmates. But will she want to bring them here later to advance her position further, even after her disclaimer?

Jana has put her phone down and is getting out of her clothing. Lexi, seeing this, is getting with the program and telling me that I am a sluggard. I need to catch up!

I might as well.

In no time at all we are skin to skin. I am on my back with an arm around each of them as they lie on either side of me, each of them propped up on an elbow. Lexi has a hand on my package. Jana has a hand on my chest. Each alternately is kissing me. Each kiss a lazy and slow affair, imparting feelings of closeness and intimacy.

It is not hot sex. It is slow, patient, intimate entanglement. These two, the youngest of the four, are giving me, what prior to my arrival on these islands, I would never have thought remotely possible.

It feels like love. Is it? How can I measure such a thing? How is love assayed?

Tongue engages tongue. Fingers entwine hair. Breath mingles with breath. The warmth of one body transmits to its neighbor. Singing, murmuring, gasps, the sound of shifting sheets, the hum of the air conditioner, and the otherwise silence of the room become the sounds of a sanctuary. There is no clock we need to heed. There is no appointment to keep in mind. Tomorrow will surely come and we will be done long before then. But exactly when is of no importance as we just absorb each other's presence, each other's needs and attend to them without haste.

I am rigid but nowhere near needing to peak. Each of these girls is beyond wet as they grind cunts into my thighs.

Two small, trim, cute, sweet girls, who would, if in the USA, both still be in high school, are doing for me what every high school boy only dreams of, doubly over.

Is this incongruous? I guess it is in that way. But here, now, it only seems necessary and right.

I roll over onto Lexi and push my dick deep into her small, tight cunt. She is far from complaining. Is she thinking about all her schoolmates who would be happy to take her spot? She appears to be relishing this in a manner that is possibly beyond the expectations of my current slow and methodical performance.

It's not that I am ignoring her. I am very much not, but I don't think what I am doing should be getting her off in the manner she seems to be expressing herself. I am happy she is enjoying this, but it must be more about her than it is me.

But as she explodes in what seems to be an earth shattering orgasm, I find that I can, with ego intact, withdraw and mount Jana, who has been more than patient.

Jana leans into my far ear from Lexi and asks in a whisper, *What you do to her?*

I pull my head back and, as I stroke in and out of Jana's hot, wet cunt, I shrug and tell her, without whispering but in rhythm with the strokes, *I have no idea. Ask her later.*

All I get back is a, *Ughh*, as she pushes her cunt into my next stroke down against her.

Lexi is gently caressing my back and ass as I continue to earnestly fuck her bedmate.

Perspiration is coating me, and it coats Jana as the fucking continues. She is looking right at me, smiling, her eyebrows going up and down. Urging me to find culmination inside her, her hands now gripping my shoulders, fingers digging in, her legs forcing her cunt and abdomen hard against me. The bed is shaking. The sound of our skin slapping against the other, over and over...

Has she cum? I don't know. But I have found the place where it must end and my seed cascades deep into her cunt. I am most assuredly done.

Mummm, that was good, she says. I hope it was. It most certainly was for me.

Maybe I should shower, but all I do is roll on my back with a shit-eating grin on my face. This is just too fucking good.

And then, another reason to grin hits me, when I think of the shitstorm I may have kicked up with Lexi's mom. I am not thinking of anything else, not even the two kids in bed with me, as I drift off.

It has been a good night and I am tired.

By the time I get downstairs for breakfast, Lexi is long gone. But the other three are all here and hanging around me.

Lyn and Jana want to know what my budget is for the karaoke. But I have no clue what they normally cost, so how do I establish a reasonable budget. I need information.

That gets us into a convoluted and frankly frustrating discussion that seems to be going nowhere. Finally I ask, *How much does a day's rental cost?*

That they can get an answer to without further hassle. I figure if the cost of the karaoke isn't more than twenty times the rental fee, the price will be OK.

That piece of business now resolved, I turn to Mel, who needs to know what I have decided about her mother's interest in a visit. All are still here, and I suspect that is a good thing, as I begin.

Mel, please tell your mother than she is welcome to visit this Saturday, but that, at this time, I do not want anyone else staying here. I am not excluding her alone... I am saying, no one else at all.

*What?! Why you do this? My God! No! My father, he be here with his wives!
No!*

Mel, that is the way it is. She either comes or she cannot visit.

Why, Po¹⁰? Why?

Your mother is opposed to what your father does. Correct?

Yes! Why that matter?

How is that different from what I am doing?

But my mother not want to see my father and his wives!

Mel, did you hear my question?

What?

How is what your father has with his wives different from what I am doing?

You want she be your wife?

Lyn, do you understand what I am asking Mel?

Yes, Sir. Let me try.

I nod and wait. There is a prolonged discussion happening, but I don't understand a lick of it. Finally, Lyn turns to me and says, *Mel say her mother will not require them to leave. She sure of that. It best if she not here with Mel's father.*

Yes, I am sure she will not require them to leave, too... but she will say I must pick only one of her two girls. I cannot be with both. Of that I am reasonably sure. That is also why she wants to stay... to make sure it happens that way. I am saying to her, I am not going to accept her way. She accepts me as I am or she is not welcome. I don't want a fight with her so it is best if she not come, or come when she will not be able to fight. ... She comes when Mel's father is here and does not stay, or she is not to come.

¹⁰ Sir.

Lyn thinks she understands but asks me to go over the points with her again before returning to Mel and another discussion in which I am a complete bystander, unable to decipher anything said.

Sir, Mel thinks you are wrong. Her mother not that way. But I say, chat her! Find out now. See what she think. She do that now.

Mel is texting. Lyn and Jana, who has been silent throughout all this, wait with me, filling the time asking me what songs I like to sing. It is awkward, as it is a concept that I am unprepared for and so am stumbling a bit.

The conversation moves on to how one orders dirty ice cream and where one finds karaoke machines. None of the answers are completely edifying. They are having a problem explaining how these things are done, and the frustration in their eyes is clear to me. They have English, but lack a way to describe practice and custom. I don't know why, but it is the way it is. I don't push it.

Nothing is going smoothly for me right now, but I gather it isn't going any smoother for Mel in her chat with her mother. She has just slammed the phone down on the table.

I do not say a word. Lyn and Jana are silent. Mel is also not saying a word. She just gets up from the table and moves off to some unseen destination in the house.

It is unclear whether Mel is upset with me, with her mother, with both of us, or if it is something else entirely. It is just as unclear if I will ever learn what has transpired. I don't think Mel is leaving, but even that is unclear.

Five minutes later, Mel reappears with an umbrella in hand and announces that she is going out to order the dirty ice cream. She is saying nothing more. Lyn and Jana jump up and ask her to wait. They will all go together and look for Karaoke systems, as well as check rental prices.

And with that, and in three minutes, I am for the first time since Sunday evening, with the exception of the ride from Lexi's school to the house, quite on my own.

Being at will, I decide to leave the house and look around my neighborhood. I have not done so up to now. It is time to do a little exploring.

The main street, which our street crosses, isn't much of a street to speak of. It is a two-lane affair and it is charitable to call it paved. It appears to be tar-bound macadam paving with as many potholes as there is macadam. There are very few private vehicles to be seen. It is mostly tricycles, motorcycles and bicycles, plus plenty of folk afoot. This main street is filled with commerce of sorts, but the commerce is done from seven foot wide shanties with corrugated steel lean-to roofs. All manner of things are for sale, though few are of interest to me.

I don't see the beggars here, as I did in the downtown area. It isn't that this is a wealthy region, but here there are residences and shops. These may be the working poor, but the operative word is 'working.'

I am attracting glances of curiosity for the most part. Maybe foreigners are more common close to the hotel, but here I really do seem to stand out, a pink giraffe as it were. Not dangerous, not valuable, just weird and definitely out of place.

As I ramble up north, away from downtown, I am seeing more and more kids in school uniforms. These are not the same as Lexi's. Gone are the pink skirts and sailor style blouses. Here the skirts are a muted blue plaid, simple white blouses and blue plaid feminine ties.

Clearly, the school is close by and I am here as the school day is about to start. This is a public high school. You might think it's just like the one Lexi is attending, but I get a sense that these kids have at least a couple more pesos to rub together.

It's not that they look affluent. They most assuredly don't, but they don't look as down at the heels as did many of the kids in Calumpang. It's funny, I guess, but I am always looking at things via the economics of life. I am not saying it's a good thing to do. It is just how I function.

Maybe these girls are approachable, if that's what I wanted, and I don't, but there is a different vibe here and they don't seem as ready as did the pink-skirted ones.

OK, so that is what I thought thirty seconds ago. At this moment there are three school girls standing in a clump as I am intending just to walk past but, I hear, *Good morning, Sir! How are you, today?*

I am somewhat stumped. I do not really want to engage with these clearly underage kids at all, but quite certainly I don't want to do it with an audience of other youngsters all around.

I am not sure I have been fumbling long enough for anyone to notice, when I hear a boy too far away saying something about the girls practicing their English.

Whether that is what they were up to in reality, I use it as an excuse to play along with the English lesson and, in a more robust voice than I might have otherwise used, say, *Good morning to all of you. I am fine today. How are you girls today?*

They seem delighted with the response and, one at a time, each one tells me she is fine. The last one then asks, *Sir, why are you here this morning?*

I have moved into a house close to here and have just decided to take a walk this morning.

Oh! That is very good, Sir. This last one says in a very exaggerated manner, trying to enunciate clearly, as she has been taught in school. *Sir, may we know your name?*

I figure, what's the harm? All seem to know these kids have grabbed the opportunity to work on their English. I don't think I am in any jeopardy.

My name is Craig. May I know your names?

Yes, Sir Craig. I am Jocelyn, this is my friend Katrina and this is May.

What wonderful names. I am pleased to know you three. Well, I am sure your classes will start soon, and I need to continue with my walk.

Yes, Sir. But, Sir, before you go, may I ask what is your wife's name?

Well, I'll be damned. This little kid is trying to figure out if I am taken. All three seem to be hanging on, waiting to hear the answer. Oh, hell, no harm done. I decide to play a game on them.

I am sorry to disappoint you, but I am not married.

Sir? If you not married, why are you here?

I am trying to decide if I should retire here.

Truly, maybe you will stay here?

Yes, truly. That is what I am here to decide.

These girls are having a hard time containing their excitement. It's cute, if way beyond weird.

Sir, maybe we could be your girlfriends?

Another lesson in economics...

1

They are what... twelve, thirteen? For Christ's sake they can't be any older than that.

Jocelyn, that is a very sweet request, but I think your parents will be very angry with me. They will say you are all too young to be my girlfriends.

No, Sir. They will not say that!

These kids are something else. Oh, sure, I know damned well their parents would say, no, and I don't need any more girls anyway. Their absolute conviction that their folks would be OK with it is charming, while completely nuts.

Jocelyn, I do not want your parents coming after me for breaking the law. I have not asked you to be my girlfriends and have told you, I think your parents will say you are far too young to even ask me. That, and only that, may you tell your parents. I invite your parents to be here tomorrow for only one reason, so that they and I can tell you, we all agree. Do you understand?

Yes, Sir, I understand. So, Sir, that mean you will be here tomorrow morning?

Oh, what the fuck, sure. Maybe I will have Lyn or Mel with me, but why not have the parents straighten these three out a bit?

Yes, I will come by tomorrow. And with that, I return to my walking.

I don't stop walking for quite a while, for the simple reason that I don't want to walk through this gaggle of schoolkids again, and I am unaware of how to circumambulate successfully a path back to the house. I am a little irritated by this matter and am grumbling to myself when I spy a little Dunkin Donuts shop on a busy cross street.

I may not be a huge fan of donuts, but Dunkin Donuts was founded just five miles from where I was born¹¹ and have lived most of my life. It has been part of my life for as long as I have lived. Having a place that sings a song of home right now is something I truly need.

It is a cramped little place, not more than nine feet wide. There is a small counter and four small racks to hold donuts, but only one and a half hold anything at all. There is no coffee brewed, but the guy behind the counter gamely offers to brew a pot. I feel a bit guilty. I can't drink a pot of coffee, but accept the offer while wondering if it will even be palatable.

I order two donuts and am served a small paper cup of coffee with packets of powdered creamer and sugar. The coffee is fine, and the donuts, if not as good as I might get back in Dorchester, are fresh and fine.

In no hurry to leave, I linger over the coffee before asking for a second cup. The donuts are long gone and I am thinking it's about time for me to get going, when a guy who clearly must be an expat comes into the place.

He smiles towards me and orders a donut and a coffee. As the coffee is already made, there is a little playful banter between the new customer and the employee regarding that, at least there was someone else to drink part of the pot. Evidently, today is the very first time that the coffee was made before the expat arrived, and there will be less to toss down the drain.

The service now complete, the expat turns and asks in an accent that announces a European origin, *May I join you?*

Yes, please do. Maybe our friend behind the counter still has enough for another cup for me as this one will be empty in a moment.

¹¹ Founded in Quincy, Massachusetts.

Ha! That will make his day! Maybe there will be an empty pot when we are finished! Yes, yes. Kuya, bring my friend a second cup!

Po¹², that his second cup now. He really want a third? Truly?

Yes! Another cup.

OK, Po.

My new 'friend' turns back to me and asks, *So, what is your name and why are you here?*

It turns out that my new friend is from Germany. He has been here a few years and has more opinions about Filipinos, Germany, beer, and a whole host of things than there is time here to catalogue. His name is Manfred and, though married, I gather he likes both alcohol and whores. Which he prefers more it is hard to decipher.

I am quite sure that he and I will never be close. But, you never really know. Both of us are far from home. Though they are different homes, they are not Asian homes, and in that way there is a common bond. He lives close to here and so that makes him a neighbor, of sorts.

Manfred is not a tall man but, in his own way, he stands out here even more than do I. His thick shock of red hair and incredibly fair complexion floating above a broad and powerful frame make him unique among those here, expat and Filipino.

He is doing the talking. I am the audience. Right now he is telling me that, two nights ago, he was at a resto-bar. I gather it is similar to the one I was at the first night I was here. He tells me he is there every night, as are a few other expats. They take their evening meals there while drinking the nights away in paradise.

Two nights ago, a Filipino drove up in a pickup and parked it on the side of the street such that the truck's tailpipe was maybe just a few feet from Manfred's table. That would not have been a

¹² Sir.

problem if the pickup was not running. However, it was and the vehicle's exhaust was blowing right at Manfred.

I guess I should note that most Filipinos do not own cars or pickups, so this was not anything ordinary. Anyway, Manfred asked the guy to turn the vehicle off or move it. Exactly how he asked it, I cannot know but, according to my interlocutor, the Filipino became incensed, returned to the pickup, removed a long iron bar, and returned to Manfred's table. With one swing of the bar, the table was cleaved in two, and everything on the table crashed to the floor. With that the Filipino returned to the vehicle and drove off, but not before Manfred noted the guy's license plate number.

Both of us need coffee refills. The employee is gleeful as he has just about emptied the pot.

Manfred says the owner of the Resto-bar sees everything but feigns ignorance of the incident. That, I gather, just pisses Manfred off more. He wants to teach this pickup driver a lesson.

I ask about what the cops said, but he says there is no value in asking for police assistance. Why is not clear to me.

Now Manfred's wife, who he calls his Sweetie, seems to become important to the story. She has the plate number and the next morning calls her cousin, who works at the LTO,¹³ and asks for the name of the plate holder.

Sweetie, now in possession of a name and address, texts others in her family.

To bring this whole thing to a close, though Manfred was in full fettle as he went about relating all of this, by the end of the day, the driver was in the hospital having been badly beaten and his pickup had been torched. Manfred was crowing that it served the bastard right.

¹³ Land Transportation Office. Much like the DMV in the USA.

I remained passive. Was my new friend about to be arrested? Paybacks can be hell. But I don't know enough about this place.

Between the school girls this morning and the telling of vigilante justice, I have a lot to consider.

I thank Manfred for his company but explain I must be on my way. I am sure we will meet again but I am not anxious to pursue it.

Retracing my path back to the house is thankfully uneventful. School is in session and so the street, though busy, is not the problem it was this morning.

I have been gone for over three hours. Mel, Lyn and Jana are all home when I arrive, and all seem to be completely stressed out. Where have I been? Why didn't I answer their texts?

The failure to answer texts is simply result of the speaker not being loud enough and sitting in my pocket. They only started texting about twenty minutes ago. I was walking back and things are noisy on the street. I didn't hear the phone.

As to where I was, that becomes a long discussion. I start with Dunkin Donuts and Manfred.

The explanation is slow going as my long English narrative of it is hard on them and they are getting confused over parts of it. As I complete the tale, not a one of them seems to be shocked or in any way discomforted. And the fact that they aren't, has the opposite result upon me. It has me discomforted.

I ask why they think this is OK. At first I get blank stares. So I proceed to explain how this would be handled in the USA and how what Manfred's family had done would land them all in jail.

OK, I think they get why I am confused. It is Lyn who tries to explain it to me.

Craig, this man disrespected the husband of a Filipina. That is a disrespect to her and her family. A family must preserve their honor. What this man did, it wrong. He would not do this to another Filipino. If he do, maybe even someone

kill him. Maybe he think he will do this to a foreigner. But the family say, no. He is our family now.

So now I am scared. I haven't mentioned the girls at the school yet. Am I about to die?

Lyn, I think I understand, and now I am worried about something else that happened today. Maybe I am in trouble.

What you do?!

I proceed to lay it all out. All I get back are smirks from the three of them.

What is so funny?

You! What you think you do wrong?

Talking to those young girls. In the USA I would probably be arrested. Why won't the parents come after me and teach me a lesson like what happened to the guy I told you about?

You do nothing wrong. You were respectful to the girls. You not ask them to do anything. You tell them you respect their parents. Why you worried? There only two problems. But no one will hurt you.

OK, what are the problems?

The parents, Craig, they will have to not work tomorrow to meet you. That will cause loss of money, I think.

You really think they will come?

Yes, I think so.

How much money will they lose by coming?

Maybe one hundred and fifty pesos. Maybe more. I not know.

Will they be insulted if I offer two hundred to them and apologize for saying they should come?

Yes I think that OK. It right to do.

OK, Lyn, what is the other problem?

You may have three new young girlfriends!

What?

Why you say 'what'? You know 'what.' The parents, I think maybe they will say it OK, you a good respectful man. Good for the girls. Good for them. One less to pay for. They still daughters, still family, but cost of food, school, clothes, that you pay for now. So better for them. Maybe not all will think this but some, yes, some.

Lyn, I do not want twelve or thirteen-year-old girlfriends.

You make mistake. If you not want, you have to say that.

I guess I was expecting the parents to fix that without my having to hurt feelings. I figured that if the girls told their parents tonight, that the girls would be told they are foolish and there is no sense to even come tomorrow, as the answer was absolutely, no.

You know, Lexi will be angry you not take her friends.

What?

You think friends of Lexi not want this? You wrong.

I don't want anyone else!

Then why you nice to those girls today? I think you want.

I give up. So tell me. Have you ordered the dirty ice cream for Saturday?

Mel tells me they have. It is buko dirty ice cream. I gather that means young coconut flavored. It sounds good and I am looking forward to tasting it.

What have you learned about karaoke?

Evidently I have just opened the door to far more information than I care to explain here. They have found a karaoke to rent for very little money. The cost of a new device that is something like a CD player is doable, but the girls have been warned that it will be

obsolete soon. For now, the decision is to rent for two hundred pesos for twenty-four hours.

I ask what we need to provide to make it work. They tell me nothing. It is complete with screen, and speakers built into a cabinet. All we have to do is connect it to electric.

As all of this has been transpiring, Mel and Jana have been busy making lunch. I am not very hungry, having consumed two donuts and four cups of coffee, all after my breakfast here. And lunch is pretty much pure starch, rice and noodles. For some reason they not only do not see it as redundant, but put the noodles over the rice as a topping.

I decide to not comment and just eat.

During lunch Lyn asks, *Craig please text Manfred. We will invite him and his wife to come over.*

I don't have his number.

He refuse to give it?

No, I didn't ask for it.

Why not? How you find him?

Why do you think I want to find him?

He white!

OK, yes, so do you think that is a good reason for me to want him as a friend?

Yes! Of course, yes.

Fascinating. Well, I don't. Just because someone is 'white' does not make them someone I want to be around.

Why not? He like you.

Lyn, he is not like me. In any number of ways, he is not like me at all.

I don't understand.

Do I go out to the resto-bar each night and get drunk?

No.

Well, that alone is a big difference. Plus, he's German and I am an American. There is a large cultural difference between us. Germany is as far from the US in one direction as the Philippines is in another.

Really?

Well, it does depend on where you are in the USA. Where I lived, Germany is closer, but basically, yes.

Wow, I not know that. So both white but different.

Yes. Are you the same as a Korean, a Japanese, or a Chinese person?

Of course, no.

But you are all Asian.

Oh. OK. So, he not a friend?

Correct.

I think his wife not know this. I think his wife telling him, why you not have this man's number.

I have to smile. Lyn is probably right.

Mel, what happened with your mother this morning?

Not good. You right. It what she want. I tell her, then come when father is here and not to stay, or not come at all. She say not at all. Sir, she is difficult.

Will she cause me any problems?

No, she say, she not approve but how she complain when my father the same. She say she sorry for me. I tell her she a foolish person. We use bad words.

I nod and hold her hand a bit. There really isn't anything to say.

The rest of the meal happens, if not in silence, then at least without any need to involve me. It seems that the impending party in just

two days has them both excited and freaked out. This place needs to be immaculate inside and out. So, sure, Mel's mother isn't coming, but her father is, and that is a very big thing.

I am home with three girls and yet I am functionally alone. They pay no attention to me. The house and grounds are getting the attention. I am left to ponder if I have made a huge fucking mistake.

It may well be that, though I didn't miscalculate my objectives on an economic basis, the subsidiary results make the primary objective more of a problem than a solution.

My mind loops over the issues.

Too many want to jump aboard. It doesn't matter if I am good or bad, if I have bad breath or a heart condition. It doesn't matter if I am a drunkard, or a scoundrel, so long as they get a berth on this ship. And it doesn't seem to have an age limit on the low end.

The matter of family honor is a concern. On one level, there is nothing wrong with it, but that's just the surface level. Dig a little deeper and the thing is a damned nightmare. This isn't even medieval, this goes way back. This is tribal, clan-like. There are police, but they don't seem to matter for some reason. I really need to come to a better understanding of the value and importance of police in this culture. At the moment, I don't get it.

It is all more than I was expecting. I am beginning to understand why. I was looking at economics without considering the cultural-societal issues that were endemic to the economies I was considering.

What do I do now that I have made commitments for these four girls?

In one way, I have made a horrible mistake. In another, it is no mistake at all. All I had hoped for, I have here.

Was I wrong to have the goal? Is that the problem? What are my alternatives?

Tomorrow morning, I am going to be walking back to that school. Just what the fuck am I supposed to do?

2

Supper becomes a little icy as Lexi learns of my morning. She just isn't talking and she sure as hell isn't happy.

There is talking, but it is not in English. Jana tells me what was said later, but I will insert it here for the sake of continuity of the time sequence. Lyn starts by asking Lexi why she is so angry.

Maybe Craig will tell us to leave if things not good here. So tell us sister, what is wrong?

At this point as Jana is relaying it to me I stop her and ask, *Why did Lyn call her 'sister?'*

Jana is nonplused, *Yes, yes, OK she not sister, but this is what we say with each other. OK? I continue now?*

Yes, OK, go on.

Jana sighs and continues with what Lexi was saying.

Why he say that?

Say what, Lexi?

Say he will come back tomorrow. Their parents, they will come.

It is OK. Craig not in danger. He told them they are too young. Why would they be angry?

No! Maybe they say, OK? What he do then?

Yes, I mentioned this to Craig, too. But they really are too young and he don't want any more loves.

If the parents come and say, yes, he insult their honor to refuse! Then he in danger! So Craig must say yes! How I tell my friends that they cannot come but younger ones can?

Maybe I go with him tomorrow and tell the young ones I not want them there. Then Craig not dishonor and it will be OK.

You think he will agree?

I think, yes, he will agree. I will tell him later when I am in bed with him. I sure if I ask at the right time he will agree.

So then I can bring my friends?

Maybe best to wait until he come back from the USA. Not now.

OK, I agree. I will wait. You with him tonight?

Evidently, Lyn knew my plans better than I knew them, because I had not given any thought to whom I will be with tonight. Lyn, however, has promoted herself into my bed and I see no reason to complain.

As it is, two hours later, we are in bed together.

OK, so you told Lexi you are going to tell the parents, the girls are too young, and I agree. They are. Will that work?

Lyn giggles a bit. *Well, no one shoot you then. But you give them only a little, not too much for coming. Maybe it will be OK. But, Craig, it not good for you to go out without one of us. It not smart. OK?*

No, it is not OK. I do not want to live in a jail.

It not safe!

In the middle of the day? I think you are overreacting.

People see you and they think, 'Ha! He has money! How I get it?'

Look, everyone was nice today. There was no problem with that. No, I am not going to be limited to where I go. I will go out on my own, when I want to.

You are stubborn. This not good. You get into trouble today!

I will not make that mistake again.

So you will make a new mistake next time!

Don't push it, Lyn.

You agree for Lexi to bring friends when you come back from USA?

I guess so. It doesn't mean they get to stay, but they can visit.

Good. I will tell Lexi.

If Lyn was angry with my refusal to do as she wishes regarding my leaving the house, she has let go of it very quickly, because the next order of business seems to be to get me hard and inside her.

I suspect my mood is harder to adjust than is hers, as it takes a fair bit of time, following her stroking my member, before old glory is standing at attention.

I chose to live in a place that meets my economic requirements but, just as living in a jail might meet those same requirements, there are things I am just unwilling to relinquish to reach the required criteria. ... And that, most assuredly, is rumbling around in my noggin and therefore competing with Lyn's actions for my attention.

The fact is that it clearly is way too easy to become the object of the desires of others here. I do need to make some adjustments in my psyche before I get into some real trouble. Economies have consequences that you just don't read about in the scholarly journals. They ought to be written about, but just aren't. As they are important factors in the 'rational behavior' of the individual, why aren't such things considered?

We know in the USA that voters act upon their aspirations as often, if not more often than simple logic, aren't these young girls voting with their bodies in an aspirational way, rather than a purely logical manner? So tell me, isn't that aspiration, rational?

Just like the lottery. Yes, you know you probably won't win, but the cost of playing is minimal and the potential, no matter how remote, is fantastic. In that way, gambling is rational for the poor. It is more rational for them than it is for those who actually 'have enough.'

So now, do you see why Lyn has been having a problem getting my pole in the air? But succeed she does, and concerns of the day don't just drift away, but are completely submerged by a rising need for Lyn and what her body has to offer.

This is a two way thing. I am not taking from Lyn any more than she is taking from me. There is no placing her in this or that position. All becomes a collaboration.

Lyn has me hard, but she is not wet enough. I take the initiative to resolve that, as I play with her cunt and suck on a tit. And, soon enough, that task is complete. Her juices are flowing.

Sliding into the girl is its own reward. The feeling of bliss as my member is snugly surrounded by her hot, tight cunt is not to be compared to anything, but rather just savored. I do not want to move fast. I want to make this last as long as possible. I want to feel this connectedness for as long as I can. As ineffable as it is, it is better than anything else other than possibly being in the cunts of the others here.

What does Lyn feel? What does she want from me right now? Would she even be willing to tell me the truth if asked?

It isn't that I am insensitive to her intimate desires, it is just that I cannot know them. There are so many layers of impediments to any such understanding that I know to not even try. Any attempt would be cosmically lost in translation.

Her body moves beneath me. Her hands grip me. She moans and sighs. She pumps her cunt up toward me as I push down into her.

The heat, the moisture, the sweat of her body glistening on her brown skin, the aroma her body emits, not stinky, but rather sexually alluring, pushes me on with her. The bed is creaking and shaking. If there is noise outside, I do not hear it. All I know is that Lyn and I are making love. All I know is limited to my body, her body, and a mattress.

I have nothing to prove. All I want is right before me. I have it and I am giving of myself all there is to give. There are no secret agendas.

She gasps and her body tenses. It is exciting. I push her on and she tenses again. This time more intensely. It is an unspoken language and my body is answering. I start slamming into her and then, as she cums yet again, my body answers with cum that flows forth, strong and sure. We are done, exhausted and at peace with each other.

Friday morning arrives. There is much my three girls who are not at school need to be doing, but Lyn and I are walking toward the school. I am far from sure we will even see the girls and far from sure I will recognize them. I am even farther from sure that we will see any parents.

Lyn does not share my doubts. She points out that I will not have to recognize the girls, as they will present themselves. She is also reasonably sure we will see at least one parent.

We are a block away and I am already regretting saying that their parents should come. That was beyond stupid. Lyn has a determined look on her face. I suspect I have a look of sadness.

We have not even gotten to the front of the school. There they stand. The three young girls and two adult women, though hardly old women.

Sir Craig! You come! See Mama, this the man!

If memory serves me, this is May who has spoken. The woman says something in a sharp way to the girl, but it is in their tongue and I have no idea what has been said.

Evidently, Lyn decides she needs to speak and snaps back at the woman, who seemingly recoils from the response. I am totally at a loss to know what is being said.

The conversation continues, now in a more civil-seeming fashion and with five participants as Lyn, the woman, and the three girls are all so engaged. I hear my name mentioned on occasion. It seems some are questions which are then followed by answers.

Katrina, it would seem, sees my distress at not knowing what is transpiring and sidles up to me and, in somewhat tortured English, explains what is happening. I am not sure I can relate it exactly as she told it without it coming out barely intelligible, but this is pretty much what she was trying to say.

May's mother first thinks your Lyn is the wife and says a bad thing to May. Lyn tells her that she is a girlfriend. That you are not married. No one lied. Then there is discussion of how you live. There is discussion about us. Lyn says same as you, we too young. She say, you think May's mother will agree with you. You think the mother will tell the daughter she is foolish.

Well, doesn't she agree with me?

Why you think that? She want to know, will you be good? Now May must take a tricycle to school each day. That eight pesos each way each day, or eighty pesos a week. It three hundred and sixty-eight pesos a month. Then there is the food for lunch, another fifty pesos each day or over a thousand pesos a month. If May's mother not need to pay that, it better for the family. You live close to the school. Lyn say your house is nice. May's mother think, OK, maybe this a good thing.

Oh, Jesus. The other mother, is she yours?

I am doing the math, converting the costs that have been explained to me. The food for the month is coming to twenty-three dollars. The transportation is coming to seven bucks and thirty-six cents. So, for less than thirty-two bucks a month, these women think that giving me their daughters is a good thing? Really?

No, that is Jocelyn's. She agree with May's mother. My mother say, the other mothers will be the ones to decide. It OK with her.

Are they expecting I will just give you a room and money for lunch, or are they saying you should be my girlfriends? I am confused.

Katrina is giggling. *We will be your girlfriends, just like Ate Lyn, Sir.*

Is Lyn agreeing to this?

Unclear, Sir. They still talking... wait a while.

I start doing the math again. I gather the average wage at the moment for unskilled labor is about one hundred and seventy pesos a day. And when it rains, depending on the labor, there is no work on those days. So if one child consumes sixty-eight pesos a day, that is a shitload out of the paycheck and, if there is more than one kid... and there seems to always be far more than one kid... so, as crazy as it seemed a moment ago, it is becoming clearer. The more kids that can be farmed out, the better for the family budget. And if the kid has a shot at a better life in the process, then, hell yes, sure.

And at that moment, everything I thought I knew about parents and parenting just flies out of the window. My head is beginning to hurt.

And just then, a worry surfaces. *Lyn, I need to talk to you for a moment.*

There is a short bit of back and forth between the mothers and her before she turns towards me.

Katrina has been explaining a bit about what is going on. Look, I am concerned that, even if these moms think it's OK now, they could go to the police later and accuse me of a crime.

There no crime! Age of consent is twelve, Sir.

Really?

Under the child abuse act, if the parent sells or trades the child for money, then the parent has broken the law, not you. I not think this is a problem, Sir.¹⁴

¹⁴ This was the state of the law at the time. However, in May of the same year the Philippines passed the Republic Act 9208. That act, in section 6, would not cover what I was being asked to do, **except for Sec. 6 (a)**. Still, that law was not in existence at the time of this meeting on the street. Until that act, an adult having sex with a child, so long as the adult was not a parent or guardian, was legal. It would change soon after.

I'll be damned. Twelve?

Yes, Sir.

OK, never mind.

Yes, Sir. Sir, you still not want them, correct?

They are children... too young.

The mothers, they think it OK.

Yes, Katrina was telling me that.

Sir, two of them, there is no father and many children. It a great hardship to keep their girls in school. Maybe if they not be home, another can also go to school. You see?

Just because of the tricycle and the food?

No, Sir. There are books, uniforms... even free schools cost money. It OK, Sir. I will explain to Lexi and you will allow Lexi to bring friends home too when you get back. It OK.

Lyn, maybe the mothers have older daughters instead of these? If we are to cover their expenses and house them, maybe it is better if we have the older ones?

Sir, these are the oldest.

I don't know.

Sir, I told them you not want, but the mothers tell me this sad truth. My heart is sad for them. Please allow.

I am struggling with this. It just seems wrong. It will create a mess at the house. I don't want twelve year old girlfriends.

I tell you what. Invite the mothers and their children to our house for a simple supper tonight. Nothing fancy. All three mothers will have to stand up and explain to Mel, Janna and Lexi why I should allow their daughters to stay with us. If our three agree, then I will agree. If the mothers don't come with their families, then I absolutely do not agree. We will pay for the tricycles and today's lost wages.

That good, Sir. I will tell them. Sir, give me five hundred pesos for the tricycles and wages.

I pull the bills out and hand them to her as she sets about explaining what I have decided.

The result, once it is explained, is we have three little girls jumping around in glee and two mothers kissing my cheeks.

Lyn, why are they so happy? I just made it harder for them. There are three more to convince.

Sir, you showed that you honor those who live with you. You seek harmony and happiness in the family. And you respect them by providing for the lost money. These are good things and they respect you for this. Sir, you make a good decision. I am proud of you.

There is no sense telling her that it wasn't the reason I made the suggestion. This culture is so different than any I have known that I feel like I am just bumping around without knowing the consequences of my actions.

Lyn and I walk back to the house in silence. There is little to say and an encyclopedia of things to discuss, but no way to do it. I am intimately close to Lyn. I have real feelings for her and no way to communicate in a meaningful way with her.

That feeling of isolation is chewing at my gut. I am surrounded by my girls, and I am alone at the same time. I suspect I will live my life both surrounded and alone if I stay here. And that is more than a passing worry. It is a problem.

Back at the house, I leave Lyn to talk to Mel and Janna. Once again, that sense of being alone is reinforced as I sit down and try to read a book.

There appears to be a great deal of commotion among the three girls and I ask for an explanation. They look at me as if I am simply stupid. There is a party both tonight and tomorrow. It's a big deal.

There is no party tonight. What are you talking about?

Jana seems pretty ticked off as she explains it. *This is Friday. No school tomorrow. The daughters are coming to live with us. So we have a party with the families. Why you not know this?*

Why are you sure the girls are coming?

You invite them, so they will accept, of course!

And all I can muster is, *Ah, I see.*

It has become a play of manners... Filipino manners. Each plays a part. Each knows what is expected of each part. I am learning, as with the use of Ate and Kuya, sister and brother, being used between technically unrelated individuals, in a manner of speaking, all Filipinos are family. It's just a question of who lives in what house. 'Family' appears to be a fluid thing.

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Lexi arrives home looking a little frightened and is immediately surrounded by Jana and Lyn. Thirty minutes later, her arms are around me, her head on my chest as she asks, *You promise I can bring home friends when you get back? Promise?*

Yes, I promise.

Me and Mel with you tonight. OK?

OK.

Not the girls, OK?

Agreed.

Good. Craig, we will be good to the girls. It will be OK.

I am not sure how it happens. One moment, Lexi is holding on to me and the next it is me holding on to her. She is only two or three years older than these three young kids. Only two or three years...

Two hours later, there are three additional women, one man and eleven kids. So that makes it twenty in total. Need me to explain? My four, the three women, plus a husband, makes is $4+1+3+1=9$ and then you add the eleven kids and you get twenty.

So, in a way, just as a matter of the number, it is a party. The youngest kids are under three years of age. The married couple, Jocelyn's family, has four kids which includes Jocelyn. Katrina's mom has three children plus Katrina. May has a younger brother and a sister. The reason Katrina's mom wasn't there this morning is that she was both working and was caring for her two year old at the same time. I feel like an idiot.

Just as Lyn and Lexi told me it would be, it is an evening of manners. Respectful statements, smiles, kind words, and compliments.

I have known some of the less well off in Southie¹⁵, where barely a sentence can be made without a 'fuck' inserted somewhere. Here, these upright poor folk would have cut their tongues out before a foul word passed their lips. These people are making what seems to me hard choices, but there is dignity here at the very same time.

I might well be feeling isolated, but I am also feeling honored to know these people. I am not as good a person as are they. And that is something else I am chewing on.

There is no requirement to bed the little girls. They can say I am their boyfriend without anything really happening, and so it seems like I will have three extra lodgers. It seems nuts to me. Last night my four were opposed as I was to this, now they are in favor of it.

I can make no sense of the matter at all. On top of all else, I am being referred to by the other kids, the five little ones who will not stay with us, as 'Tito Craig. I am told that means 'Uncle Craig.' In a matter of minutes I have become a family member, and one to be honored by the children.

Financially, my plan has not sprung a leak. The additional fiscal hit is small.

Looking at this in a different way, I have sprung a leak. I now have a larger family than I have ever experienced in my life. I gather that these mothers, their children, and the one father, will all now see me as relatively immediate family, as will possibly Mel's father's family tomorrow and Jana's family next week.

I pull Jana away from the others. I just need someone to talk with. This feeling of isolation, being both surrounded by so many and alone at the same time, is worrying me.

Jana, I have not been here two weeks yet and I now have seven living with me. This has to stop. Please tell me how it stops.

¹⁵ 'A part of Boston on the Southern End of the City. Home to **Castle** Island, partially Dotty, and indeed the living place of many Mics with a love for liquor. "I'm Irish, I drink, I scream my disdain for the Yankees when the Red Sox play Philly. **Don't tell me** I'm from **South Boston**, I'm from fucking Southie."

When the house is full. Then it stops. The bigger the house, the more we can fit. It is fair that way. There is room and money for food, so there room for the seven. See?

Maybe. Are we out of room now?

Maybe yes. We will see.

The party breaks up at 11:30 with the babes basically bouncing off the wall, they are so damned tired. Mel and Lyn situate our three new girls in a bedroom together on the second floor. This doesn't seem to be a problem. They are not clamoring to be deflowered and I have no such plans.

There is nothing to clean up as all lent a hand in that process before leaving. We just lock up the house and retire to the bedrooms.

Lexi and Mel are here with me and that works just fine. It's not sex that I am needing to have with Mel, it is just being 'with' her. Every day I have been here, to this very day, I have had sex with one of them. That is sort of nuts. It goes against everything my world expects and assumes about male-female relations. The guy is to be in serious need of sex while the female doesn't think it's a big deal at all.

Mel appears to be more than ready for some action. I am not. So that is topsy-turvy, right? It's close to midnight and I am just tired. I say as much to Mel; the result is less than what I might hope for. She is feeling rejected. I pull her into my arms with the intent to just comfort her. Mel has different plans.

For the second night in a row, my manhood is being coaxed to attention in spite of the owner's intent. I can't say I am all that firm as Mel mounts me from above, but she does seem to have me inside of her hot cunt.

That seems to do it, and the expansion to fully inflated status follows quickly.

By any standard, Mel is a young woman. Young and pretty, sweet and self-effacing, the girl has a great deal going for her. What she sees in me beyond a life-line is unclear. But love and attachment can grow on rockier soil. I choose not to judge any of these girls harshly.

For whatever reason, Mel is riding me in a dedicated fashion. No dilatory attempt, this. She wants to get off. She is working her way towards that goal as she bounces on my now rigid pole. I am doing little, other than to match her rhythm. It seems to be enough, as she is cumming.

The feeling on my member is satisfying but not encouraging a response. I suspect I am really just too tired as I lie on my back taking it all in but doing little myself.

Lexi has been a bystander in all this. Now she leans in, facing me and meeting her lips to mine as she takes two firm grips on my head.

There is an urgency to Lexi. I can feel it and, in some way, I sense it. In that second way, she is imparting that urgency to me. My balls tighten and cum shoots into Mel's cunt.

And that is Lexi. Somehow she reads Mel's world and figures out what is missing. I really do not understand Lexi, but she is a very special girl.

Saturday morning finds my original four and the three new ones all pulling together in anticipation of the pending arrival of Mel's father's family. They will be here shortly after noontime. I choose to make myself scarce via time with a book.

I don't have much to report from the visit. Mel's dad has no English. He does want to sit and drink beer with me. I gather that we are bonding via this procedure, but little of any substance occurs. The guy's two wives seem to be interrogating my girls, but the result seems to be approval on their part. All are happy, a meal is consumed and the rented videoke is used far longer than I would have preferred it be.

In the end, I am able to mark Saturday as a victory. I have been accepted by one of Mel's parents, her polygamous father with his two wives. Mel is less than happy, as her mother and she are now formally estranged. That makes my sense of victory less an 'us' thing and more a personal success.

I take Mel aside to talk this through. If her mother matters that much, she should consider leaving me. I will understand. What I cannot abide is her mother interfering with how I live my life. Mel leaving is one thing. Her mother messing with what happens here is quite another.

She gets it and does not want to leave. She is just sad.

Tonight, our guests are gone by 10PM, but cleanup takes the girls another two hours after our guests have left. I am not helping and that is at their request.

Instead, I am sitting on a chair on the balcony of the bedroom enjoying the cooler evening air. It is not quiet out here tonight, but I am above it both literally and figuratively. The noise does not rise very much this high up and so it is not at a disturbing level. I know it is there but am not rudely impacted by it.

This time alone, away from the others, is also an 'alone time,' but it does not carry the negative connotations of the feeling of isolation I feel when surrounded by others.

This being alone, is calming. It does give me time to reflect on how fast everything has been moving. I desperately need to slow things down or this just isn't going to work, no matter the promises I have made.

I need to have a stake in the ground. For now and until I return, no more changes. I don't want to play tourist now. I can do that when I get back. What I want to do is 'nothing.' Sure, I need to see my surroundings a bit more, but I want to just hang out as well, and make sure just being here, without any new crap, is going to be OK for me. Sometimes too much activity can hide the obvious everyday issues. I need time to just 'be.'

I hear the bedroom door open and less than a minute later Jana is sitting next to me.

You OK, Craig?

I think so.

Mel say you think maybe she should leave. That true?

Hub, no, not exactly. Mel is sad she can't bring her mother here. I told her that if she can't do this without her mother then maybe she needs to leave. I can accept it if she leaves, but can't accept her mother interfering with things here. She says she understands and wants to stay. I never said I want her to leave

Ah, OK. Yes I see that.

Maybe I should talk to Mel now?

Talk to her in the morning. I think that is soon enough.

OK.

Craig, no problems with my family. Promise.

Yes, you told me that before.

Sir, Jocelyn wants to know when they become your girlfriends.

What does she mean?

Sex, Sir. When you have them in your bed.

Ha! Maybe in a few years.

Sir, you make a joke?

No. Why?

Then it not a good idea.

Jana, I don't care. They are here. That's enough for now. I want no more changes until I return. No one new in my bed, no one new living in the house. That just has to be the way it is for now. Those girls can argue as long as they want. I just don't care. Things just have to settle down now until I leave. When

I get back, I will sort out what to do with the three children and with Lexi's request to bring home her friends. ... but even then, I am not promising anything is going to change.

My family can still come next week?

Yes, that is the only new thing I am allowing.

Thank you. Sir, it is late. Come to bed now.

It very much is late. The bed awaits. Jana is with me tonight. I make no move on her and she does not make one on me. We just sleep.

Sunday morning sees the three youngest girls plus Mel gone from the house before I am up. I am told they have gone to celebrate Mass at St. Michael's. I gather the church is close by. Lexi informs me that the young ones were excited to go today as they can walk to the church from here — no tricycle required, though Jana tells me that Jocelyn's father has a motorcycle and all five ride on it to church every Sunday.

I have seen such things here and I find the whole concept appalling, but it certainly does happen.

Still, the other two would have had to take a tricycle.

I ask Lexi why she didn't go with her sister and all she does is snicker a bit. I can't say I am a good, or even practicing, Catholic, but the disdain she is showing is more than a little unexpected. It confuses me and so I gently press the matter.

Lexi looks right at me and asks, *You believe it? Really?*

So, Lexi, you don't? What don't you believe?

It a scam! You know it. The Priests... they say have children, no condoms, no pills, but enjoying sex a sin. They not married, right? So why do they sneak and have sex? If money is the devil's tool, why do they collect money from the poor who not have much? They have more money than the poor they take from. I see it. It true. They say the Archbishop in Cebu, he live in a palace. That is very wrong. It a scam, that all.

I don't have anything to offer in reply other than to thank her for her honest answer.

Lexi and I will get along just fine, but it is pretty clear that she won't win any Miss Congeniality award among other Filipinas. She is not a go along, get along gal.

Lyn has just served me what I am told is a traditional Filipino breakfast. In a way it is pretty similar to a traditional American breakfast. You substitute fried rice for the potato, and a sweet cured ham (she calls it tocino) for the side of meat you get in the States, along with the fried egg and you have it. It is close enough to what I know as breakfast that I find it a pretty darn close to comfort food. Given the fact that there has been very little that I have eaten here that can so qualify, this is a nice exception.

As I eat my meal, I explain to Lyn and Lexi what Jana already knows about how I want the rest of the week to go. They seem happy with my decision. All I hear is from Lyn, who says nothing more than, *Good*.

Jana tells me she has spoken with Mel this morning and thinks it is OK now. But that triggers Lexi... *What you tell her?*

I say, Craig not want you to leave.

Why you need to say that?

Little sister, your Ate is sad that your mother can't come. Craig said she needs to decide, either accept his decision or go back to mama. She think Sir want her to leave. She is wrong.

She say that? She say Craig wants her to leave?

Correct, she say that.

She is buang¹⁶. OK, you do right, but I will talk to her too. Craig, what you do today and the next days?

¹⁶ Foolish or gently crazy. Not stark raving mad, just off her or his nut.

My intent is to do a little riding around during the days, looking at the surrounding area, and grabbing maybe two more books from the bookstore at the Mall.

I had initially planned to see Davao. I really don't intend to right now, but the girls tell me that, while it is safe to take the bus, it is not smart to take the motorcycle all the way there. And anyway, they want to know 'why' I want to see Davao. Am I unhappy with this place?

When I explain that I am just curious, I am urged to hold off on that until I return from the States. As that was my actual plan, for now we make a plan for tomorrow to see Polomolok, Tupi, and Koronadal City. They want to go to Lake Sebu as well and are pushing me to agree.

I doubt we can see it all in one day and so the plan changes to a two-day event with a stay over in Koronadal City, leaving the visit to Lake Sebu on the second day. But the problem is that I can't take all the 'older' girls with me on the bike, and Lexi has school anyway.

The decision is to see if I can rent a car for three days.... because on Wednesday they want to see a 'resort' near Glan on Sarangani Bay. I mention that I have just told them I didn't want to do much. The response is... they agree and this isn't too much.

The girls get busy checking on the car rental matter via their contacts at the Sydney Hotel.

An hour later, it turns out that a car rental does not appear to be possible, but a rental of a van and driver is, even with the stay out of town on one of the nights.

With an overnight trip, Mel says she won't come with us. Lexi and the three kids all have school, so they won't be coming. It will just be Lyn, Jana and me. And though I don't want to take the bike with both behind me, a van seems excessive. I ask if there isn't some other option other than the van and I am told there isn't.

It seems a bit fishy, but I decide to go with the flow. I don't know enough about the place and how things are done to push the issue.

As to today, I decide to go back to the mall and purchase another couple of books. My plan is fine as it goes, but these girls have their own agenda. I am asked to wait until the churchgoers return because others also want to go to the mall. It is a heads up that I am no longer simply able to make plans for myself without considering others.

But, I can't take them all on the bike. They will have to take a tricycle, so why wait? The answer is that it is best if we all go at the same time. It sounds nuts. However, it is also clear that I need a four-wheeled conveyance going forward. I might like the motorcycle, but the number of bodies here argues for an alternative means of transport. Resolving that will have to wait until I return from the States.

I find it fascinating how quickly the issues of normal life in a place become clear and must be considered, once the decision to stay has been made. I am no longer a tourist. I was a tourist when I arrived, but that status has been lost. I am now a neophyte expat.

Yet, when I got the motorcycle, even though the girls were already here, I was still just thinking about me. They, however, are making it clear that I need to factor their lives into my plans.

So that is what I am doing, only to realize that I need a van! I have just before been thinking that this current trip doesn't need one, but it is what I will need to purchase, and that means I will be taking a great many trips when it will seem excessive, for the simple reason that I am not going to purchase a fleet of vehicles for the various size needs I will have on any given day.

The thought of needing a van is nuts, humorous, embarrassing and all too real.

4

But the purchase of a van will have to wait.

So will the trip to the mall.

Lexi and Mel are having what charitably can be called a discussion but is more like a donnybrook. Mel is crying and Lexi is yelling. As the yelling is not in English, I have no clue until Jana and Lyn explain that Lexi is telling her older sister to grow a set of balls and grow the hell up.

The three young kids are a little freaked out and Lyn decides she needs to talk to them. I suspect that she does. This place all of a sudden doesn't seem as stable as they possibly had thought it was.

As to the fight, I decide that this probably needs my intercession. Lexi may be right, but she is not going to resolve anything with her manner of arguing with her sister.

Mel! Lexi! Stop! And listen to me. Lexi, don't say anything. Allow me to talk. — Mel, I want you here. I want you to stay. Are you clear on that?

She just continues to cry.

Damn it, Mel, answer me. Do you understand that I want you to stay?

She seems to indicate nonverbally that she understands.

OK, now, do you want to stay?

Once again she seems to indicate that she does.

OK, then why the fuck are you crying? What is the problem?

You say I can't see my mama.

I did no such thing. I said she can't come here. You can see her whenever you like. Just make sure you come back. Is that clear?

What if she tell me, I not to return?

If you do not return I will be angry with you. Clear?

OK. Yes. ... Sorry I make a mess. Go to the mall. They are waiting.

I am walking out to the motorcycle with both Lexi and Jana right behind me and asking me what just happened. I stop.

What's the problem?

It is Jana who speaks, You tell me, you OK if she leaves, I explain to her this morning that you want her to stay, but she should go if she must. Now you change it. Why?

Look, she may still just go and not come back. If she does, I will not do a thing about it. But she needed to hear me say I wanted her. That is what I did. Lexi, I know if she goes to your mother, that she might not come back. All I said was that I would be angry with her if she did that. Just like her mother will be angry if she does come back. ... Now either way, someone will be angry with her. Before, the way she saw it, her mother was the only one who would be angry if Mel didn't do as told. All I did was even the matter.

Jana seems confused but Lexi isn't. She is smiling. I look at her and ask, OK?

Yes, OK. It is good what you do. I not see what you see. Yes, she will visit mama sometimes but will always come back now.

Jana is still confused, but as Lexi is OK with it, Jana decides she is too.

The girls all go to see a Disney movie, *101 Dalmations II*, which has just come to the theater here today. I venture into the National Bookstore in search of some light reading. I am hoping for a good detective novel. Something that allows complete escape without reference to my life in any way. I want a non-jarring and pleasant escape from reality.

I am not sure how well I have done as I pick up Michael Connelly's *City of Bones*, *Constable's Run* by Laurie Moore, and *A Knife in the Back* by Bill Crider. I hope at least one of these will be a good read.

There is a little kiosk in the mall selling coffee drinks. I purchase a flavored silly coffee type thing that is some takeoff of a Starbucks drink and settle down on a chair to wait out the movie. Settling into a too small, and not too damn comfortable, chair, I open one of the books for a first read of a few pages.

Anyway, that is the plan, but I no sooner sit down and get one page read when a woman, maybe in her thirties, comes up to me and asks if I am alone. Not thinking much about it, and thinking that I am alone until the movie gets out, I foolishly say, *Yes*.

There are unoccupied chairs at the little table I have just placed my drink upon, but there are other tables, as of yet unoccupied, with their own complement of chairs. She sits down at my table.

I could have said something then. I didn't. Why should I? I haven't done anything wrong.

You like the Philippines, Sir?

Yes, I like what I have seen here.

Where you from?

The USA.

Ab, nice. California?

No, Boston.

Where that?

The other side of the country.

She looks confused but that is not enough to push her off course.

It nice there?

Yes, it is nice there.

We appear to be playing 20 questions and all I want to do is drink my coffee concoction and read a book. She, however, is leaning in and getting into my 'space'.

Maybe you are looking for a girlfriend?

I already have seven girlfriends.

In the USA?

No, here.

Oh! You are teasing? Yes?

No. I am not teasing. Five are here, now, at the movie theater. Two are back at my house.

So, friends, not real girlfriends? Correct?

Are you asking if I make love to each of them?

No need to be rude!

But that is what you are asking, correct?

Yes, OK. You are correct.

I make love to four of them. Three are too young and I have not touched them. I just take care of them.

I am not sure how to explain it. It is not that she is going to call the cops, but she is offended and angry. Exactly why cannot be determined. But then I think I do know, as she says, *I think this is not true. You say you are alone! Why you just say you not want me!?*

Miss, you are good looking and I did not lie. I am alone now because they are watching the movie. Later I will not be alone. If you misunderstood my answer, I am truly sorry.

So it true, you have four girlfriends?

Yes.

You married?

No.

So these not mistresses, correct?

I am not sure about this. Please explain... I know of two definitions for Mistress. The first is a lover when already married. The second is a lover you live with even though you are not married. Which do you mean?

The first... married and another.

OK. I have no mistresses. I have girlfriends.

And they know about each other?

I already told you, five are together at the movies and two are at home. Yes, they know about each other.

How that? They will fight to make you their own, I think.

It is a reasonable assumption, but all know, if they fight, they have to leave. So there are no fights.

I think that not right. If I am there, I tell them to leave.

And as soon as you did, I would tell you to leave.

Why, I will be the best to take care of you!

First, you can't know that. Second, you don't know if you will like me. Third, I refuse to have anyone control how I live and with whom I make love. So, fourth, it will never happen.

You say there are three you not love?

I said there are three with whom I do not have sexual relations. I never said I did or did not love them.

Don't be difficult.

Sorry if you think I am. That is not my desire.

OK, so why are the three with you?

I am not sure I can explain it. But if you are here when the movie is over, you can ask them.

I do not think they will admit they are your girlfriends.

You can ask them. Maybe you are right.

Yes, I am sure of it!

You say two more are your lovers?

Yes, the two older ones are lovers. But they are not old. They are older than the three. The two oldest are at the house.

How old the two here?

Seventeen and fifteen.

Oh my G! Truly?

Yes.

This is wrong!

Maybe, but not illegal.

Maybe you are right, but they are too young for you! Ha, they not know how to take care of you! They cannot take care of a house. You need a woman for this! You make a big mistake!

Tell that to them... really, please try. I want to see what happens.

You must tell them to leave!

Is that an order? Really? Do you think you can order me?

This not your country!

You are right, this is not my country. It is their country. They chose this. Tell them. Argue Filipina to Filipina. I really want to see what happens.

You say, you have a house. How that? Foreigners not allowed.

Hub? What do you mean, not allowed?

You not allowed to own land here.

I never said I owned the house. I have leased it.

Oh, I see. Where this house?

I am told it is in City Heights. It is near Lagao National High School.

I really don't want to know shit about this woman, but I have to turn off the question machine.

Are you single?

Yes, of course.

Truly single or, maybe, separated?

OK, yes, separated.

How long have you been separated?

Eight years.

Do you have children?

Yes.

How many?

Two.

I feel like I am pulling teeth here. Forthcoming with answers, she sure isn't.

How old are they?

Ten and eight.

Now the picture is coming into focus.

Do you work?

Yes, I am the bookkeeper at my cousin's store.

My questioning continues as I kill time until my girls arrive. It is painfully clear that this gal isn't leaving and that I am not going to get any reading done. Better my asking the questions than having her do so.

The gal, I never got her name and she does not have mine, has a high school diploma and finished two years of college before, at 18, she got pregnant and married the guy. College was not completed and two years later her second kid comes along, and the husband takes a powder at about the same time. She hasn't seen him since before the birth of the second kid.

She is twenty-eight, and looks just fine, but I am not looking to add anyone and, if I was, it would not be her. Just like Mel's mom, this one would create a real mess.

I understand her need. It just so happens that it doesn't fit with mine. I am not saying that she's a bad person, or that she might not make a guy a great partner, but it just won't be me.

I have always been able to say that... that some gal just wasn't going to be OK for me ... even when there was no girl I was seeing. I might be lonely at times, but I know not to do something stupid just because I am lonely. Of course, now it is an embarrassment of riches that I am dealing with at home.

I am running out of questions and have long ago finished my drink. At the moment I am asking her about how she celebrated Christmas. I don't really care, but I just need to keep her talking and not asking questions herself when Jana texts me.

Where U?

*At the coffee kiosk on the same floor as
you near the cellphone vendors.*

OK, we coming.

I have company but I did not invite.

You OK?

Yes.

That them?

Yes, they are coming.

We are sitting maybe thirty paces from the entrance to the theater and so it doesn't take long for the girls to appear. If I wasn't reasonably sure I was safe legally, I might have been more than a little concerned when the three thirteen-year-olds come into view with smiles as they trot towards me, Jana and Lexi following at a more restrained pace.

My new acquaintance patiently waits as all assemble and then waits some more for me to introduce her, which is awkward as I don't have her name.

Lexi proves to be a unique girl, sensing something is up, (she has a nose for this somehow) introduces herself and asks, evidently, for a name, as I hear *Janeth*. The rest I am not catching at all as it is in their language.

I can see Jana being introduced and the three young ones.

Janeth is seemingly being cautious as she starts to query the girls. Jana is answering now as Lexi, though right next to me, texts me...

Do we tell the truth?

Yes.

OK. She is like Mama I think. Correct?

Yes.

The conversation continues on with Janeth asking Katrina a question. I see my young one asking Lexi and Jana a question and Lexi answer in a clear voice. My best guess is that the word was given to just be honest, because there was a flood of words from Jocelyn, and Katrina following that, and then more questions from Janeth.

Janeth gives me a weird, questioning look but then turns her head and asks Jana a question. Jana seems to give a forthright answer but maybe Janeth is not convinced because she asks Lexi a question.

I can tell by Lexi's face that she thinks the question has already been asked and answered.

OK, so Janeth returns to ask May a question. Well now, May seems to be a bit pissed off and rude in her tone of voice. Lexi snaps at her. Katrina addresses Janeth in a more conciliatory manner.

I have no idea what is being said. Does it show on my face? Maybe it does because Lexi texts,

I will tell you later.

Thanks.

Janeth seems to give up talking to the young ones, or maybe she has gotten all she needs from them. She now turns back to Lexi who seems to unload on the gal.

I do hear *National High School* from Lexi followed by Jana saying something about a college. Once again I get a look from Janeth.

There is more conversation but it seems to be desultory rather than challenging. At one point, Jana is shrugging her shoulders, but Lexi gives a clear, *No*. And then in English, I guess so I can hear it, she says, *Craig say no more. No one else at least for the next few months. Maybe he will change his mind in June. That right?*

She has turned to me and so I guess it is my turn.

Yes, that is right. Absolutely no one else for now.

Does she want to be added? This one, who told me she would kick the others out if she got in? She has to be kidding herself thinking that I would even entertain her desires now. And now for the benefit of my girls, because there is really no other reason to say another word...

Janeth, correct? ... OK, Janeth. Do I understand you are asking to join my girls?

She isn't saying a damned thing.

Jana, did she ask?

Yes, she say you pay for school for all. You take care of the young ones, make sure they go to school and not take them to bed. You must be someone very special. Maybe she should join us.

Jana, before you got here, she told me that if she was mine, she would kick the rest of you out. And now I turn to Janeth. You said it. Did you tell them that?

Janeth is crying. How I know it be good for me and my children if I join? I never hear of this type of thing before. Maybe it wrong, but maybe it be good for me. These girls, they very lucky.

Yes, they are lucky and I am done now. No more additions.

Maybe later? Maybe in June?

Janeth, your ten-year-old... boy or girl?

Girl.

So, consider that, if you were with me, your daughter would be Lexi's age in five years.

*I think Janeth is about to answer, but Lexi beats her response by adding, *May and the others want in Craig's bed now. He says 'no' now but we not know when he will say 'yes.'* Maybe long before they are fifteen.*

*Janeth's head snaps back to me. All I know is that my young ones are way too young. I suspect fifteen is the very bottom, but I never said anything about that to anyone. Lexi had every right to say what she did. I just smile at Janeth and say what I have been saying all along... *All I know is that they are too young now. I have not said anything else in this matter. ... But there is no sense trying to scare you away, because I am just not going to add anyone else at this point.**

But you might in June?

I told Lexi, I would consider it based on someone or ones she might ask me about, but as a general rule, other than that, no one else is going to be added. Maybe you would be a danger to my girls, maybe not. But it doesn't matter

*because I am not going to change my mind. ... Well, it is time for us to go.
Nice meeting you.*

And I get up as some words are passed between Jana and Janeth. Ah, they are trading cellphone numbers. I don't see the merit in this, but what the hell, I am not going to micromanage.

The ride back is quiet, as I only have one passenger with me and Lexi is not feeling chatty.

You know, everyone here, it seems to me, is fighting a steep uphill battle to survive. Each is looking for a firm foothold. I might not be a traditional or standard foothold, but I do represent a real one. That seems to be enough. Morals, right and wrong, prior assumptions and prejudices get thrown over as soon as that reality takes hold.

But, as I said, it is pretty much everyone here and I sure as hell can't be the answer for many at all. I already have three I ought not to have.

I think all who are here have figured that out... with the possible exception of Lexi's need, and even that is unclear.

5

Jana and Lexi are busy telling Lyn and Mel what transpired. I ignore it and settle down with the first of the three books.

I barely got a page read while at the Mall. I only get two more read now before the three young ones descend on me. Katrina seems to be the spokesperson for the moment.

How old we be?

Hub?

You always say, we too young. How old?

Ab. I see. ... I don't really know. Lexi is fifteen. So maybe when you are fifteen.

Not fair!

Oh? Why is it not fair?

Not a one of them has a reasonable answer and in the end following some good natured teasing and giggles, the matter is laid aside for another day.

And with that I am finally able to get some reading done – uninterrupted by all until the call to come for supper.

Supper starts out with news that most of our trip needs to be shelved. There is ‘unrest’ north of us and a trip to Lake Sebu is a bad idea. Lyn has heard of some problems with mining operations forcing T’Boli natives off their land in the area. She tells me things are very tense there right now.

We can do Polomolok by a public transport van. They evidently run back and forth all day long and the cost is minimal. That also means that Mel can come too, as it is a day trip.

The excursion to Tupi and Koronadal City, while not as dangerous is also something that maybe I should put off for now. I ask if there is enough to see in Polomolok and am told that Dole, as in Dole Pineapple (that same company that stole Hawaii and made it part of the USA) has a huge processing plant there and that we can take a tour.

And so, from what would have been a pricey prolonged trip, we have morphed into one inexpensive day trip. I will hang out here, read more of my books, and just settle in. This is far more to my liking.

In a way, I get a sense that living here is going to force me to see the USA as it is seen without the gauze of jingoistic patriotic fever masking the shitty things.

Dole is an important employer here and very important to the local economy. On the other hand, its history is somewhat on the rape and pillage side of the ledger.

The USA itself has bloody hands here, especially here on Mindanao where it fought a bloody campaign against the Moros, the Muslims here, who had, for all intents and purposes, never lost to the Spanish in over three hundred and fifty years of attempts by Spain to control the island.

The best the local Spanish government could do was to sign a treaty with the local sultans on Mindanao and ‘get along’ with them. Of course, I don’t suspect Spain provided that fact to the USA when they ceded the islands to them at the end of the Spanish-American War.

The result, by most estimates, left two hundred thousand Filipinos dead by the hands of US marines. The fact that Americans are welcome here today, in part is more due to the contrast of how the USA behaved following those first few bloody years and how Japan behaved when they arrived in 1942.

While all that rattles around in my head, I am about to tour a Dole operation. History of the past here is very close to the reality of today.

And so, as my mind wanders down the odd historical pathway, supper is completed and I return to my book.

The girls are busy. I am not sure what they are doing and I suspect I don't need to know.

This is a good thing. Let them do what they see the need to do without involving me.

Having companionship is a good thing, but I like my personal space. I don't want to feel the need to be with others, any others, much of the time. Let them be busy.

This Sunday evening is quietly giving me what I want. I am in a comfortable place. I need to attend to nothing. I have a book and a good place to enjoy it. Yes, to enjoy it in a place that I can afford and live much like a Pasha.

So long as these girls don't bring me problems; so long as we are done with others finding ways to climb aboard; so long as I can come to terms with the brutal nature of this clan-like culture; I could not have picked a better place to settle down.

I will enjoy my remaining days here before returning to Boston. There I need to wind down all that remains, so as to return here with no matters left hanging. It is virtually impossible to manage anything there from here.

At ten in the evening, Jana comes to me and suggests that it is bedtime. I can take a hint and put the book down.

Craig, I think we all learn something today. The young ones will not push anymore. The rest of us, we know we are very lucky we meet you first. We make sure. We not make problems for you. ... Mel say she very stupid before. Her mother is wrong and she will be good now.

Why? What has happened?

It Ate Janeth. We think there many like her. We think she see what we have and think she need the same. The young ones see that maybe they not be here if you say no to them like you say no to Janeth.

OK, I see now. Yes, I think you may be right.

I get into bed with this seventeen-year-old, whom I do not have to sweet talk or cajole. I don't have to lie. I don't have to hide my true age from her.

Jana is here for one reason only. She wants to be in my bed. She wants to open her thighs wide for me. She is not afraid of the intrusion of my cock into her cunt. She wants it.

As I slide in, a big grin spreads across her face. She welcomes my presence inside her. She seeks to bring me in deeper. She wants my thrusts to slam into her. She does not want gentle caring. She wants my passion for her.

Passion, it is passion that she needs to feel more than anything else. Passion felt is the tangible measure of emotional reassurance that she has place here for more than a moment.

Passion tells her that I do more than allow her to stay but, rather, that I desire her, need her, want her.

Her eyes burn into mine. She is seeking to see that passion in my face, in my eyes. Yes, sure, she was here with me last night but, last night there was no passion, only sleep.

Her hands grip my arms firmly, unwilling to let go for a second.

Her hips tip up to meet mine.

Her cunt is awash in her own secretions. Sloppy sounds emanate from that region as I pound her cunt ... the juices coating my loins, my hips, my thighs.

Her face is glowing with perspiration. Little beads form on her upper lip.

I am perspiring and trying not to drip onto Jana as we press on.

Jana weighs half my weight. I am above her and she does not want it any other way.

If she wants my passion, I feel her passion, knowing that for whatever reason, her passion is real. There is no reason to doubt her desire.

I hear, *Please, please, please.*

I am not sure what she is asking for and am not going to ask.

Her small, thin frame is mine, freely given and whether it is right to take her, or not, she is mine. She is mine as I slide effortlessly, and repeatedly, into her.

I smile at her. She smiles back. I cum. She smiles again.

It is that simple.

There was no seduction. There are no awkward moments.

Jana slides off the bed, grabs a towel from the bathroom and cleans me up while kissing me, over and over again. There is giggling. There is teasing. Jana is a happy girl.

The lights are turned off and we snuggle in with each other for a bit before the combined body heat forces us to find a bit of distance as we find sleep waiting for us.

Jana is up before me this morning. My shower awaits her relinquishing of the bathroom. She is quick about it. My shower follows easily enough.

Lexi and the three young ones have to go to school within the hour, Lexi leaving a good 45 minutes earlier due to the distance she must travel. And then... it is quiet. The three that remain decide to go about tasks within the house and let me be. They are cooking and cleaning.

It is not an accident. It is intentional and much connected to the reality as Jana spoke of it last night. If it wasn't completely clear before, yesterday's event reinforces their belief that their job is to

keep me cared for and happy. To give me no reason to be dissatisfied.

It makes sense to me, but will it last, or is it something that they can keep going for just a day or two? Only time will tell and I will not gainsay their efforts. If it is a long term thing, so much the better.

I return to my reading.

At some point, Mel brings me a snack of fried sweet potato in a caramelized coating and a glass of buko juice, before withdrawing to allow me to enjoy my snack in peace. Is this what it is going to be from now on or is this based on a fear of my turning against them if everything is not 'just right'?

In point of fact, the next five days are much the same. While each night a different girl slides under the sheets with me, each day is pretty much the same. Oh, yes, we do go to Polomolok to see the Dole operation. We do go out to a beach 'resort' which is both nice and underwhelming... but the main thread is that these girls are dedicated to 'not screw things up.'

Saturday, February 8th, does come and, with it, Jana's family arrives. Everyone is nice though few have any English. We have no incidents. That, in and of itself, is welcome news. No one other than Mel and Lexi's mom is pushing back. And that doesn't seem to be a real problem.

It is odd. The first few days here were ones of unending whiplash. This last week has been the exact opposite. This, this quiet life, is what my girls are showing me is to become the new normal.

And so, even with my impending departure on Tuesday, the 11th, no one is acting like there is any crisis or concern. They keep peace and harmony in the house right up to Monday night.

While I will need some hobbies to keep me busy, I hope they are right. It is what I was hoping for.

During the day Monday, I give Lyn enough money to cover all expenses until June. I am quite sure she has never seen so much money in her life. While I can text her internationally, I am not sure whether she will be able to text me back. If I don't get texts from her, I will have to try calling her. That will be expensive and a bit of a challenge.

Other than these Nokia cellphones, we have no way to keep in touch. Lyn has never used the Internet and I am not going to be able to bridge that divide now.

So, with a trip to the bank, I hand her money to put into her own account which we open then and there. She can take out what she needs, when she needs it, while not risking having it all stolen, as well might happen if she just has it all outside a bank account. I have her account number as well as my own here; I can wire funds as needed into either account.

So, Lyn can now pay the rent, utilities, cellphone loads, groceries, sundries. She can pay for the college classes I want them to sign up for. The girls know what they want to take now, but registration is not until May.

Monday night I have an unusual request from them all. They all want to join me in the bedroom. When I say all, I mean 'all'. The young ones want to join us.

No, Lyn. No.

Craig, please allow it. The young ones, they are scared you not really want them.

I am not having sex with them and I am not having sex with anyone else with them in the room. So how is that going to work?

Lyn smiles. *You have sex with me first, then we have everyone join us to sleep.*

Oh hell, I guess it will be OK. And so, with my agreement, Lyn withdraws to inform the rest of them.

Ending my stay here in GenSan, inside Lyn, makes all sorts of sense to me. It is a nice closure to all that has transpired. I will be returning, but for now, this really is an end.

It has only been a little more than two weeks since I met Lyn. In these brief days I have made the jump from curiosity about the Philippines to a decision to stay.

It took me a long time to give up on my plan for a life in the Caribbean. It has taken almost no time to realize that this is the place for me.

While it might have happened in another way. It is these girls who made that decision for me, in a manner impossible to refute.

Yes, this most likely would have eventually been the place I chose, but it was their presence, in a huge way, which provided the proof of the rightness of the choice, while at the same time being totally unexpected... a clear proof of a blind spot in my understanding of how the world works.

Now, as I slide into a girl, [she can hardly be considered a woman, can she?] who has become quite possibly my de facto wife, out of all seven of them, there is a bizarre sense of homecoming in the act. Lyn's warm, juicy pussy gives way to my cock without complaint. Her legs open wide for me without hesitation. Lyn and I are sure in our movements. Neither has anything to prove now.

She knows I value her in the most basic way there is to understand it. She is the recipient of my money. In her I have placed my trust. For her, there is no doubt.

For me, she is the glue that will hold all together until my return. She has proved her worth by meeting my needs with her actions.

My cock pumps in between her wet thighs. Her lips seek mine, her small tits jiggling below me. The bed squeaks. I can smell her. It is strange, but the smell does not argue for a shower to my nose. I find it arousing, erotic. It pushes me on.

She is mine. In a little more than two weeks I have collected seven girls who are all mine. Each of them, yes even each of the young ones, is mine. While I have not fucked, or even touched the young ones, there is no one stopping me, other than my own judgment.

I have never considered having sex with a child such as the three here, but they are seemingly willing. As I continue to fuck Lyn, my mind wanders to May, Jocelyn, and Katrina. Could I really bring myself to do it? Would it harm them? What would it do to me?

And what about Lexi's friends? The ones she wants me to meet? My God, how many girls can one man have? Really... how many? This is already nuts. How much crazier can it get?

I must be getting amped up, because I am pounding Lyn harder and she is responding in kind. We are close now. She may already be over the edge. I have not been paying attention to her. I was in my own world.

I am so close now. Lyn is pure submission. I see it. I feel it. I know it. And my cum fills her as a coda to that gift.

Lyn does not move. She is happy and well fucked. In a way, I suspect she does not want to hide the evidence from the others.

But, move we must, at least I must. I am far too sweaty to sleep like this and the bed needs to be put back in a manner that allows others to join us tonight, though I am at a loss to know how we fit eight on the bed in a way that allows anyone to get any rest. I guess I will see.

And I do see. Amid a surfeit of giggling and playful jostling we do eventually make it, though nighttime trips to the bathroom are going to be a challenge.

Lyn's promise, that the youngest three would be far from me, proved impossible to accomplish. I do have Lyn on one side of me and Mel on the other with Lexi next to Mel.

Jana is sort of down a bit toward the lower part of the mattress between Lyn's legs and the edge of the bed.

The three young ones are all arranged between legs on the bottom of the bed and so I have May against my legs and the inside part of Lyn's legs. On my other side of me between me and Mel's legs is Katrina. Jocelyn is between Mel and Lexi's legs.

I am wearing fresh boxers. While it is not nearly a chastity belt, I doubt the young girls will be as sneaky as a young horny boy would be if the roles were reversed.

I am not sure I am tired enough to sleep and this congested bed has me a little tense. I just don't see how this is going to work. Still, I don't say a damned thing as I don't want to hurt feelings by selecting who must be kicked off the bed.

There is chatter between the girls. It is hardly making the getting of rest any easier. But the chatter slows to a few calls and responses and then it stops.

And then there is one more call. The responses are not vocal. I have hands on me; hands on my arms, on my neck, on my scalp, on my back, and on both my legs.

As the massage/attack continues, Lyn leans in and kisses me, all while she is massaging my neck and scalp.

Hands that were on my feet are now moving up my calves. Hands that were on my arms are now on my chest.

There is a hand on my left thigh, and then another on my right thigh.

It is far from painful. It feels great and I am hardly fighting it. I am luxuriating in the feelings. Never in my life have I ever experienced anything like this.

It is not stopping and now there are more lips on me. Lips on my chest, and on my legs.

A hand finds my member and strokes me to tumescence. My tryst with Lyn notwithstanding, I am both floating and horny, at the same time.

The stroking is more insistent and I sense lips there as well.

Lyn's body now covers my chest as her kisses continue. The combination of Lyn's loving and the actions below have me rolling in a sea of emotion and need.

Someone is mounting me. Ah, oh shit, it feels so damned good. Whoever it is has a hot cunt. It feels like my cock is on fire. In no time I am cumming and cumming hard.

The attack/massage gentles down and brings me to a soft landing. I do not remember the end as I am sound asleep.

Commitments, obligations and the cable company...

1

I am packed and waiting for a taxi to take me to the airport.

The girls have been clingy all morning and into the early afternoon today, trying to anticipate any need I might have. I am well aware that my leaving is scary for them. I am going to be on the other side of the world and no amount of promises can assure them that I will return.

Yes, Lyn has a fair bit of cash, which suggests I will return, but that is just not enough to calm their agitation. It makes sense to me and yet there is nothing I can do to assuage the fears.

The taxi arrives, each gets a hug and a kiss, even the young ones, and then I am truly on my way back to the USA and Boston. I will get there, though not all at once.

First is my stop in Manila for a night. I know there are plenty of bars and bar girls in Manila, but really, I mean, why would I even consider that now? All I will do is get there, get to The Manila Hotel, check into a room and sleep as much as possible. I need to be at the airport by 5AM for the flight to San Francisco. So there will be no drinking and no bar girls. Just a dinner and sleep.

I will stay a couple of nights in California before getting back to my home in Dorchester. To be honest, I am not really ready for New England winter weather.

Well, ready or not, when I land at Logan on the evening of the 15th the temperature is a crisp 8 degrees Fahrenheit with wind gusts to 17mph. In other words, it is colder than shit. The only upside is

that it isn't snowing now, but there had been a snow storm on the 8th that had dumped 10 inches and some accumulation still remains.

On the 19th we get another storm dumping 19 inches. By March the temps get warmer but I am very much resenting every day I am spending in Boston.

Each day I spend time texting with the girls. That really does seem to make them happy.

I work with my bank to wire some cash into Lyn's account. That works OK, so then I wire far more into my account in the Philippines. I sign documents which will allow me to get funds wired on a semi-annual basis automatically from an account I maintain at the bank in Boston to my Philippine bank account.

I had placed a hold/suspension on my TV/Internet contract, but now I need to find a way to end it. That is proving difficult. The cable company says that I must continue with the contract and they will just 'move with me'... assuming I am moving across town. In frustration, I agree. I tell them I will start paying as soon as they can deliver service to my address.

They are happy! Where is the new location, they ask. And so I give them the address, City Heights, General Santos City, Philippines 9500.

There is silence on the other side of the phone... and then, *When will you be returning?*

I have no intention of returning.

Silence.

Sir, I am sorry to inform you that we do not serve that region.

Well, I am leaving for there within the next few weeks. I am discontinuing the card you are billing. I will have no US address. What is your suggestion since you say I can't cancel and I am not going to pay if you can't provide the service?

Sir, I will have to transfer you to another person, please hold...

And I am on hold for 25 minutes, only to start this entire thing again.

This gal tells me she doesn't believe me. I have to prove that I am never going to come back from the Philippines. How am I to do that? She has no idea.

She warns me that if I don't give her a correct US address, and fail to pay my monthly bill, they will report me to the credit agencies and ruin my credit.

OK, so given that promise from your company that you will trash my credit rating, why should I ever pay even the current bill? You have given me no reason to pay you another cent.

Sir! Don't threaten me!

Miss, I am not threatening. You think I am lying about relocating to the Philippines. True?

Yes! We get these types of claims all the time. It's a scam.

OK, so since I am really leaving and you are really going to trash my credit, I have no reason to pay you anymore. To my way of seeing it, it is you who is threatening me and I am just telling you what my only sane response is. By the way, where do you want me to drop off the DVR/ Cable box?

Sir?

I have already explained that I am leaving. Where does the hardware go?

To your next home!

It will not work in the Philippines.

Sir, you can use it when you return.

I am not returning.

I am sorry sir, there is nowhere for you to return it.

OK, I give up. I will contact whoever in government regulates this. Maybe they can talk to you. Clearly I cannot.

I really want to lease out the house, but as I will be a truly absentee landlord, that is proving to be a problem. Property management companies want so much of the leasing payments and their contracts absolve them of any financial obligations that it just isn't making any sense.

I put the house up for sale. It is a good time to sell! I get the place professionally cleaned and appraised in March. I list it the first of April. I get two offers. Both offers are at the asking price and I am told I need to accept the one I got first when, out of the blue, I get an offer above the asking price. It is a clean cash offer.

On a hunch I decide to sit on it until I have to accept it by the nature of the offer. I wait the entire three days. It pays off and I get an even better offer. It is also a straight cash deal. I take it.

That gives me just one month to clear out. The buyer's bank is weirdly ready to go and they are in a damned panic to move it. I think the whole thing is a little weird, but cash is cash and I want nothing more than to get back to my girls.

I spend the month getting rid of shit and finding a moving company to ship the rest. The cost isn't nearly as bad as I feared and with the absurd profit I am making on the house, even that shipping fee is softened a bit more.

I sell my car which more than pays the shipping costs. I cancel my health insurance, and my auto insurance. I notify my agent for the homeowners insurance that I am selling the house and will no longer need insurance. I stop the delivery of the Boston Globe.

I use the held mail I had from the post office as a way to figure out all the things I need to cancel and just go through all of it methodically.

Everything I had in Dorchester is at an end.

I do stop at the bar a few times, just so I would have those memories, but don't tell a soul there as to what my plans are.

I speak to a few old friends to say goodbye. Each thinks I am being a little melodramatic. I promise to email once that option becomes available to me in my new home.

I arrange to hang out at a friend's house for a few weeks as I will be out of my house and needing a place to stay for a bit before departing. Once again I am told I am over-playing it... is it really necessary to get rid of everything?

I have a chat with a bank officer about the funds I will be receiving from the sale of the house. I want to move those funds to the Philippines. As nice as the house is which I have leased in the Philippines, I know I will need my own place, even if I cannot own the land. I will need the funds from the sale to build the new home.

I can't begin to describe how hard it is to wrap everything up. It isn't as if people don't move in the USA. But when you do, you have your mail forwarded and you can catch things on the 'other end' once the move is made. This time that isn't possible.

The closing is on the 14th of May, a Wednesday. I know that is going to be the date for nine days but, resist buying my airline tickets for fear that something might go wrong.

Nothing goes wrong. By 2PM on the 14th I have a cashier's check in my hands. Rather than run to the bank, I run back to my friend's house and get online. I need to purchase tickets. The money can go into the bank tomorrow.

My flight out is on Sunday, the 18th. I will be in Manila on the 20th and on to GenSan also on the 20th. It is done. In doing so, I splurge. I have a fair number of airline points and suspect that this may be the last time to really use them. I am flying business class.

The next morning, after depositing the check in the bank account, where they tell me it will take between seven and ten days to clear, and I am now essentially afoot, having sold my car, I take a taxi to the government agency that regulates the cable company. I have the DVR under my arm, a printout of my plane ticket, a copy of my latest bill from the cable TV company, and my passport.

I believe I must have made someone's day as I start explaining why I am there. In the beginning there are chuckles. Then they are asking questions.

Then they are on the phone with the cable TV company. Then they are looking at the DVR, the passport, and the printout of the electronic plane ticket. Then they get back on the phone with the cable TV company and they ask, *Did you really say that unless this gentleman gives you a valid US address so as to send your bills that you would report him to the credit agencies?*

Evidently they are told, yes, because next they ask, *What if he was telling the truth?*

....

Yes, I know you don't believe him. But, what if he is telling the truth? Do you think you have the right to damage his credit even if you are wrong?

...

Yes, I know you don't, but I am looking at his plane ticket and his passport. We believe him and you don't want to go to a regulatory hearing on this. ... Yes, I'll wait.

Five minutes later the cable TV company seems to suggest that the agency inspect my ticket for a return ticket. It is true that you can't fly in to the Philippines, as a non-Filipino, without a return ticket to leave¹⁷ but my 'return ticket' is a flight to Malaysia for 12 months from now.

I show that to the folks at the agency and, following some chuckles, they inform the cable company of the nature of my return. That seems to cause a bit of confusion on the company side as we hear one person claiming that the agency person is lying while another is telling the first to cool such language.

¹⁷ I learn later that there are two exceptions to that rule, a SRRV visa and a 13A visa.

Now the cable company wants proof that the ticket is real. Maybe I just made this all up.

I have no idea how to do that, but one of the folks at the agency says that with my e-ticket number, I can log onto the airline website and display the information... would I be willing to do that?

I think it's a dandy idea and so, with the cable company still on the phone, I am able to log on and display the info. One of the agency folks tells the cable folks that I have proven that the ticket is real.

In the end, the company agrees that there is no way to continue the contract. However there is also no way to 'return' the DVR. They are saying I should keep it and I am saying, I can't.

There is some back and forth about getting all this down in writing so that there is no back-tracking later.

I do agree to pay a final bill, and I leave the DVR at the agency. They tell me that it will be presented to the company at their next hearing. That would have been interesting to sit in on, but I will be back in GenSan by then.

It is the middle of the afternoon of the 15th. I am honestly just hanging out without anything to do for the next two days.

When I board my flight at Logan on the 18th it is 51 degrees Fahrenheit. Having given away my all winter clothing, I have a windbreaker on and it will be the last time I will ever need it.

There is nothing pleasing about flying such a long distance, but business class makes it far, far nicer. Being able to really sleep in a comfortable manner makes the trip so much easier.

I land in Manila feeling pretty damned good and well rested. The wait to board the PAL flight to GenSan is no problem at all.

The girls know I am coming. The entire time I have been gone, we have been texting. Not a lot each day, but at least a little. They know about the sale of my house and the container of my stuff that

still hasn't left its US port but will eventually find its way to GenSan.

While I have been gone, Lexi has had a birthday. She is now 16. May and Jocelyn are now 14. I am aware of all this and was aware as the birthdays occurred. Katrina's birthday is not for another month. Jana's is soon after that.

From all I have gathered via the texts, Lyn has handled the finances as I had hoped. She told me three of them registered for their classes just last week.

I haven't told them, but I will purchase a motorcycle for them to get back and forth to school on. I want it to be a surprise.

From what I was told, the cashier's check has yet to clear the bank. I guess I should be nervous about that. But as an officer of the issuing bank is the person who handed the check to me, I really don't think there is any reason for concern. I am simply looking forward to it getting to GenSan, as I have plans for it.

Once I decided that these girls and I were going to stay together, a number of dominoes fell into place, if a bit slowly.

The first was education for them, and transportation for us (not just for me). But housing is also an issue. The leased place we have now is great. But it isn't ours and that makes it unstable.

I need stable.

All I had in the USA is now gone. I thought I was going to have to swallow hard on that issue. I didn't. The longer I was away from the girls the more I just wanted to get back to them.

But now I need to create stability in GenSan. I think I know how to do this, but I am not one hundred percent sure. And in any case, before I move forward with most of my plan, the money from the house needs to get to my BPI account.

Stability is the cement that assures performance of prior obligations. It is a commitment to the future. Stability has

entanglements, and so entering into a stable place means giving up some liberty in the process. It means a respect for those who buttress that stable place. It is not just me anymore. It must be me and my girls.

My girls.

There they are. Each and every one of them is here as I exit from the arrivals area of the airport. It is summer break here, so no school for four of them. In just a couple of weeks three of them will be college kids and three more return to high school.

Lyn told me she was renting a van to pick me up. It wasn't too expensive and I know they are excited. In a way, it's a nice home coming. In the coming week, a van is on my list of things to purchase, so this is simply an acknowledgment of that need.

I see smiles. Seven smiles, and... one pregnant girl.

She walks up to me. She is not as large as she will get, but she is clearly close to four months along. Her arms encircle me, her cheek on my arm. She just hugs me for a bit as the others hang back and wait.

You were right, Craig.

In what way?

My plan would not have worked. Now I need you to protect me and my baby, maybe even more than Mel.

Lexi, you don't have to worry about that. You, Mel, and your baby are mine.

The only reason I not cry every day is because you text us every day. I know you are coming back. If no text, what I do? If you not come back, what I do?

I understand.

Good! Ha! I have the first one! I think the others, they jealous.

Does your mother know?

Yes! Yes, she do! She cry. I tell her she is foolish. She cry. She say, better it be Mel. I tell her she has a bad attitude.

I am sorry, Lexi.

No reason you be sorry. She not a good mother. I not care. I am happy I have your baby.

Lyn, why did you enroll Lexi in class?

She can complete one semester. It will end in October, the child will not come until the second week in November!

That is cutting it close.

It OK.

I am still hugging Lexi but indicate a desire to hug the others. It is a sweet loving crush.

May gets as close to me as is possible while still fully dressed. She tips her head up requesting a kiss on the lips. I consent to the public display and jokingly comment, *You're almost old enough now.*

You mean for my second time?

Hub?

Remember the last night in bed? That was me!

2

Damn, I sure as hell wasn't expecting to hear that. This is not the time or place to deal with the ramifications of the news. And, in any case, in truth, I am sort of... flabbergasted. Yeh, I am not sure I have ever used that word before in my entire life, but it fits right now. No other word comes close. The one word that I am absolutely not is bemused.

All I can do is shake my head in disbelief and suggest we all climb into the van.

The last time I drove into GenSan from the airport it seemed exotic, strange, and maybe a little desolate. In a way it hasn't changed at all. But I have. I am seeing it through different eyes now. I am sure that even this way of seeing it, as I do today, will change anew over time.

Will it change over time? That I surely can't know, but I know now that how I am seeing it changes as I get to know it, little by little.

The girls want to know what I have brought back for them. This concept of bringing gifts, as I learned in my brief time here before, is deeply embedded in the culture. Even folks who can barely rub two pesos together somehow find something they can bring, even if it is a coconut or papaya from a tree near their hut. It doesn't matter how small, you bring something.

I brought each of them a Boston Red Sox ballcap and shirt, a bag of chocolates, and some maple candy. Of the last, I am sure they have never tasted maple before. I hope they like it.

I playfully chide them. *You will just have to wait until we get home.*

Lyn is sitting next to me on one side. Jana is on the other. Both lean into me and say not a single word. I gather what they are feeling is relief.

In more than a small way, I feel relief too. It's odd, I guess. I was not on these islands for even twenty-one days last time. Still, it feels like a homecoming. It shouldn't.

Dorchester should feel like home. But from the moment I put the house up for sale, it is like a switch was flipped in my heart. And when the house was empty, following the discarding of things and the movers who put the rest in crates and packed it all into a cargo container, I felt much like one does when in a place where one really doesn't belong. A place you stay at via a hotel room and restaurants. A place that is not *yours*.

At that moment my heart, even more than before, yearned to return to this leased home in City Heights, GenSan. A home in a city with beggars, and crappy streets, and little infrastructure ... and my seven girls.

And now I am back. These seven girls surround me. Two lean against me. One is beaming with pregnant pride. All are happy. I am happy.

There are things I need to do, but all can wait a day or two. This is a Tuesday evening, so nothing more is going to get done today. Tomorrow I will just hang out and absorb that which the girls want to tell me. I suspect they are saving a few things up in that regard.

I slept well on the flight from the USA and feel fine and rested. My internal clock is half a world off, as I am thirteen time zones from where I started in Boston, so this should, by all rights, be morning.

I am not ready to sleep again, and though the girls would normally want to go to bed in just a few hours, I suspect they will want to stay up for a while yet tonight.

I am right. It is now 1AM and everyone is still awake. I, incredibly enough, am the one who needs to call it a night. That brings forth the question of whom I will bed tonight.

A suggestion that we reprise the last night we were all together is shot down my Lyn, barely a second before I am able to do the same.

I announce that the three youngest, based on the activity last time, are not to enter my bed again until I am ready to really bed them. I see downcast faces. What they don't know is that I have been ruminating about this issue since May dropped her little truth on me earlier. And so, to those downcast faces, I offer, *And for the two of you who are now 14, that will be yet this month. And for you, Katrina, that means this July. ... Does one of you not want to enter my bed?*

Between giggles, I am informed that there will be no one seeking a stay of the action.

Why did I decide it? First, I bedded Lexi when she was 15. These girls are 14, only one year younger. Clearly, I have not injured May. Also, clearly, this is what they want and it is going to happen, this year or next year. The age of consent is twelve and the parents seem OK with it. So, I guess, as Jana has said, I should be evil.

The decision is made, but not tonight.

Lexi is pregnant. I want to be with her but, as her ticket has already been punched, I see no reason why she should be in my bed tonight.

I pull Jana to me and whisper in her ear, *Will tomorrow night be OK?*

Her answer, after an enthusiastic kiss, is to tell me, *Yes, tomorrow is perfect.*

OK then tonight it is Lyn and Mel. Lexi, you need to allow your sister to catch up with you!

That gets her laughing and if there was to be tension, it is gone now.

Climbing the two flights to my bedroom is that last leg of the journey. I enter the bedroom and realize that I am ... home. It is

done. And with that realization comes exhaustion. I need a shower and sleep.

Nineteen-year-old Lyn will turn twenty this summer and she is the oldest girl here. In the USA a nineteen-year-old is basically wet behind the ears and yet to learn about life. Such a kid is only learning to cook, if that process has even started. Such a kid has never washed any clothing by hand and barely knows how to operate a washing machine.

But here, by now Lyn and Mel are accomplished cooks. They have been cooking for years. They have never used a washing machine. They may have seen such things at the mall, but I wouldn't bet on it.

Both of them have been washing clothing by hand for at least ten years. They sit on the floor or ground with a big plastic tub, a bristle brush and a bar of laundry soap. Since they moved in with me they have been using Surf bars, though there are other brands at the stores.

There is no housekeeping duty with which they are unskilled at handling. But both, it seems, cared enough to study and learn English. Not all do, and many here really can't speak any English. My initial concern about language when sitting at the Mermaid Bar and Grill was warranted. And the claim of the guy in the BVI that they all knew English was pure crap.

I actually need the girls to operate as interpreters on occasion. Not everywhere... no, not at the bookstore, not when I stopped by Immigration last time, and not at the bank.

My girls are far from the only ones who can speak my tongue, but the average Juan on the street isn't able at all.

I suspect that English was required to get a job at the Sydney Hotel. Still, more can't speak English than can. And so as I slide between my two English speaking young lovelies, it occurs to me that being home means being with them. At that moment I pull both close to me. I need to feel their flesh against mine.

They are happy to be held, though they may have misunderstood my intentions. Mel has hold of my package and Lyn is nibbling my ear.

I thought I was too tired, but as Mel and Lyn continue, I am having a change of heart as well as a firmer take on the situation. In the intervening months I have not even been touched in an amorous manner. It isn't that I have been rejected by anyone, I haven't. I just didn't seek any such contact out and no one there was seeking me.

Could I have done so? Sure, I guess so. It didn't occur to me. Might it have? I don't know. In a way, I suspect it would have felt like cheating.

I know that sounds weird seeing as how there are seven girls here. But here they know each other. Here we do things as an 'us.' We are a cohesive group. We have an economic connection with each other and with each other's welfare.

If I was to be with someone outside the group, that doesn't feel OK to me. Is that nuts?

For whatever it is worth, being with Lyn and Mel is the antithesis of cheating. It is part and parcel of 'us.'

Lyn's lips are on mine now. Mel's lips are warming up my rigid cock and her hands cradle my balls and stroke the lower reaches on my member. I am on my back and simply enjoying all of it.

I reach out to fondle one of Lyn's breasts. They are small with rock hard nipples the size of small pebbles. Lyn bites down on my lower lip. I think she likes having her tits played with.

Mel is mounting me from above. Her hot, tight, and juicy cunt slides slowly over my cock. It is a tight fit and Mel is making the most of it as we both savor the friction.

I squeeze Lyn's tit quite hard. She bites my lip harder. Mel is bone to bone with me. I squeeze Lyn's tit harder and the girl releases my lip as she gasps. Mel backs out partially and slams down hard.

I roll Mel over and start pounding her cunt. Reaching out, I grab one of Lyn's legs, pulling her in closer to my side before shoving a thumb up her cunt and snaking a finger toward her ass.

Lyn bucks her hips up, tensing her ass cheeks, making my entry there harder but allowing my thumb deep penetration into her cunt. Her legs open wide to allow even more penetration but, in her doing so, my finger now penetrates her ass. Another gasp.

Mel is bucking beneath me. It's not me that has her animated as much as it is her desire to carry a child, like her sister now carries. Children were not part of my plan, but they are the natural outcome of this life here. That became apparent as soon as I committed to these girls.

They are Catholic. I am Catholic. This is a Catholic country. Birth control will be hard to get, frowned upon by most, and children are seen as desirable. I knew that based on the demographics alone. I am not going to feign a silly, 'what have I gotten into' song. No, I knew. Do I have an overwhelming desire for more progeny? No. Does that matter? No. So, I am not going to argue with nature. These girls will get pregnant.

As it is, Mel is well on her way to receiving some cum. And though no one has received cum from me for months, there clearly is no assurance that she will get pregnant tonight. All this is, is a tip of the hat to her desire.

Lyn will have to be satisfied with manual stimulation for the evening, because I have nothing more to give.

Well she is and she isn't. After I roll off Mel, Lyn rolls on me and tells me she has me in the morning, no if's ands or buts allowed. Yep, I am home.

The morning comes with Mel getting out of bed first. She is probably going to get breakfast ready. Lyn remains here with me and after trips to the toilet for both of us, we are back in bed, with my sweet girl snuggled up against my side with an arm holding her tight.

Everything done there?

Yes. Everything.

You going back again?

No.

You sure?

Yes, why?

We not like it. Stay please.

I am staying.

I know you say it. But it scary. Truly.

I understand.

You really going to do sex with the young ones?

It seems I already have with May, right?

Yes. You will do it again?

Why are you asking?

They will be pregnant. True?

Maybe, Lyn. So are you saying I should not bed them?

Maybe. This hard. I am not sure.

Do you want to talk to their mothers?

Ha! No, Craig. They will say it OK.

So? What are you worried about?

How they finish school?

I don't know. What are the options?

I not know. Maybe nothing.

I see. Well, it wasn't going to happen tomorrow, so maybe I need to talk with them. It is their future.

OK. Thank you.

I smile. She is thanking me for being willing to talk to fourteen-year-olds about if they want to get pregnant or stay in school. It's sort of nuts.

You're welcome. Now, why are we still in bed?

Making love with Lyn is, at once, effortless, and intense. Effortless to the extent that there is no mystery, no missteps, or misunderstood cues. Our communication is seamless. Things just happen without awkwardness. Intense to the extent that it is with real meaning. This is not the casual sex of a hookup. This is important. It is filled with the subtext of the commitments and obligations that bind us together. Her commitment to be truly mine, not just for now, but for the long haul. My obligation to do right by her, to not leave her, to protect her and allow her to live without worry of where the rice will come from.

My cock is well and truly deep in her cunt. It is not an intrusion. It is exactly where Lyn wants it, now and forever. I will grow old, she may lose her looks, but we are bound together. If I need a new pretty one, I can have one, but this commitment and these obligations must remain.

No one has professed love. Will love exist? I suspect it will. To these girls, love is essential to any justification for what I am doing and what they have committed to. That I have not heard the words yet is, in some ways, surprising.

What is Lyn thinking right now as we rut away this morning? I can only guess and the guess will be most certainly be wrong. What I am sure of is that Lyn is as attached to me as it is possible to be.

I could well turn out to be a first class ass and it really wouldn't matter. I am hers and she, right along with the other six, is mine.

That she will never complain that there are the other six is a testament to economics and aspirational logic.

Lyn's body is hungry for the power of this act. She is not tiring. She is committed in a way that calls on my body to respond, to match her intensity of need with my intensity of desire.

Her small, slight frame takes all I have to give and calls for more. Her cunt is more than slick with secretions, it is awash with her own fluids. Her muscles demand my attention. Beads of perspiration on her upper lip glisten. Her breath is ragged, her eyes so wide open as they stare at me.

And yet, though we have been going at it (for how long now?) her cunt is tight and hot. This is not playtime. This, for all the passion, is honest and real. I see it in her countenance, I feel it as we fulfill this ancient ritual. And finally, as my cum enters her, there is transmitted the biological commitment that, should things come to pass as they might, a child may well spring forth from our efforts. And should that happen, neither of us will regret it.

In the very short time I have known Lyn, she has not lied to me once. She has not played any games. She has not deceived me. She has been honest in all her dealings and reliable as a mate.

I could never have said the same for my wife even for one week of our life, from the first date on until the divorce. I could never say the same for any woman I have been with prior to my coming to these islands.

Are there bad women here? Yes, certainly, and Lyn has warned me about them. But neither Lyn, nor Jana, nor Lexi has given me a moment whereby I have had to check myself. With Mel, it is complicated, mostly around the issues of her mother, and while I understand it, it does put her outside the golden circle of the other three.

As to the youngest three, May did take advantage in a way that has caused me real regret, but they have never lied.

In all this, I have never in my life known such honesty and commitment, without at a base level questioning it and wondering what was hidden. I don't think anything is hidden with these girls.

It is, as I keep on reminding myself, a matter of need, of economics. But it is also real.

Might that change? Yes, as they complete their education and advance to a place where a profession is possible (something that was previously not possible for them), they will no longer have the economic need to hew to me. Will they? That is unclear. It may be that I will have to add new girls whose economic condition mirrors these girls now to maintain what I have now with these seven. Only time will tell.

3

I need a hobby.

My 'stuff' from the USA will not get here for months. While I will apply this week for Internet, it is unclear how long that will take. I have some books to read, but I can't spend the rest of my life only reading. Life here makes sense, but I also need to be doing something.

One of the problems I had with the consulting practice is that I wasn't busy enough. I knew that giving up even that was going to make things even more challenging. But that was going to happen no matter where I landed.

As I have mentioned, I am not a team player, and so organized activities just don't work for me.

I need a hobby. Joining something just sounds awful.

Maybe I am a bit weird, but there are times that I withdraw into myself. I shut everything out and just take the time to think.

A hobby should be something I enjoy. But that is possibly the wrong way to start. Maybe I should start thinking about what I am missing. Things that would be nicer if I had here, but seem unavailable.

I miss a good steak, but no hobby I can come up with can resolve that.

I miss good bread. The bread here is too sweet and there is just no crust. In that way it reminds me of Wonder Bread back in the states. I want bread with a crust, with substance, and with a yeasty flavor.

I have never made bread, but maybe I can. So that is one potential hobby.

I love Italian food and, from what I have seen here, there is no Italian food to be had. I have a pasta making machine, a hand crank affair, coming in the container from Boston. So making pasta is something I will be able to do, but I have not seen any veal, or ricotta cheese, or cottage cheese. I also haven't seen any Italian sausage. I can research cheese making and sausage making. That might also lead to hobbies.

So, cooking can be a thing, but I can't do that all the time. I need more ideas.

This is a Wednesday and there are things I do want to do now... I can put off the hobby stuff for a little bit.

My earlier decision to take a day off and do nothing isn't working in my head. There are things I need to do. First is to talk to a lawyer. I have seen signs of law offices all over town. These are mostly small and pretty ratty signs. I am not sure the legal acuity I need will be found in such places.

I tell Lyn that I need to go downtown. It is just a courtesy, telling someone that you are leaving before you leave. I have not had to do that for a long time, but I do now. And I am glad I did it because Lyn starts rummaging around in her purse. Out comes a new prepaid SIM card for my cellphone and a card containing a 300 peso load. Without that I would have been unable to text any of them and they would have been unable to contact me.

It seems Lyn already knows the phone number assigned to the phone and has shared it with the other girls. My Philippine cellphone, which I left here, contains all their contact information as their numbers have not changed. The only issue was that my old SIM has expired and with it I lost the use of that phone number. The new SIM provides me with a new number.

I know my plan going forward today has some risks attached to it, but I decide to ride down to my bank and ask if they can point me to a good attorney to handle contracts, leases, and the formation of trusts.

I have an idea of how I want to proceed on a couple of matters. While I was back in Dorchester, I did some research on Philippine civil law, but I don't know how accurate the information that I found is.

The bank manager I speak to is, in fact, helpful. As soon as I explain that I will have in dollars what amounts to about eighteen million pesos arriving at his bank in the next seven days, he just about jumps at the ability to provide me with a solid referral.

And so, I do get the address of an attorney who has an office at Trinity College here in GenSan. If this was Boston, I would be scratching my head over a law office at a college, but I am not in Boston and I just go with the flow.

When I get to the college, I ask for help to Atty. Juan Trujillo's office and a perfectly nice young woman leads me up some stairs and down a hall to the wonderfully colonial style, dark wooden chambers of the attorney. It just so happens that he is there, and though he is currently busy, if I would please wait, he will see me as soon as he can.

An hour later, I am ushered into his inner office. The guy is in his forties, by the look of him. As opposed to many I have seen here, who dress rather informally, this guy is in dress slacks and a formal dress shirt, which I have read is called a Barong Tagalog¹⁸.

After a formal introduction on both his side and my own, I am ready to get down to business. Atty. Trujillo is not.

Sir Craig, what brings you to the Philippines?

I was looking for a good place to retire.

And you find our city such a place?

I do.

Really? May I ask why?

¹⁸ Worn outside the slacks and no jacket over the top.

I initially decided to come here based on the cost of living, the climate, and the fact that English is spoken here.

I see. I also note you said initially. So there is more. Is that not true?

I just have to smile. I think I am going to like this guy, if he can put up with me and my needs.

When I arrived I was asked the same question as you asked, relating to why I am here, by a sweet young woman. I told her and she asked, where was my girlfriend. When I told her I didn't have a girlfriend, she told me that if I stayed, it would be because I had a girl here. She was right.

You have found such a companion?

I have found several.

Several? He is chuckling. There will be blood when they find out about each other! Be very careful, Sir Craig! Filipina are very emotional.

Oh, but they do know of each other. Each knows if she gives me any problems related to it, she is out of my life.

Really! He is shaking his head. I think you are in for a big disappointment.

If I am, I have been warned then. The reason why I am here relates to this in any case. Possibly you will not want to handle my legal needs, but I do intend to pursue them in any case.

Please explain and I will do my best to give you firm advice.

I will have a significant sum of money deposited in my account in BPI next week. It comes from the sale of my home in the USA. I know I cannot own land here. However, is it possible to create a non-revocable trust naming Filipinas as the recipients of the trust?

Yes, that is legal.

Can I establish terms of trust membership?

Yes.

Can the trust own land?

Yes.

Can I then build a home on the trust land?

Yes! This is an interesting way of working within the legal requirements. But why not just marry the woman?

Because there are seven of them and I am not going to play favorites.

Seven? Really? Seven?

Yes.

And you say they all know each other?

Yes.

And you visit each of them? It must be tiring maintaining such a schedule!

They all live with me in a home I have leased here.

Trujillo just looks at me, shakes his head and declares, I do not believe you Sir Craig and I do not have time for such foolishness.

I believe he is about to get up. I quickly ask, If a few of them can come here, right now, and attest to the truth of this, would you be willing to assist me?

The guy grimaces before answering with a question, How soon can they get here?

The house is in City Heights, close to Lagao National High School. I will text them and ask that a few come here right now. Will you entertain the possibility of reconsidering your position after you meet them?

I have a meeting for which I must leave in an hour. If they can get here well before that, I will meet them. Will all seven come?

Probably not all seven, but maybe three or four. Will that be sufficient?

Maybe. ... wait out in the outer office. If they arrive in time, I will meet with them. Good day, Sir.

Thank you.

As soon as I get out of the inner office I call Lyn and ask that Mel, Jana and she get down here as soon as humanly possible. I ask her to call me back as soon as they are on their way but that getting going must happen without any delay.

Five minutes later my phone rings.

Hi Lyn, you on your way?

The sound from her phone is not the best but I can hear her as she says, *We are in a tricycle. I tell the driver, I pay extra if he will drive fast.* I hear her laughing. *Craig, he is... We will be there soon.*

Good. Sweetheart, I need you to meet an attorney. I asked him to do some things, but he tells me I am lying when I told him I have seven girls. Don't talk about the ages of the others, just that they are too busy to come right now.

I understand. Why you need an attorney?

I will explain that later.

OK. We will be there soon. Hebe... we going very fast!

They girls walk in only 20 minutes from when I placed the call for them to come. That is well within Trujillo's timeframe.

I ask the secretary to inform Trujillo of their arrival and three minutes later, they are told to go into the office but I am told I am not invited to go with them.

For twenty minutes I sit and wait. I am sure I have not done anything illegal, but I am getting increasingly nervous. What is taking so long?

Eventually, Lyn sticks her head out and motions for me to enter. As I do, she whispers to me, *I am sorry, Craig. He know everything.*

Damn, well, let's see how much trouble I am in.

I am still standing when Trujillo starts talking.

Sir Craig, you told me the truth. Not all of it. No, not all of it. The pregnant one, Lexi... you didn't want me to know this? And the three younger ones, you were trying to hide them too?

Yes.

I understand. It is a difficult matter. But you have done nothing wrong. It is not illegal and I am told by these three that you wanted the parents to tell the three youngest that they should not be with you. That was right to do. I am also told that you told the three youngest to stay out of your bed. Once again, that was the right thing to do. So, you do have seven and you want a trust to protect them. Correct?

Yes.

They don't know this?

None did until you just spoke. I have not discussed it with them as I did not know if it would be legal.

So you are putting six of the seven through school, including a university education. You are working to provide for their future. That is why you have come to me?

Yes, and to find a way to build a home for us that is ours and not a lease which we will eventually have to vacate.

Please sit down, Sir Craig. I was wrong in my assessment of you. Very wrong. Yes, I will assist you. These girls are very lucky. I am not sure they know how lucky.

Thank you for reconsidering.

Yes, yes, now I will need the names and NSO¹⁹ birth certificates for each of the girls. You said that you wanted to establish terms of membership. Do you want to discuss that now? Or would you prefer to wait until another time?

¹⁹ National Statistics Office, part of the [Philippines Statistics Authority](#). In the Philippines, like many other nations, there is a national registry for records of birth, death, marriage, and annulment/divorce. The USA is an outlier in this regard.

That's a nice way of asking if I want the girls to hear what the terms are.

If you have the time now, I can proceed.

Very well, what membership terms are you seeking?

We start with the seven right now as members. At the end of every calendar year, only those who remain with me are to retain membership. New members can only be added if they have been with me for two years and are still with me at an annual reviewal of membership date.

Yes, that can be accomplished.

Further, the trust is managed by those members of the trust who have reached their age of majority. All decisions of the trust must be by a vote of those members, and must reflect agreement of not less than seventy-five percent of the voting members.

The age of Majority is eighteen. You have two who qualify now.

Yes and Jana, here, will be eighteen very soon.

To get seventy-five percent all three will have to agree.

Yes for now, but I don't see a problem with that for the short term and Lexi is only two years away from joining those of majority age.

Trujillo turns to the girls, smiles, shakes his head once again, before asking, *Do you three understand what your Sir Craig is trying to do for you?*

Lyn speaks for all three as she says, simply, *No, Attorney, we not know.*

Your Sir Craig is going to give you property and build a house on that property, which in the end you will own as well. When this happens, you will not be poor girls any more. You will be land owners. Sir Craig is doing for you seven what he would do for a wife.

Lyn is just looking at me. Jana has a big smile on her face and is clapping her hands. Mel is bawling. Crying isn't close to describe the wails coming from her.

Lyn now turns to Trujillo and asks... *When Craig talk about percentage, that mean we are the real owners of the land he will buy?*

Yes and no. The Trust will own the land. So long as you stay with Sir Craig, you will be a member of the trust.

Then yes! No one will leave. We not need land to keep us with Craig. He the one we love. All of us. No one will leave.

I am not surprised. Well, I need to leave for my meeting now. But please provide the official NSO birth certificates to my secretary as soon as you can and all contact information. Once I have it all I will write up what is needed and contact you all.

And with that the meeting was over.

I am not yet down the stairs to the ground floor when Lyn says, *Craig, you not need to do this to make sure we not going to leave.*

I hear it and say nothing, one step, two steps, almost down to the bottom.

Jana chimes in, *Lyn tells the truth. There no need. We not leaving. Even Mel, she will not leave. This not needed.*

I say nothing as we walk through the portal out of Trinity College and out onto the street.

They have no idea that I have already transferred a fair amount of cash to my BPI account. I did it after verifying that the funds I wired to Lyn's account had reached her without a problem.

My next item on my list is to buy a van and there is sufficient money in the account to accommodate that. All of them don't need to be with me. Theoretically, none of them do. I am sure I pulled at least one away from a task.

OK, who needs to go back home immediately?

I get blank stares.

Lyn, what were you doing when I called?

She giggles. *I doing Jana's nails!*

Do you need to go back to that now?

No need, I think.

Mel, what were you doing?

Cooking.

Do you need to get back to that?

Maybe, yes.

OK, who wants to go back with Mel?

Neither Lyn nor Jana seem to be interested. Jana asks, *It OK three on your motorcycle?*

Really? I guess we can try.

Sure.

That seals the deal. Mel grabs a tricycle back to the house. Lyn and Jana climb on to my Yamaha, without a clue as to where we are going. They just want to be with me.

Where we are going is to the Mitsubishi dealer. Pulling into the dealer, Jana gasps. *We buying a car?*

No.

Then why we here?

We are looking at vans.

Oh! Van not a car?

Not in my world. Is it the same thing in yours?

Craig, what you mean?

Never mind.

There is a Spacegear van on the floor. It sits nine in three rows of benches. Maybe it will be OK but I decide to check out the Toyota dealer. There I find a HiAce Granvia. It has a little roomier seating, but only eight seats. The Mitsubishi is a gas engine, and the Toyota is a diesel. Here, diesel fuel is far less expensive. My best guess is a diesel engine will run better and longer in this climate.

The Granvia has two nice captain's chairs up front with a ton of room between the chairs. The second row is a split bench of a two seater and a single seat. The back row is a bench that can hold three normal sized adults or four Filipinas.

I like the Granvia better but with only seats for eight without squeezing, it will barely accommodate us now. The Spacegear is barely better.

The next option is a regular Toyota HiAce, not the smaller Granvia. It has four benches and can carry 15 people. That's way too large and yet may be what I need to purchase. I can't find anything between these seating capacities. I need to think about this for a day or two.

I say as much to the girls, who both tell me I am an idiot. With Lexi pregnant, that already argues for nine and don't I think there will be other pregnancies?

OK so there are no real options... I get the price on the HiAce in a straight cash sale. I get a very small discount. It seems that they are only happy if I am financing the vehicle. There is no value to arguing. It is clear that it's the only option I have.

They need a day to get the paperwork ready. I will return tomorrow with the cash. Following that there is some prep work to be done. I can have the vehicle the following Tuesday. Welcome to the Philippines. Things don't happen fast here.

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The ride back home with all three of us on the bike is not something I want to become the norm. It is all the more important I get that damned van.

That is what is front and center in my mind as I walk into the house and into a very angry Lexi.

Why you do that?

Do what?

Think you need to bribe us?

Why do you think I am bribing you?

The ... what it called? The trust? Yes, why the trust? You think we will leave?

No.

Then why you bribe us?

I am not bribing anyone.

But we only have it if we stay, correct?

Yes.

So it a bribe!

No, it is not. It is to protect those who do stay. To make sure that those who stay are not hurt by those who have left! Look, you will get an education. Maybe then you all get good jobs. Maybe one of you is offered a job that takes you away from me. I won't force any of you to stay. But I do want to protect those who do stay.

No one is leaving!

How can you know that?

You not know us! You not know the Filipina! Change it!

Change what?

The agreement. We all part. No one can be removed. That what!

I am looking at the rest of them. They all seem to be in agreement, except for Lyn. She has a different idea. I can see it on her face.

Lyn, what do you think.

No need for the trust. Do not do it.

I think you are all missing an important fact. I can and will do things to protect each of you and could do it without this trust. The trust is as much for me as it is for you. I need it for my own needs!

Lyn is not biting. *How?* It is less a request for information than it is for me to prove the statement.

I want to build a house. A place that is ours and not something we lease. I can't do that on my own as I am not allowed to purchase land. That is why I need you to own the land as a trust.

These girls have never lived anywhere where they or their family has owned the land. Many Filipinos are simply squatters. There is a legal term for it here and laws to protect such folk. The legal term is 'informal settlers.'

The fact that I will build us a house of our own on land is as outside their imagination as if I said I was born on the moon.

Now Lyn is crying; Mel is bawling again; Lexi just looks completely perplexed.

Jana is smiling and asks, *When we going to look for the land? We get the van on Tuesday, correct? Maybe we look starting next Wednesday? Then we all go and see, OK?*

But before I have a chance to respond, and for what it is worth, if we get some other motorcycles we can go looking sooner, we all hear from Lexi. *You build a house for me and my baby? Craig... you really do this for us?*

I am doing it for all of us.

OK, you right. This not a bribe, and you are taking care of my baby. But you must drop the requirement!

Why?

What if I die? Then my child not part, correct?

Is she thinking of a death in childbirth? I guess that might be less uncommon here than in the USA. But she has a point. Even if it is ten years from now and a coconut falls on her head, we have the same problem. I hadn't considered that.

Lexi, how about if I add in as immediate members, any child any of you give me. Does that cover your concern?

You can do that?

I think so.

OK. That work.

Good. ... Does anyone else have a complaint?

Maybe that has come off a little too testy but I guess the jetlag is still with me a bit. I am fatigued and mildly frustrated, plus the tension I felt when at Trujillo's has not fully abated. I know in the end he was all good with what I want, but the intervening time until then really took a toll on me.

Lyn sidles up next to me, puts an arm around me, kisses me on the cheek and announces that there are no more problems. They were just confused. No one ever expects such things to happen in their lives.

OK, I can see that being true. Just like I never expected to have seven girls.

Look, there are going to be a lot of things changing for you. No one should think any of it is a bribe. There are good reasons for all I have in mind and not

one of those things have anything to do with bribes. Are we clear? ... Lexi? ... Lyn?

I get what I gather is acceptance. And that sure as hell is good because I am about to lay a bunch of it out.

Tomorrow Lyn, Jana and I are going to buy two more motorcycles. They will be for getting to your school and running errands. I want everyone here, who can to get a license. Understood?

Little May pipes up, *Why two?*

Because the land we buy will be further out of town. That will make it cheaper to buy and we can buy a larger lot more easily. That means we will need to have vehicles. We already have one bike. We will have a van. If we have two more bikes, I think for now we will be OK.

Lyn is taking all this in and not commenting. Jana scrunches up her face and ask, *How far out?*

Not too far. When we were looking around the area before I left last time, I noticed that the land keeps on getting higher the further north you go. I also noticed that the land is less settled in just a mile, I mean a kilometer, north of here. I am hoping we can find something there.

Jana seems satisfied, but May is now concerned.

That means we can't walk to school.

True, but it also means that we will be able to take you. Especially if we put a tricycle cab on one of the bikes. Mel, can you operate a motorcycle?

I see eyebrows. She can.

There is something else we need to discuss, May. This is as good a time as any. You have already lost your virginity and want back in my bed. Correct?

I get eyebrows again.

And you, Jocelyn, you want to join me that way, too, correct?

Two more eyebrows go up even more firmly.

And you Katrina, as soon as you turn fourteen, want the same thing, I think.

Yes, Po²⁰.

May, do you understand that you might have become pregnant, even that one time? Do you understand that if you return to my bed, there is a strong likelihood that you will become pregnant?

May is just staring, not saying a word.

The same will be true for you Jocelyn and you Katrina. If you become pregnant, how do you think you will be going to school?

I see lightbulbs beginning to turn on.

Jocelyn is fumbling around, squirming as she forms the question she needs to ask. *Are you telling us we can't be your girlfriends?*

You three are already my girlfriends.

No, that not right. We not true girlfriends. Not like the others.

You are to me.

You are being difficult, Sir! You mean we not have sex with you?

No, I am saying, if you want to continue with school, you need to understand what happens if we make love.

We have to decide now?

No, you should not. You should talk with the others, and with your parents. You should take as long as you need to make the decision. This is a serious thing. If you get pregnant, you can't get unpregnant without giving birth.

We make the decision?

Yes, but I hope you will talk with others and take your time. You want me to treat you as my girlfriend. That means you want me to treat you as an adult. OK, act like an adult. Think this through. Be careful. Think about Lexi. ... She will not be going to school the second semester this school year for the simple

²⁰ Sir.

reason that she will be giving birth right after the end of the first semester. ... But she can return to the university next year. But that doesn't work the same way for you. You can't just take a semester off. You have two more years of high school.

There is now total quiet in the room. Maybe I did this wrong, but is there a right way to do this? There is no reason in the world why these three young ones should be mine in any other world. Still, they are, and they need to come to terms with what that means.

What will they decide? I have no idea. I have no idea what Jana and Lyn are thinking. A pregnancy will screw up their educational plans, though, even should they get pregnant now they will be able to complete the first semester.

I have read that reliable birth control is hard to get here in the Philippines. There are condoms, but all too often something goes wrong with them.

Do I care? Does it really matter to me, should they choose one path or the other?

Up until this very moment, I had never considered that this was even a question. There is deep within me this concept that men don't fuck children.

Yes, yes, I know... Lexi is a child in the eyes of society in the USA, but is she really? She was on the edge when I first took her, and now? Now I don't see her as a child.

But, May, Jocelyn, and Katrina... in my Dorchester eyes, they are children. Deep in my acculturated psyche, I never asked myself if it matters to me.

This is not my world. It is theirs. To say that is not a cheap 'get out of jail free' thing. It is the literal truth. I have been told three times already that 'foreigners are not allowed to stay here as a right, rather it is a privilege that we are allowed to stay.' It is a privilege ... a courtesy that can be revoked at any time.

This is their nation and they establish the rules. They decide what is permissible. Three mothers, and one father, put three girls under my roof. That was their decision, apparently happily made.

So, once again, does it matter to me, which path each of them chooses to take?

I can tell myself that it shouldn't. I can rationalize that this place runs on a different set of rails. And it is more than a rationalization. It is the absolute truth.

So why does it bother me? Why do I want those three mothers and one father to stand up and say, '*No, this is not OK!*' I pretty well know they will do no such thing.

I do know that I will accept their individual decisions. Knowing that makes my head hurt all the more. I need to accept the decision of two fourteen-year-old girls and one not even fourteen.

Oh, Father Dan, pray for my soul. ... But, Father, do me a favor — don't tell Lexi you have done it!

The girls have all scattered to accomplish whatever they need to accomplish. I am left to my thoughts and now to a book, which keeps me company until I am called to dinner.

Dinner is fine. Mel is a good cook and the dinner table conversation revolves around the need for driver's licenses. None of them have such a thing. It turns out that while they know many who have motorcycles, not a one of these individuals has a license... or a helmet for that matter.

The girls tell me there are orange shirted enforcers who will pull riders over and check for such things, impounding the bike if not found, so all the riders seeing the orange shirts ahead just wait by the side of the road until the enforcers leave their assigned post.

I gather the enforcers can't go after the riders who hang back. They can see them but not go towards them. The orange shirts stand out loudly on the road.

Is the plan to just get the truly stupid riders off the road? Anyway, I want these girls all to have licenses as well as helmets.

There is texting to relatives who know folks who do have licenses to learn what is needed. And then, glory be, one relative has a friend who works at what they refer to as the LTO²¹, which I gather is their version of our DMV.

There is a side discussion about what they want me to purchase. My bike is far too big in their eyes. They want something far smaller. They think smaller is safer and smarter. I don't know, maybe it is. But nothing will be safe unless they are wearing real shoes and not flip flops, slacks and not dresses or shorts with bare legs, and not unless they are wearing gloves, not to mention helmets! I have seen no safety equipment or sensible attire on any rider here. No one.

What I have seen are kids in t-shirts, shorts, flip-flops, and nothing else threading through traffic. It is a frightening sight, and unfortunately, a common one.

The girls know my feelings on this, as I have spouted forth on the subject a couple of times. There is no reason to discuss it now.

At no time does the buying of land and building a house arise. But the fact that it doesn't is more a case of not having a mental box to fit it in. It is so far outside their life experience that they have no reference point at which to start a conversation. Maybe it will as we start actually looking for land.

The dishes are cleared. With seven sets of hands, all is cleaned and put up in no time flat. I am retiring back to my current book when Lexi comes to me and plops down on my lap.

Craig, ... ummm... do you ... And then nothing further is spoken, but tears appear.

I hold her tightly, kiss her cheeks and wait.

²¹ Land Transportation Office. (I gather the concept of land transport is a concept that came long after seaborne transport and therefore the designation. Boats can have motors, too! And so, a division of motor vehicles, could theoretically include ocean craft, I guess.)

You want the baby?

Yes. Of course! Why do you ask?

You never tell me... you know... you never say...

Say what?

How you feel?

Have I been mean to you?

Not what I mean! Oh! Why you not know?

And then, I think I do know.

Do you mean, I have never told you I love you?

Yes! Yes! Why? Why you not say it? You not love me?

Lexi, I love you and I want our child. Truly, I do.

Really?

Yes, really.

Why you not tell me this?

Why is it needed? Do I not act with love?

Why you not say it?

Is saying it important?

Yes!

What if I say it but not act that way?

Hub?

Well, words are just words. Actions have meaning. Words can be untrue.

Actions are not.

Confusing! It important you say it, Craig. You not say it to any of us. This is true.

I just hold her, kissing her neck and cheek. We are quiet. She, a girl who carries my child, and me, the old father. She is my girl. I do love her and value her. She, who arrived initially under a cloud and has proved herself to be special and important. She, who perceived the error in my land trust conditions, as it might hurt her child. She, who I have a special place for in my heart. Lexi is no one's fool. And that makes her presence here all the more important as I navigate a world I often do not understand.

Me and Jana tonight?

Yes.

Jana loves you too. Tell her!

OK, Lexi, OK.

Good, I go now.

And off she goes.

I settle in with my book and get maybe three pages read when Jana appears and sits on the arm of my chair, leaning into me, with an arm around my shoulders.

Craig, please tell Lexi that you love her. She scared.

I did.

When? She not hear it!

How do you know that?

We talk this morning. She tell me.

Ask her now.

You tell her?

Yes. I told her I love her. I do love her, and I love you, Jana. Why do you girls think I don't have love for you?

You not say it!

What is more important? The act of loving or the words?

Both! Need both!

Jana, I am building a world for all of us. Why would I do that for all of you if I didn't love you? Why?

Because we take care of you?

There! Damn! She sees it. She sees the quid pro quo. She is completely cognizant of the economic reality that defines our life together. Do they all? They must, right? Is that why they want to hear me say I love them? Is it the balm to cover the wound they feel for making the deal which they have made with me? If I love them and they love me, then the reality can be whitewashed and we all move forward with head high?

Couldn't I just hire maids for that? Why send you to school? Why buy the motorcycles?

I don't say, I am doing it to assuage my guilty feelings. I don't say I am doing it to try to salvage some good out of this wrong. No, I have obfuscated. I will continue to, as well. I don't see like I have any choice in the matter. Besides, I am falling in love with them. At least I think I am.

So why you not tell us?

Jana! I was telling you via my actions!

You have to say it, silly. It needed. And that is followed by a nice kiss before she also scoots away to some unknown task.

It takes a bit before I can free my brain of the tunnels of confusion I am lost within. But finally, I can return to me reading.

I have about ten pages read this time before Katrina appears some ten paces from me and asks, *Sir Craig, it OK if we talk?*

Yes, sure. It's fine.

Why you make us decide?

Hub? I am not sure what you are asking.

Why we have to decide to have a baby or not? We are your girls. You decide this. We will agree.

I want to tell them that this is the way a child sees a parent but not how a girlfriend sees her guy. Yeh, I want to, but I don't know this culture and I need guidance. Maybe I am wrong. After all, even in the USA, women were chattel until about one hundred years ago and men did have the say over adult women. Is it similar to that here now?

Katrina, before I answer, would you please ask Lyn to join us here?

OK, Po.

Lyn appears a few minutes later with Katrina in tow.

Before I can ask Lyn anything, she announces, *Craig, we really need a karaoke system. The girls all want to sing.*

OK, we can discuss that later. I need to ask you some questions and I need to hear the complete truth. OK?

Trouble? I in trouble?

No Lyn, you are not in trouble and since all seem to be wondering today, I do love you. Now, please calm down and listen... I do not understand your culture well enough and I need clarity. ... When a woman becomes a girlfriend, is it her right to decide when she is ready to have children? Or is it the guy who decides?

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You mean, can I say 'no sex' to you? I not want to say that, Craig. I want it and I want your child! Why you ask this?

I am not talking about you, Lyn. I am asking can a girlfriend say no? Or must a girlfriend do what the man says, always?

I think, we must do. If he say do it, then it to be done. Maybe the girl say 'why that?' but she do it. If she the girlfriend and she not want, then she must leave, I think. To disobey and stay, that not work. Cause fight. Best to leave.

So if a woman does not want to leave, she will do and not argue?

Yes, this true.

Katrina asked me why I ask her what she wants and not just tell her. Is it wrong for me to ask what she wants?

Ah, OK, no, you right. It OK to ask what she want. That showing respect. You not have to show respect, but you do and that is good, I think.

OK, so, stay here while I say what I think I should to Katrina.

Lyn flashes her eyebrows.

Katrina, come here please. She had been standing back, somewhat behind Lyn. As the girl moves forward, I continue. There is a difference between how you are with your mother and as a girlfriend to me. Your mother will tell you what you are to do and you are to obey. It is the duty of a child to a parent. Do you agree?

Yes, Po.

But even though at your age, it is not normal for you to be a girlfriend to a man like me, there are times you need to choose, to decide things without my direction. This is one of those times. I understand that I could have told you what to do. I do not want to do so. I really want you to decide and I will accept the decision you make. But just so we are clear on this... I will love you no

matter what decision you make. You are mine and that will not change. Do you understand?

So I have to decide? You will not tell me?

Yes, you really have to decide.

Why you being difficult?

How is giving you the freedom to decide being difficult?

It is!

Well, then, I am difficult.

Why I not allowed to do both?

How do you propose that?

If I pregnant I not go to school that year. I go next year.

I look at Lyn and ask, Is that possible?

No, I not think it is. But there is home study. That possible.

So, if home study is possible, then she can do both?

I think yes.

How do we find out about this?

Best if her mother ask the school. Tell them that because of family situation this may be needed. Find out how it done.

OK, please arrange this, if the mother wants to assist. Do not pressure the mother!

Ha! Craig, I not think the mother will say this is pressure.

Yes, so it seems. ...OK ... Katrina, if home study is possible, then you can have both. But... you still have to decide. It will be that you will have a third option. But you still have to choose.

Po. I not understand.

Option one is go to school and no sex. Option two is sex and if you get pregnant then no school. Option three will be sex and when you get pregnant you will do home school.

Why that an option? If it is possible, we do it!

Uh-huh. OK, Lyn, please see what can be learned. In the meantime Katrina, we will wait.

OK, Po. I understand.

They both withdraw but I am drained and am not really ready to pick up the book again. I am just sitting. My mind is circling back over what has transpired this evening when Mel appears... For crying out loud, what now?

I look at her, not saying a word, just wondering.

Sir, maybe you would like something to drink? Rum or brandy?

Are they mind readers?

Yes, some rum please.

Yes, good. Some nights need rum. No? Says the barmaid that she was.

Yes. Yes, Mel. ... Mel, do you need me to tell you that I love you?

No, Sir. I know. No need to say.

Good for you, Mel. Good for you. Yes, some rum, please.

And good for the rum, as it slides down my throat and calms my disposition. I may not be reading right now, but I am no longer agitated.

I have never, until I gathered up these girls, had to ask myself if I was up to engaging in sex tonight. But, as I enter my bedroom, there sit both Jana and Lexi. Last night I had sex with Mel. This morning it was Lyn. Lexi's pregnant, but not so pregnant that sex is off the table and Jana... well, Jana has a look in her eyes that requires no effort of mind reading. She wants a good hard fucking.

All I can do is hope she can get me in the mood ... and that has me almost laughing out loud, though only a smile crosses my face. The world has turned inside-out.

Jana is a pretty girl and I am far too struck by the attractiveness of each of them to be blasé about it. When the girls are just going about the tasks of the day, it is hard not to notice them and their beauty. But, when they want to get your attention, there are things they do that make ignoring impossible.

I promise you, I am not ignoring Jana right now.

It takes only a few minutes before I am naked and Jana is under me. Jana wants me right where I am — my member deep within the smooth walls of her tight, hot, and juicy cunt. She isn't speaking. I have not said a word. The sounds are those of the movement of our bodies, the sheets, the mattress, and the bedframe.

Lexi is with us, but not engaging. She is nothing more than a voyeur, or possibly a concierge, able and willing to take care of any details that might arise.

Nothing that has transpired today is interfering with what is transpiring now. Jana's athletic body and my far less toned one work with passion. Her sweet tits shaking beneath me. Her eyes staring up at me. Her hands grasping me. Her cunt's liquids both lubricating and making noisy proof of our efforts.

I feel the heat of her body. I feel the desire she has. Jana is a marvel. A lovely, sweet, sexy, young marvel who wants all I am giving her and would readily accept more if there was more to give.

I am not thinking of the meaning of this act. Is she? She, the one who not long ago wanted to know if I loved her; is she thinking about love? Is she thinking about commitment? Is she thinking about getting pregnant like Lexi?

I do not know. I will never know. All I know is that which our bodies know. Does it matter? I know that I am feeling the need to

cum inside Jana's hot cunt. That matters, and I am quite sure she wants to feel my cum. I am sure that matters to her.

How long have we been going at it? I have no clue. I have lost track of time. Jana is sweating. I am sweating. I am cumming.

Jana, Lexi and I find comfort in each other's arms for the night. No more is expected of me and for that I am supremely grateful, as I don't have any more to offer other than sincere and honest joy that both of them are with me.

Morning comes and Jana finds a way to leave the bedroom first, giving Lexi time alone with me.

Though Lexi is pregnant, she is not so far along that lovemaking is out of the question. And, it seems, it is very much on the girl's mind as she playfully harasses me as we lay in bed.

I am not going to outdo Lexi in playfulness. That much is clear. If I want to get her to knock it off, I can only do what I suspect she hopes I will do, make love to her.

I believe that Lexi's breasts are more sensitive than they were before. When I try to play with her nipples, something she used to enjoy, she is now experiencing real pain.

I have no proof, but suspect this is related to her pregnancy. Recognizing that, I give her breasts more gentle attention and that does the trick. She is really enjoying my adjusted attentions, maybe even far more than she used to ... so long as I don't directly touch the nipples, as I play with her tits. It doesn't take but a couple of seconds to figure all this out and the results are impressive. It is like I flipped a switch.

Before, she was all about getting me in the mood. Now that the switch has been flipped, it is pretty much... 'Oh my God! Fuck me now! Right now!'

Lexi always liked sex, but I have never seen her like this. If I don't drive her ass into the mattress and do it fast, she is going to blow a gasket.

I am not hard as a rock but there is enough going on that I can mount the girl. She doesn't really care, so long as I get that damned cock of mine inside her.

In I go.

I am deep cunt diving with my probe. No matter what I do, Lexi is pregnant now and there is no way she can get more pregnant. This is just for fun, I guess. But it is more than that, too. This is Lexi and me being a couple. Not an exclusive couple... she knows that, but it doesn't lessen the sense of being a couple.

This girl who is grafted onto my life, because of her need to protect her older sister, is now mine for reasons that have nothing to do with her sister. Her need to protect Mel is no longer operative. She is with me now and will stay with me for reasons of her heart... and her womb. At least, that is how it seems to me.

Is that love the reason for this out of control need? I don't think it is. Is it a side effect of the pregnancy? It may be. I don't know enough to say.

I can say that, as hard as I am pounding her cunt, she seems to be willing to take even more if I was capable of delivering more.

She felt pain when I was just playing with her nipples before. What if I do so now as I am skewering her cunt? Will I get the same reaction?

I try. I try touching a bit more than just grazing a nipple, but not mauling it either. She goes fucking nuts. Lexi almost levitates off the bed and screams bloody murder — but in a good way. She is cumming hard. I'll be damned... she isn't stopping.

This has got to be the most erotic thing I have ever experienced. She has become a cum machine, a sex doll. And I, too, trip a breaker. Lexi receives my cum.

We are just lying there, side by side. I am exhausted. I look over at her. Lexi is just looking at me, wild-eyed. *What you do? Oh, my God, Craig. What you do?*

There is nothing I can say. I just smile, and rest for a bit.

We are late getting downstairs and there is much I want to do today. Principal among the things are the two motorcycles I want to purchase, and getting the money from the bank for the HiAce van needs to happen probably before that.

But, as I am eating my breakfast of fried rice and corned beef, it occurs to me that I had promised the folks at the agency that dealt with the cable TV company that I would text them my new phone number once I got back here. I have failed to do it. I was provided a number for them. It's in my wallet. Digging it out, I send a brief message with the complete number in case the number doesn't display automatically on their end.

To my surprise, five minutes later, I get a return text. The cable company has reneged on their agreement to void the contract. They are demanding my postal address.

Do I have a postal address? The girls think I might and go to retrieve the lease document. The document does not explicitly provide a postal address and Lyn thinks I should stop by the PHLPost office and ask them, lease agreement in hand. So that gets added to today's list as I need to fax the lease agreement back to the agency as well.

I text back asking for their fax number with an explanation that I will be using a public fax and doubt that I will be able to receive faxes. This is just so I can send them something.

Whoever is on the other side, texts me another phone number.

I text back once more saying that I will attempt to provide the address in the next 24 hours but the fax of my house lease will be sent in the next few hours.

The girls need to go to the NSO to get the birth certificates. Lyn, Jana, Lexi, and Mel all need to get student driver permits from the LTO. It turns out that Jana and Lexi will need parental permission but all can get the student licenses.²² The LTO also needs an authenticated NSO birth certificate. Between looking for the bikes and time at the NSO, the girls are going to be very busy.

Lyn tells me there is long queueing at the NSO each and every day. Jana and Lexi text their mothers for permission letters. I ask Lexi why she asked her mother and not her father, but just get a blank stare. I gather it is a dumb question.

There is more discussion about the birth certificates. It turns out that Lyn has two already.

Mel, Lexi and Jana each have one but need another. Those three will proceed to the NSO as Lyn comes with me for the bikes.

Yesterday I noticed a Honda VTR250 sitting near the entrance to Holy Trinity College. I liked the looks of it. A number of the bikes here have manufacturer's names I have never heard of. I have no way to judge the quality of those unknown brands. Honda and Yamaha are names I trust. And so, today we will see if any Honda dealer in town has one of these. The last time I was looking for a motorcycle, almost none of them had even a 200cc sized engine. In truth, most were 150cc or smaller.

Lyn says a 115 is all she needs. The tires on those small ones aren't much bigger than a bicycle's tires. Considering the potholes she will hit every day, she needs more of a bike, if we want to keep it out of the shop.

But the first stop is the bank. With bankbook in hand, I withdraw what is needed for the van. They don't do cashier's checks. I have a

²² Later the age limit is increased from 16 to 17 but, in 2003, Lexi can get a student permit.

huge pile of thousand peso notes. Each bundle of one thousand notes is a couple of inches thick. I have forty inches of thousand pesos notes. This is untenable! And yet there is no other way.

I have Lyn run down to a store that sells large envelopes. We stuff the cash in those. We tape them together, get back on the bike and ride fast as I can, safely, to the Toyota dealer. There we pay for the van and sign a shitload of paperwork. In the process I eat up far more of the day than I had hoped to spend here.

But, finally, we are done. I wish it was now time for the motorcycles, but I need to fax the lease agreement. Lyn tells me there is a place right by the Sydney hotel that does this and so that is our next stop.

Thankfully we are close to the hotel and the process of sending the fax takes only a few minutes. That done, we are finally going to look at motorcycles.

There are a number of places in the city selling Hondas and the first two we check out don't have the model I am looking for. By the time we find the third place, it is almost lunchtime, a point Lyn is making, as she sees my search for the 'right bike' as a fool's errand. 'Almost' lunchtime doesn't cut it for me. I want to go in and see what we can find.

The third time is the charm. I find a cherry red VTR250. Lyn is horrified. There is no way she wants that much machine between her legs. I smile and tell her, *Just think of it as one of the many hardships you will have to bear as my girlfriend.*

A salesman is standing close by and evidently hears me, as he begins to laugh. Lyn does not think this is a matter for levity and (I learn later) tells the guy he is being rude and nosey. At the time, all I know is that he stops laughing.

He is really not laughing when I tell him I want two of these bikes. The reason he isn't is that he only has one ... and he is not sure if he can get another. I give up on Honda for now. Maybe I need to expand my search.

Lyn is happy to hear that, but mentions once again that maybe we could get a bite to eat?

It is well past noon now and I suspect I am being a little too tunnel-visioned. *OK, where do you want to eat? Are we going home?*

What? No! No, my love. See? Over there?

That place?

Yes! I want to go there. You can have a burger! OK?

Sure.

And so, five minutes later we are walking into a place with a bee as a mascot. They do sell burgers here, and I order two “Yum Burgers” and fries. I learn later that I should have ordered the fried chicken. Live and learn. The burgers come with a sauce, but so do Big Macs. I don’t think a thing about it until I bite in. Goddamn, the thing is sweet!

I peel the top bun off and using what amounts to little more than a tissue, though Lyn swears it is a napkin, I wipe as much of the sauce as I can off the thing. Once done, the burgers are a bit more palatable. Lyn orders spaghetti. I have never heard of spaghetti in a fast food joint, but then I have never been in a Jollibee before. I take a taste. It, too, is incredibly sweet... and, I kid you not, there are chunks of hotdogs in it.

Lyn is loving it and thanking me for this wonderful treat. I just keep my impressions of the place to myself and tell her I am happy she is enjoying it so much.

Once this lunchtime stop is over, we ride over to a Suzuki dealer I saw as we were riding around earlier. There I find a TU-250. It’s an off-white with electric start and they have two of them. Just two, but then, that’s all I need. That the dealer will be out of stock is not my problem. (He tells me he always wants one on hand. My taking two is making the guy miserable. Go figure.)

Lyn is not complaining that it is too much bike, though in truth it is heavier than the Honda. It just doesn't look as sporty. I know she doesn't have a license, but she assures me she knows how to operate it. I stay in the store and she gets to take it for a short spin.

It doesn't take long before she is back with a damn big grin on her face. She likes it. That doesn't surprise me one bit. Sure, she thought a 115cc unit (or smaller) was all she needed, but she had never operated a larger bike. Being a passenger doesn't tell you anything. You have to be in control of it.

This one is clearly no behemoth, but it is about twice as much bike as the ones she has operated up to now, and the responsiveness makes a difference. I buy both of the bikes.

As the guy knows I rode up on a bike, he wants to know how I am going to take both of these bikes with me. He doesn't see Lyn texting Jana.

6

I need to find if I have a mailing address, so the next stop is the post office. It turns out that it is also not too far away. I go in with Lyn. Jana stays with the bikes as our security guard.

My request causes a bit of confusion. We are eventually brought up to the second floor where I meet the postmaster. He seems like a nice enough fella. Lyn and I field a number of questions, I show him the lease agreement and, after a few minutes, he writes down on a scrap of paper what amounts to an address.

It's a little odd, as it references a landmark, the color of our roof and the number of floors of the house, but I guess it will work.

Next stop is the attorney's office. While I want to use the birth certificates we have for the LTO, I ask if he can get started with photocopies of authenticated ones. He can, and so after delivering the copies to him, I think I am almost done for the day.

Tomorrow, the girls will go to the LTO, armed with the NSO documents and permission letters, and they will hopefully each receive a student driving permit.

But today, I have almost done all I can do. We ride three abreast all the way back to the house. The last thing on the list is to text the mail address back to Boston. I would love to see their faces when they see the actual address.

With Noika's keypad... and one line at a time, it takes a while to tap out the message. But, the address needs a bit of setup. At least I think it does, and so what I send is:

*OK, here is the address. I know it looks
weird, but I got it from the local
postmaster. Line 1: Craig Byrne
Line 2: Three story house / Red roof /
Near Horizon Spa
Line 3: City Heights, General Santos City
9500*

*Line 4: Philippines
Please text me if there are any issues.*

And with that done, my tasks for the day are complete. I know that the recipient of the text will be asleep. I just hope they don't sleep with the phone next to them.

Tomorrow I get the day off, though the girls will be busy with the LTO.

As to who I will be with tonight, I have not even considered it. All four have been bedded in the past two nights and I am looking forward to the possibility of a quiet night.

Craig?

Yes? What is it, Lyn?

The mothers, they come over now.

What mothers?

The girl's mothers. Why you not know?

Hub?

Katina, Jocelyn and May. The mothers!

Oh! OK, why?

Home study! You ask them. Remember? I text them. They coming now. They want to talk.

OK, so talk to them, Lyn. They don't have any English, so I can't talk to them anyway.

No, Craig, you must do it. They have some English. You are wrong. They just shy before. We will translate if it needed.

You know that will not work. I will say two words and then you will be talking for an hour. Just tell me how it all works out.

No! This important. You must do it.

OK, OK.

Having received my acquiescence, Lyn departs to await the three visitors. This will be a farce.

I will be standing, or sitting there, and they will be jabbering away saying God knows what. But it appears that my presence is required regardless of the reality. We went through this on the street in front of the high school that first day. We didn't say anything to each other when they came here that night. This won't be any different, now.

We haven't eaten dinner yet and I wonder how long this is going to take. I am in for another lesson in Filipino culture. Yes, they are coming to talk, but first they and their families are coming for supper. The three women, the one husband, and all the kids. They are all here. My three are having a blast with their younger siblings.

Mel, Jana, Lexi and Lyn are busy in the kitchen and are joined by the three mothers. They will eat our food, but they will also have a hand in preparing it. It's a damned party! What is the party about?

Well, hell, it's about the possibility that I am going to knock-up their young teen daughters. Go fucking figure. This is nuts. You just have to know, if they were having any problem with the concept, it would not be the party atmosphere we have here now.

Supper takes a bit longer to get on the table, but no one cares. There is laughter. There is singing, even though there is no karaoke here. I am hugged, and kissed on the cheek, and patted on the back. It is madness.

Supper is much like the pre-meal. All are elated. The discussion that follows relates to whether we will pay for curriculum from an organization that runs a home study program, hire a licensed teacher, or just purchase materials and do it ourselves. I am for the first option, but I gather that distance from these institutions offering the courses may pose a problem.

However, it is clear that this is a perfectly legal way to educate kids here and there will be no problem.

Another thing is also clear. These moms have some English skills.

So long as I am paying the bill, the moms don't have any concern. They just hope the offspring that come from their daughters' loins will be as white as possible. And yes, I got that pearl without the need for translation.

Everyone is happy except for... me. This puts all three of these young kids in my bed. Luckily, even though it is not a school night — school being out for the summer — adults need to go to work in the morning and all are gone by nine.

And that's both good and bad, because... Jocelyn wants in my bed, tonight. Her argument is that May has already done the deed and so she, Jocelyn, is next in line. I guess I can say that May didn't get the full treatment, but that just puts May back in my bed and Jocelyn would be right back the next day.

I don't want any of them in my bed. Never in my life, before May, and I'll be damned if I want to count her, have I ever been with a girl so young. OK, so Lexi was fifteen when I took her, and that was too young. But barely fourteen? Man alive, it is getting worse and worse. Jocelyn only turned fourteen last month. And still, I said OK to it, so my unease is a little bit on the self-serving moral outrage side of the ledger.

Right now, Lyn and Lexi have her in a bedroom, doing what? Getting her done up with makeup? Giving her instructions? This is so wrong in so many different ways I just can't count them all. And yet, just what am I complaining about? I have agreed to it.

Up to now, I have remained as formal as I can with the youngest three. For instance, I call her Jocelyn. Her nickname is Li-Li²³, or

²³ Pronounced as Lee-Lee, the 'P' being sounded as a hard 'E.'

Li2x if you prefer to write it that way. (Some might even write is as Li2.)

Maybe the formality I was enforcing doesn't make any difference, but I was trying to create space between us in every way I could think of. But now, that space is to be obliterated. Tonight, Li2x is entering my bed.

I ask Jana if one of them will join us and all I get back is a snicker. I gather I am on my own.

My cellphone makes some noise. I have a text from Boston.

The cable TV company is sending you a registered letter. If they get a return receipt, and you mail them the enclosed form back, they say they will process the release from the contract. Please keep us informed.

I text back a simple,

OK.

A little before ten, Lexi appears and suggests I retire to my bedroom. Nothing subtle about that! Feeling pretty weird about it all, I climb the two flights of stairs and enter my bedroom unaccompanied.

Standing in the center of the room, there before me, is Jocelyn/Li2x. Her hair has been curled into lazy ringlets. She has makeup on her cheeks. There is a muted color of lipstick and what must be mascara present on her.

She is dressed, not in a pretty frock, or sexy slip, but in her school uniform. The socks and shoes are missing, but the blouse, skirt, and neck scarf are all here. The makeup allows for a different sense of her. Maybe a bit more mature and less childlike. The uniform announces exactly what I am about to do in no uncertain terms.

Li2x, whose idea was it to dress you in your uniform?

Lexi say this is best.

I have no doubt she did. Lexi wants me to see her school chums much the same way, and she doesn't want me to forget exactly what I am about to do. Lexi isn't subtle and she has an agenda.

I decide, for my sanity, it is better to see the girl naked as opposed to in this uniform. I approach her and tell her exactly what I intend to do, if not the 'why' of it. I don't think she is opposed to getting with the program and so I am more than a little surprised when the girl tells me there is no need to undress her. She has no underwear on. All that needs to happen is for me to get undressed.

Is this another instruction from Lexi?

Yes, Sir. Lexi say the first time we do it I just lift my skirt up. She say, Sir will enjoy this!

Right now I could throttle Lexi! I don't want to argue with this kid. I don't want to start this off with bad feelings, but Lord Almighty, what the fuck is Lexi trying to accomplish other than having me desensitized to fucking schoolgirls?

Best to just get this over with. I remove my clothing and ask Jocelyn to join me on the bed.

The girl mounts the bed, spreads her legs and pulls her skirt up. This is not about romance. This is not about emotional bonds. This is an act of membership initiation; ... and of submission? This is so wrong, and there is no way I can make it right.

Mounting the bed and placing myself above Jocelyn, I move my member up and down over her labia. It is not dry, but not because of female secretions. She has been lubed up.

I am not sure her legs are stretched wide enough and so I gather them up in my arms, spread them out, while at the same time lifting her ass a bit off the mattress. I press my cock into her cunt, slowly. Ever so slowly I breach what exists of her hymen and then push deep into the girl.

Deep into the schoolgirl. Into the young schoolgirl, a fact Lexi wanted me to fully see and absorb.

There she lies below me. She in her uniform. My cock buried in her cunt. She, seemingly, happy I am there. We are in sync as we find the rhythm of our lovemaking.

The age difference is of no consequence now, though I think it should. But, no ... now, we are partners in this act. A smile spreads across her face. My cock is happy in its new home as she does juice up. Her cunt is heating up.

As we continue to fuck, and as silly as it may sound, I ask, *May I take your blouse off now?*

Li2x giggles before saying, *Yes, please.*

She has no bra, or anything else beneath the blouse. I ask, *Can we stop to remove your skirt?*

Don't stop. I not wear it next time. Promise.

It's not like I am fucking a tiny kid. Li2x has breasts. She has secondary female characteristics. As my brain takes in that piece of intelligence, if not consciously, then at least subconsciously, I get harder and my desire for Li2x grows.

For a while, I have not been paying attention to the girl. I have been inside my own head and inside my own lust. I look down at this young girl I am plowing and all I see is happiness and greedy acceptance. She wants this. It is not passive acceptance. If it be submission, it is also true that she is working the love making and trying to get the most out of me.

I have not touched her breasts, but I do now. I pinch a nipple and she goes ape-shit with passion. Her eyes are wide open. Her mouth is open as if to scream, but no sound comes forth.

I pinch her nipple again and she does scream. She is bucking below me. She begins grunting. Her legs are thrashing around. I roll over

onto my back and pull her up on top of me. We are still connected, cock in cunt.

It takes her a bit to figure out what has happened and what her options are and, then, she goes nuts bouncing on me. I begin to have real concerns should she come down wrong on my cock. Using my hands, I slow her down a bit.

She responds by moving her cunt in a circular motion as she stays flat on me, pelvis to pelvis.

I reach up and squeeze a nipple again. She cries out and seems to cum. At least, I think she has cum, as muscles in her cunt feel like they are doing a line dance on my cock.

That has the effect of transmitting to my nuts that it is time to give Li2x what I have. But I don't want to do that on my back. I roll her over and fuck her with all I have as I unload all the cum there is to deliver into her waiting and willing cunt.

With the others, they know what cum feels like and take it all with some aplomb. Li2x had no idea and, as the cum hits her, she starts calling for Mother Mary. I almost laugh and call her my little Marist Nun.

As it is, I wrap her up in my arms and hold her tight until she pretty well just melts her body into mine.

Small kisses, from me onto her and from her onto me, follow. There are no words said. It is quiet, peaceful, and in its own confounded way, it is right.

Night passes and morning arrives with Li2x right there by my side and a smile on her face. She is very much awake and, I gather, just lying there watching me sleep. But now that I have awakened, she gets out of bed and starts folding up that uniform she wore last night.

It is the very last time Li2x will ever wear a school uniform with me in bed. She asks me if I will please put it away someplace safe as a

reminder, a memory of our special day. She has others, but this one is special.

As she has no other clothing in the room, she borrows one of my shirts before going downstairs. I am still in the bedroom as she walks out. There is something different about her, now. It's a subtle difference, but it is there. I suspect it is a sense of place, or belonging. She knows now that she is home.

And, I am still in the bedroom, a few minutes later, when Lexi walks in without knocking.

Well?

Well, what, Lexi?

I bring friends, now? OK?

You mean to visit you? You could always do that.

You allow my friends too? Just like Li2x and May?

Why? Why, Lexi? There are more people here than I wanted already.

Craig, please, just meet them. OK? There is a glint in Lexi's eyes. To make me happy? You love me? Correct? So this makes me happy. OK?

OK, Lexi. OK.

That gets me a hug and a good kiss, before she tells me I should go downstairs. She will finish up putting the room right.

When I do get downstairs, there are two more girls in their uniforms, with curled hair and makeup on. May and Katrina have expressions of determination and intent. There can be no mistaking it for anything else.

Mel serves me some breakfast and announces that all who need student driver permits are leaving now. That puts me home with my three youngest ones... two of whom are intent of getting fucked from the looks of it.

There is a concept of the “come to Jesus” moment. I guess it was initially meant as a moment when a Protestant Christian accepted Christ into his or her life. I think there is another meaning to it now... a time when the veils drop, you see reality and finally understand and accept it.

Since the very beginning, since January, I had been trying to shoehorn my life here into my understanding of my world as a kid whose life was shaped by my upbringing in Dorchester. By my life as it was shaped by the Nuns at school and by Father Dan.

At first, I was playing fast and loose. I was wondering, what can I get away with? And then there was the reaction of, ‘no, no... this can’t possibly be right!’ I was swallowing hard as I took step after step, but feeling far from OK in the process.

At this moment, I am having my own come to Jesus moment, in the second sense of that phrase. It is a moment of clarity and understanding. For the first time I am coming to grips with the full meaning of my choice to make this place my home.

Last night, three mothers seemed genuinely happy that I was taking their daughters as mine, in the most biblical sense. They meant it. These girls are, for all intents and purposes, three more wives. It is the desire of the girls and the joy of their families. Yes, maybe... no, most assuredly... it is a function of economic realities, but isn’t all human history simply a summation of economic realities at any given moment and place?

This moment, this place, is what my life is about here. This is not Dorchester. This is not the USA. I am here and my life is about my life here and nowhere else.

The fight inside my heart, has not been about the right and wrong of what is happening here. It has been about my inability to accept the realities of this life.

I am not fighting them and their culture, I am having a fight with myself. The moment of clarity is that I know, I will never be at

peace until I shed that which fights against the very choice I have made, the choice to live here.

I look at these two girls in their schoolgirl attire and decide it is time to accept this world, as strange as it is, and just get on with it.

And as that really sinks into my innermost sense of self, I wonder, which of the three will get pregnant first?

The way forward...

1

They really are cute. There is no doubt that I am going to fuck them. They all want it and I accept the reality of it. There will be no pushback from me ever again. I will plow them well and good. But I am not going to do both of them at the same time. Who goes first?

I can see rationale for either choice. There is no clear reason to pick one over the other.

Both of you will be with me today. Maybe, both before supper tonight. But one has to go first and the second must wait a few hours. You two need to choose. Who goes first?

It doesn't take them long to work it out. I am with Katrina now. May will join me later. For all her bravado earlier, Katrina (or Dido²⁴, as that is her nickname) is nervous and shy. From the moment the bedroom door closes behind us, all the confidence falls away.

Just yesterday, I would have used this as a way to get out of fucking the girl. As I walked down to breakfast this morning, that same intent would still have been present. But it isn't present anymore.

I simply close the distance between us and commence to unbutton Dido's blouse. It may be surprising the girl a bit, but she isn't fighting me.

She isn't fighting me as I take the blouse off her. She isn't fighting me, as I unbutton and lower the zipper on her school plaid skirt. She isn't fighting me, as I lower the skirt down to the floor and

²⁴ dee-DOH

have her step away from it. She isn't fighting me, as I bring her to the bed and place her on it.

She really is a cute kid. And there is ample evidence of her sexual nature from the peach fuzz on her cunt and the small but nicely rounded breasts.

Dido can't be more than four foot eight inches. But that doesn't tell me much. Her mother is no taller than is she.

I have not kissed her, and here I am, naked, with my cock in hand, moving up and down across Dido's virginal entrance, not penetrating, just gathering any secretions should they exist.

Dido's cunt is dry. It isn't much of a problem. A few minutes of manual attention resolves the matter quite nicely, and it also helps with the giggles and shyness. Dido is 'with the program,' as it were.

If you are wondering if there is a difference when fucking a thirteen-year-old, the answer is not too damned much when compared to a seventeen or eighteen-year-old. But comparing it to a forty-year-old? Yes, a huge difference.

So, can I explain it? As to that, I am not sure I can fully. There are the simple things. Age most assuredly changes all of us. In a way, I guess you can say, in most cases, our bodies thicken. So that is different. These girls are spry, limber, with skin that shows no distress, no signs of wear and tear.

The enthusiasm is different. That is not to say the older woman doesn't want sex, but the younger one in a weird way is aching for it in a way that diminishes over the years.

The older one will get off, but the level of engagement with her partner isn't as strong. And you will get off with the older one, but it will be for you alone and not as much for her.

With the young ones, your happiness, your approval, your instructions, your passion for them is truly hard to quantify. It just exists. It frames the entire session. The engagement with her is

more complete. It is not just the physical act. There are words, looks, kisses, and most importantly, there is joy.

Dido is a wonder. This being the first time, she has much to learn and is completely inexperienced. We are not going to add much in the way of variety this time. No, this time it is a straight-ahead missionary position face-to-face fuckathon.

I have grown large inside her. Every time I run in to her with a good strong plunge, Dido gasps. My cock is filling her passage completely. There is no additional space to be found. She is so small that she can't wrap her legs around me and those legs are spread as wide as she can make them. I am just too large a man for a girl her size.

But, that reality is of no importance to her right now. She would start to scream if I were to stop. I have no intention of stopping. None.

Dido's breasts are very small, but they may always be small. The nipples are dark brown pebbles in the middle of gentle rises. She likes it when I play with them, but there isn't much breast to cup. The nipples move so completely with the rest of her body as I fuck her that there is no way to cup a breast and play with it as we fuck, on and on.

I get a sense that her body is reaching a limit. Maybe another day, if sensing her need to stop, I would stop. Today all it seems to do is get me into a place that needs relief. I am getting even harder and larger, if that is even possible, and I cum convincingly in her little cunt.

She knows it. She feels the cum. I have no way to know how she really feels about it, but she acts in a manner that suggests she is happy. I hope she is, because I have taken her. One day or another she will likely end up carrying a baby of mine to term.

It is done. I have fucked all three, though May's time with me needs the second act, which will occur most likely later today. However, now and for all times going forward, I have seven girls and there is

no meaningful distinction between them to be made other than of age and scholastic achievement.

Seven. If I were to be required to take a polygraph, should the question be asked, did I intend to bed underage girls as I boarded the plane to come here last January, the honest answer would be an unequivocal no. I had no such intent. I had no intent as regards any female, regardless of age, at that moment.

If the question was asked, did I have a fantasy about having a harem, once again the answer would be a clean and convincing no. I only wanted a place to live out my retirement with the greatest ease. I wanted to live like a pasha on a chimneysweep's income. OK, so that is more than a little bit of an exaggeration, but the point is entirely accurate.

I have yet to build a house, but I do believe that I will reach that goal. All the signs point to an impending success. And after the money is spent to build it, there isn't a huge retirement to follow. Yes, we will have enough, living here, ... plenty. But living in Boston? No, I would not have been able to live like a pasha.

It occurs to me that I need to consider exactly what I want built. This house is nice, but there are quirks that I don't understand. Are all the places here equally quirky in the same way? If yes, is there a good reason for it? Are other homes different?

I need perspective and I currently have none. My conservative New England nature tells me to slow down. I need to do more than think about it. I need to check things out and learn all I can. I need to figure out what I want to build before I select a lot to build upon.

That knowledge has flipped a switch in my head. I like planning. I like researching and looking at things from all angles. It may seem like a stodgy and fussy way to be, but those very same traits brought me here in the first place.

I think I am pretty good at looking at the reality on the ground and seeing it for what it is and not what I wish it could be. In a way,

that trait is how I was able to wrap my head around the reality that I just needed to bed the youngest ones. Now, I need to apply that same behavior to the house and lot.

I suspect the best way to do this is to contact some of the other expats here and see how they are living. I need to see their places and ask them questions about what they have and how it is working for them.

I think Lyn has a phone number for that Belgian guy I met the first time I was here. That will be as good a place to start as any. As Lyn is busy at the LTO today, it can wait until tomorrow. Today, I will relax and read until later when I will spend time with May.

Mid-afternoon finds me absorbed in a book when May comes to me and asks for her time. I am not really up for it at the moment, but I will get there soon enough.

There is determination on May's face. It's not that she is happy or sad; she is neither. She is on a mission and the objective is clear. That I am no longer setting obstacles in her path makes it easier, but no less important, that her mission be completed.

I don't think I realized how different these three young ones were from each other before. I am only getting a sense of that now. I was so busy trying to keep them at arm's length that I wasn't really paying attention to them as individuals.

Now they are, each of them, a bedmate. And now it is impossible not to pay attention to them. This May, this girl who has me by my hand and is leading me up to my bedroom, is clearly a different breed of cat from her schoolmates.

The others hewed to my instructions. May didn't. She wanted what she wanted and my rules be damned, she saw an opportunity and she took it.

I really don't think Katrina or Jocelyn would have done that.

Should I be concerned? I am not sure. As of now, she is going to get what she wants without impediment. Are there other things that she has her eyes set on? Will I be one to conspire with or one to conspire against?

Language is a barrier. Sure, she has some English and, on a rudimentary level, we can communicate. But as to her mind, she will not have the language, even if she was inclined to share her feelings. This is not just true for May. It is true for all of them, all seven, to one degree or another.

For me, May is a cypher. They all are at times. Even Jana and Lyn are cyphers in many ways. I know why they are doing what they do most of the time, but not all the time. There is no way I can know them in any real way. Language is the bar.

It's odd. I can predict what they will choose. I can often know why they have made the choice, but not what they really think of their reality with me. That is unknowable.

We have reached my bedroom and, now, May's confidence appears to be gone. She doesn't have a plan for what comes next. Luckily for her, I do.

She is standing five feet from me and looking down at the floor.

Come here, May.

She does, but her eyes are still looking at the floor.

May, do you want to be my girlfriend?

In the softest of voices, I hear, *Yes.*

Then look at me and tell me yes again.

She is still looking at the tile floor. It is incongruous in so many ways.

Let's start with the tiles. These are not linoleum tiles. They are not ceramic or porcelain. They are not twelve by twelve inches squares.

They are just a shade under 24 inch by 24 inch square at 60cm per side and they are made of marble.

The bedroom is huge and ornate. It bears no resemblance to the design of the rest of the house. The furniture in the room is all in a gilded rococo style.

And here on these marble tiles, surrounded by the opulence of the furniture, is this young female whose mother really was so concerned by the cost of tricycles and lunches that she gave her daughter to me and is eagerly waiting for a pregnancy. Was there anything but dirt on the floor of their shack?

This young girl, who has previously sneaked her way onto my cock like a pickpocket lifting a wallet, is too embarrassed to lift up her head and find love eye to eye.

A cock in her cunt? Sure, that is good. Being with me in a romantic manner, that is something else entirely. God forbid if I try to kiss her.

I place my hand, fingers open, under her chin and lift her head up toward mine. I smile. Her lips show me a semi-smile before retreating from the expression.

May, I am going to undress you. And then, I am going to undress. OK?

Yes, Sir.

Good.

She isn't fighting it. Her help is passive at best. It's more like she allows it to happen. This is not a case of 'be careful what you wish for, as you might get it.' She wants this. It is more about how to do it, and what it feels like inside. She is completely unsure of herself, and what she should be doing.

If we were in Dorchester, this simply would not be happening. Someone from that culture might be shouting right now, 'stop!'

I don't think May wants to stop, but I hear the shout inside my head too, even though I now know that such a shout is misplaced here.

May, are you sure this is what you want to do?

Yes! Her answer is screamed out in almost a hysterical fashion. She really wants to be here. I am a jerk for falling into the trap of thinking this is wrong in any way. She just doesn't understand the romantic part.

We are both naked and I move her to the bed. She gets on it without any inducement from me.

May is sweet, small, with light chocolate colored skin. Her skin is lighter than that of her two schoolmates. Her teeth are bright white. Her smile is huge when smiling, which she isn't right now. There are small studs in her ears. Her nails are painted pink. Her breasts exist, but are very small. The dark area around her nipples is about an inch in diameter. The nipples themselves are dark brown and rock hard.

Her hips flair a bit. She clearly has shaved her pussy today as it is baby smooth and glistening with some lotion that she must have applied. I doubt she weighs eighty pounds or wears larger than size four shoes. May is small.

I place one arm around the back of her shoulders and one hand on her cunt. May spreads her legs. Her cunt isn't dripping wet, but as my index finger spreads the labia, I find moisture. She spreads her legs yet a bit wider.

Inserting my finger a little deeper into her elicits a moan. I shove two fingers deep into the girl. Her eyes are wide open as is her mouth. No sound comes forth, but there is surprise on her face.

I try to find her G-spot, but May is feeling some discomfort. I withdraw. I mount the girl and, pushing her legs wide with my hands, I enter her, neither very fast, nor particularly slowly.

May is a small girl, but her cunt accepts me without complaint.

I don't ask her if she is OK. Her face tells me she is doing just fine and I proceed to give the kid a good and long ride. Having just cum only six hours earlier inside her friend, I am not going to unload in the girl quickly.

I am having a fine time with May, but it seems that she is getting sore. We have been at it a good forty-five minutes. That is just more than May can handle.

I should be a good guy and stop. But I am not feeling like a good guy right now. I am at the edge. Rather than back off, I start fucking May with more powerful strokes and a sense of urgency, until... I cum in her cunt.

And now I am done. May is wiped out, but far too proud to admit that I took her too far for too long.

I pull May to me and just hold her for the better part of an hour. It is done. All the girls have now been bedded. No one is outside and looking in.

Will anyone else become pregnant this year? All three of the young ones will return to their regular school in just a few days. Which ones, if any, will need home schooling is unknown. Will they be the only non-virgins in their class? Probably not. But then, I doubt all the young ones in the States are virgins. Some things just don't get talked about.

Dinner is courtesy of the young ones as my other four are stuck at the LTO until five in the evening. The meal is edible if not inspiring. However, that is just fine as we are not thinking about what we are eating. We are talking about the craziness of the hours spent at the LTO.

The girls didn't have any inclination to bribe anyone, and so, they got pushed to the back of every line and there were a lot of lines to negotiate. Eventually, they couldn't be stalled any longer without

the staff having to work overtime, and they got their permits. Each is now legal to operate the motorcycles.

One more item off the list. This was a big one for me as school starts in ten days. We needed the permits before school started. I am not crazy about Lexi riding on a motorcycle in her last two months of pregnancy. I wish she would just stay home, but the girl seems intent on doing the semester.

2

It is entirely possible to get eight of us on three motorcycles. I don't like it, but that seems to be beside the point. Behind me I have Jocelyn and May. Behind Lyn there are Jana and Katrina. Behind Mel is Lexi.

We are just riding around an area a bit north of the house. The girls tell me the place is within the city limits but called San Isidoro. I am sure, I am not sure. I don't yet understand how things are done here.

I gather the city is divided up into smaller portions but when I mention this to Lyn, she tells me that these smaller sections also exist outside the city. So, like I said, I am sure, I am not sure.

The land rises slowly the farther north you go from the bay. Being higher seems to be a good thing as far as the temps and breezes are concerned. If I wanted beach front property, this option would be no good. But I have no need to be on the beach. Plus the girls tell me that this land will be less expensive. That sounds good to me. Cheaper and cooler, what's not to like?

There are no 'for sale' signs, but I gather you just never know. We have been stopping as we go, asking folks about who owns what and how to get in contact with owners. Often we come up dry. The person we speak with most often doesn't have a clue. But we do end up collecting a bunch of information.

We are at this all Saturday. For those potential owners of land for whom we have cell phone numbers, we send texts asking if they have any land for sale. Once again, we don't get positive responses from all we text, but we do get a few positive replies.

And so, on Sunday afternoon we arrange to meet some of these folks at the land they will consider selling. I will not be at these meetings, as all insist that it will drive the cost of the land way up.

Some landowners want to meet on Sunday morning but that is not an option because of my church-going contingent. And Mel needs to be at the meetings along with Lyn and maybe Jana and Lexi.

I am not happy about not being there as I am concerned about the details, but Lyn insists, I must not be there, promising that no commitments will be made. They will find out exactly what is up for sale and what the asking price will be. I can, later, then take a good look at the properties, giving Lyn instructions about whether a piece of land will work and, if it will, what our counter offer should be.

Not all go after Church. But we really want Mel going.

My three younger ones stay with me. Dido has hopes for some playtime in bed, but Li2x rains on her parade. She explains to her friend that I will be getting cell phone calls all afternoon from Lyn and Lexi.

I don't trust the four, who are looking at the properties, to remember all the details of all the places by the end of the day. So after each stop, I want a call with all the details. There are four stops, four properties, four sellers, with four different asking prices.

I ask all four to note the answers to a series of questions I have. If Lyn fails to ask a question, then Mel should. If neither asks about a specific thing, one of the other two should. I think, they think I am being a little excessive. So be it. I don't care. I want the answers to the questions.

I have told the girls to make it clear to each potential seller that we are looking at four properties. Inflated prices will not be entertained. If the seller doubts that claim, the girls are free to disclose where else we are looking. At the same time, they are to make it clear that when we buy it will be a cash sale, and the cash is already here. It probably is, unless I am buying something incredibly expensive, which I don't think will happen, but even if there isn't enough in the bank now, it will be by the time we are ready to sign any papers.

The girls have some rags attached to wooden stakes. I want them to find the corners of each property and stake them. That will allow me to go back out and take a look tomorrow.

It is a long afternoon and it is dark by the time the girls get back to the house, but I have pages of notes.

The prices on the land range from fifty pesos per square meter to one hundred and fifteen pesos per square meter. The smallest piece of land is one thousand square meters and the largest is two hectares.²⁵

The two hectare plot is the one going for fifty pesos per square meter. The location is a way back from any main road, but there is legal access from what the girls tell me. I will look at it tomorrow. Even if I don't get a better price, and I will definitely try, my cost at one million pesos works out to be less than twenty-three thousand dollars. For what amounts to five acres of land inside the city limits, I figure, at that price, it is a good deal.

Of the four properties, only this one and one other is of any interest to me, but if neither pan out I will just look some more. There is no pressure to buy the first ones we see. If the lot proves to have issues as to siting a house, I will take a pass, as I don't have a plan yet.

So tomorrow, we go back out to look at the property. If I like it, I will offer forty-five pesos per square meter. But I am done for tonight. There is nothing more to do with property matters until the morning.

I slept alone Friday night, after bedding two of the girls during the day. I was going to sleep alone last night as well, but Lexi joined me and spent the better part of an hour explaining why I want to meet her friends. If she could be a pain in the ass about that, I decided I could return the favor and we spent a fair bit of time with Lexi learning how to give really good head. As a reward, I ate her out,

²⁵ A Hectare equals ten thousand square meters. An acre is about four thousand square meters. (It is actually 4046.86 square meters. So two hectares is damned close to five acres (4.94211).)

only to hear complaints that she way prefers being fucked good and hard.

Now I am being asked who I will be with tonight.

Mel, will you join me tonight?

She will and so it is done. The others will clean up the kitchen as Mel joins me on the two flight climb up the stairs.

Lexi worries about Mel and I guess I can see why, but now that Mel is attached to me, most of those concerns are resolved. No, not all, but most. As far as being good to me, and good for me, there is not a damned thing wrong with Mel.

There is no pressure on us tonight. There is no one else in bed with us and it is not late yet. We have time and I decide to use that time to get playful with the girl. Just like last night with Lexi, I want Mel to give me head just the way I like it.

We work on this for maybe ten minutes, but Mel is gagging as I am pushing her to take it as far as she can. She really wants to give it a break for now. I guess we should.

As a reward I decide to go down on her, except she doesn't see it as a reward. First Lexi and now Mel!

Having my mouth on her pussy freaks her out. I get a little pissed off and tell her to shut the fuck up and relax. Nothing bad is going to happen. Like I said, there are still a few things about Mel that need work.

Once she accepts my eating her cunt, she seems to get with the program. I can't really prove it as I really ordered her to knock off the crap, but she seems to be responding positively to the stimulation.

From my end, there is nothing wrong with her cunt. It doesn't smell or taste bad. I have a good time sucking on her clit for a bit while fingering her cunt. She is arching her back and shoving her

cunt up to me. I am facing no resistance and seemingly I am receiving encouragement.

My jaw can only take so much of this and it is time to give the kid a good fucking anyway.

I slide up on her, my cheeks soaking from her fluids. Her eyes are wide open and she is really looking totally freaked out. I ignore it, wipe my face on a pillow case and plow into her cunt with a very hard cock.

She still looks to be in shock as I start to slam repeatedly into her cunt. She is responding, but the oral stuff may have really not been copasetic with her. It's not like I am fucking a block of wood. I hear grunts, moans, gasps. Her cunt is awash, and though her passage is a tight one, I hear the sloshing of her juices on my cock.

Has she cum? I am not sure. I think she has and sure as hell don't want to ask her anything right now. I pound her cunt on and on, staying inside my own head. Thinking about making Mel pregnant. If I do, just what the fuck can her mother do then?

Weird as it is, that sends me over the edge and I cum deep and long inside Mel.

Mel, as soon as you are pregnant, your mother can come and visit.

Really?

Yes.

Why you change your mind?

I am not sure I have. What will be different is that both you and Lexi will have my children. There is no way she can demand I choose one of you and leave the other alone.

Oh... Oh! Fuck me again! Ha! Yes, make me pregnant! Then my mother can come!

Uh-huh, yes, this is weird shit and I am not going to try to deal with it other than note it has happened.

I gather her up in my arms, kiss her deeply and then settle down for the evening's sleep.

Monday morning means looking at the two hectares. We will need a legal survey of the land, but if it surveys even close to how it is staked out, I am OK with it. There is no city water here. I will have to drill a well. There is no electric service here, but there are poles close by.

Next I will need to get a title search done along with the survey. If everything is OK following that, I will make the offer through Lyn.

I am not sure how to take care of these things and ride over to the attorney's office. Maybe they can guide me. I get there right after lunch but Trujillo is not there and the secretary has no idea when he will return.

I explain what it is I need assistance with, only to be directed by the secretary to contact a woman who for a 'consideration' will handle everything for us. I ask, *How much of a consideration?*

I think she will do everything for maybe three thousand pesos. But you must call Ate Rena. I will text her now and tell her to expect your call.

Lyn is the one who texts this Rena. A text comes back almost immediately. A cellphone call follows and then a decision to take her to the land we are considering, tomorrow. We will do so after I get the van.

I was going to ask the secretary if the paperwork Trujillo was working on for me was done, but Lyn told me that would be pushing and to just wait. She giggled and called it 'Filipino time.'

It is mid-afternoon on Monday and I am done for the day. It occurs to me that I never asked Lyn to contact the Belgian. I do so now. We are still downtown and, if by any chance he is too, this is as good a time as any.

It turns out that this is not a good time, but the text turns into a call.

The guy is amazed I have returned. He turns the phone over to his long-time girlfriend. Lyn and the gal get to chatting for so long I am about to get irritated. Maybe Lyn sees this in my countenance, as she wraps of the call.

For me a call is a short thing. You deal with an issue and hang up! Here every call seems to become a social event.

Craig, why you angry?

I am not angry, but why have a long social call when we are standing out on the street? If you want to socialize, why not wait for a better time?

This not social! I tell Stefan you want to see many homes here and what people say about their homes. He asks why so I begin to tell him but he is busy so he give the phone to Mona. She want all the details!

And that couldn't have waited?

But she need that before she say she will call others.

I can tell I am just going to lose this no matter what I say. So to get some kind of closure I just change the subject a little. *So the Belgian's name is Stefan and his girlfriend is Mona?*

Yes, of course!

OK, and what happens now?

We go to their house for dinner tomorrow. She will call others and we will make more plans about them tomorrow when we see them.²⁶

My brain is not able to absorb this. It makes no sense! But for now I just give up. I think I am about to get a headache.

Tomorrow! Lyn, I have to pick up the van and then meet with this Rena. Do we really have time to meet with Stefan and Mona tomorrow?

I think, yes.

²⁶ The use of pronouns when there are multiple subjects and no clarity is just part and parcel of life in the Philippines!

How many of us go to Stefan's?

All.

All? Really?

Yes. They know.

Oh? All? What did you tell them?

That you have seven with you.

All this was necessary as we stood out on the street? Why was much of it necessary, ever? Now, I am sure, I am getting a headache. I keep my mouth shut.

The rest of the day is a blur. My head is pounding. There doesn't seem to be any aspirin in this city. Lyn buys something called Biogesic.²⁷ I start to take two. Lyn is insisting I should only take one. I look at her.

You only take one, right?

Yes! So that all you need.

No, if one works for you I will need at least two! You are less than half my size. I will need more medicine.

Lyn isn't happy but I take two of the tablets.

It's late and I am intending to go to bed right now, but the girls insist I eat something first. What they give me is a combination of thin noodles in a thin chicken broth with chopped green onion, an egg stirred in plus rice. It tastes fine and I suspect it can't hurt.

After eating it I am not feeling any worse and maybe a bit better, but I still decide just to sack out alone for the night.

Tuesday morning arrives and I find the headache is gone. I feel fine.

²⁷ A brand name paracetamol.

I ride down to the Toyota dealer with Mel behind me. She can ride the bike back to the house while I drive the van back.

There is only one problem. The van is not ready.

Why? How many days do you need?

Sir, we not expect you to pay so quickly! I am not sure what still must be done, Sir. I only know it is not here right now.

Well, I recommend you find it right now and tell me what remains to be done.

Yes, Sir, please wait a while. I will check!

Mel is sitting with me. I am most likely riding back home with her behind me.

We have been waiting for a good forty minutes. Twice the guy has come by to say they are still checking. Finally, he appears with an expression that I suspect indicates he has some news.

Sir, the van is here now! You can take it.

Mel stands up, kisses me on the cheek and leaves. She will ride the bike back alone.

However, if I thought I could drive back right now, I am very wrong. The van is here, but they want to check me out on it. They want to walk me through the owner's manual. They want to instruct me about what to do and who to call if there are any problems so that I don't void the warranty.

I burn through another two hours before I can drive the vehicle off the lot. All the while I am getting texts from Lyn. Rena is waiting!

It is almost lunchtime when I am finally on the road. I ask Lyn to offer to buy Rena lunch before we go to the site. It seems to mollify hurt feelings and so I swing by the house, pick everyone up before driving off to pick up Rena. Lyn has the instructions necessary for finding the gal's place. Without that I am absolutely sure we never would have found her at all.

When we do find her she is not alone. She has a fellow with her whom she says needs to come with us. OK, so there is one more for lunch. I am not worried about that and there is room in the van so, why not?

Rena is probably in her fifties. She may be the fattest Filipino I have ever seen. She clearly has enough to eat. Is this type of work how she supports herself?

The guy she is bringing along is her son. When she needs to come back to the property in the future, he will be the one to drive her in a tricycle. That is why he is with us today. He needs to see where we are going.

There is a Mang Inasal on the National Highway. It seems that's where Rena wants to go.

During lunch, we give Rena all the information we have on the land. That includes a copy of a surveyor's filing, a photocopy of the title, the owner's name and cell number. We share the asking price and I propose a counter offer. Rena thinks my offer is an insult.

I don't figure Rena is going to be a good person for us to work with. Lyn sees that in my face and asks Rena what the problem is.

Rena has some English and she is letting me know that now.

He will not sell it for that!

So, he can come back with another number.

Oh! So you are bargaining?

Yes.

Oh! OK, yes. I think he will settle for forty-eight pesos.

Try to get him to forty-seven-fifty.

Sir, maybe you were a businessman in your country?

Yes, I was. Why do you ask?

You know to bargain. Many foreigners, I think, they not understand. Yes, I think we can do this. But I must check to make sure he really own the land! Sometimes they not tell the truth. Sometimes others own the land or the taxes not paid. Let us also survey it ourselves. Never trust another's survey! First, let us look at this property!

OK, so maybe this Rena will work out.

There are ten of us in the van as we leave to roll down the road again. I sure as hell needed a van.

3

The property looks good to Rena. If the paperwork and survey all check out, it will be a good purchase but, she warns me, I will need to sink a well. I already know this, but I appreciate that she is paying attention. The electric service, she informs me, will not be a problem. She ‘knows a guy.’ I have no idea what she is talking about.

We get Rena and her son back to their home at four in the afternoon. She has already texted a surveyor and will meet the guy in the morning. She asks, might I advance her cash to pay the surveyor? I can see how this is going to go. I will be nicked and dined for more than three thousand. It will be three thousand plus expenses, fees and such.

We are back to our place close to four fifteen. I need to shower and change clothing, so does everyone else ... and we need to get on the road in thirty minutes. It just isn’t going to happen.

We drive away from our house at six. I figure it will be a long ride to Stefan’s place. We were supposed to be there by five. I am thinking back to my comments to Lyn yesterday that this was just too many appointments for one day.

Even if we were walking in Stefan’s door right now, it is already too late.

As much as I was expecting a long trip, this one is almost around the corner! We go past the high school, turn at a corner where Dunkin Donuts is, and no more than a quarter mile down the road we turn into a subdivision.

The homes are small bungalows on small plots of maybe one hundred square meters. The bungalows probably take up sixty-four square meters of that, leaving no more than two meters around the perimeter of each house.

I have begun thinking in terms of meters for the past two days, as I have had no reference to feet in this search for property. But doing a quick conversion in my head I realize the house must be about six hundred and twenty-five square feet, or twenty-five by twenty-five feet in dimensions.

Surrounding the lot is the concrete wall, which here is called the fence, about eight feet high. The wall is topped with shards of broken glass. It is probably an effective design for the less than dedicated burglar, though I suspect a good one would come prepared with something to cover the top to facilitate entry.

There is a padlocked, sturdy steel gate of maybe eight feet wide. If you have a motorcycle or a tricycle there is enough room to bring it in through the gate. Built into the larger gate is a manhole with its own padlock for personal entrance.

What amounts to the road the house is on, is no more than ten feet (or three meters) wide. There is a ditch on one side of the road. The ditch isn't wide, but I suspect it's wide enough to cause problems. As to the road, two cars cannot pass each other. The road is simply too narrow. Tricycles can pass, and a tricycle can pass a car. I am counting my lucky stars that there are no cars already here as I drive up to Stefan's place.

The width of this van is just a little more than six feet. I can't put it right next to the fence because of the ditch. As I park here, it is clear that no car will be able to pass and I mention this to Lyn as a concern. The girl only chuckles.

Craig, no one here have a car. It not a problem.

It is true that I haven't seen too many cars here in GenSan, and none in this subdivision. Vans are typically used for public transport on the highway.

Still, I park the van as close to the wall as I can, after having everyone get out first.

Mona meets us at the manhole and welcomes us. I am apologizing for being late, but that brings criticism from Mel, Lyn and Jana, while at the same time it brings amazement from Mona.

Why you say late?

The invitation was for five and it is now six fifteen. That's late.

No, Sir Craig, it not late. It fine!

Lexi gently punches me as she says, *It Filipino time, Craig!*

The house is a low-ceilinged affair. There are two very small bedrooms, a small parlor, I gather they call it a sala, a kitchen area and a bathroom. That's it.

The bathroom has a tiled floor but is otherwise concrete. There is no shower enclosure. You shower and shit in the same tiny room with a large floor drain. There is a mirror over a small sink but no medicine cabinet and no drawers. A little shelf is screwed to the concrete wall under the mirror.

The sala has a small couch and two chairs. All are low to the ground and poorly padded.

The ceilings look like board and batten affairs using sheets of plywood. Ceiling lights are simple ceramic sockets with naked CFL bulbs screwed in.

It is hot outside. It's not much cooler in here. There is an air conditioner sticking through the wall, but it is not on. The only thing running is an oscillating fan.

The dining room table can sit only four, and tonight it functions only as the sideboard, as we have been invited for dinner. We sit with plates on our laps. There are the four chairs from the table, three seats on the couch, and the two other chairs in the sala. That makes for nine. There are eight of us, plus Stefan and Mona, but that is not a problem as four choose to sit on the floor.

The meal is what I am learning to expect here at such gatherings. A stringy noodle dish called bihon, a platter of fried chicken, and a huge bowl of white rice. The bihon noodle is made of rice starch. The dish includes cabbage, a carrot, green beans, and some meat. The meat can be chicken, pork, shrimp, squid rings (though not battered or fried so not really calamari) or liver. What goes into it is at the discretion of the cook.

We have brought a cake from a bakery. Bringing something is necessary and makes sense to me. Bringing wine, though, which I would have done in Dorchester, makes no sense here as I have yet to see a good bottle of wine and have not met anyone here who drinks wine, other than some weird Chinese ‘wine’ called Swordsman or Siok Tong, which looks pretty sketchy to me.

As to drinking, if it isn’t beer, it really seems to be rum or brandy. Tonight, Stefan offers me a San Miguel beer. The girls are all drinking cokes from glass bottles.

Stefan tells me that he had built a nicer place, but his wife, from whom he is separated, lives in it.

He and I spend the better part of three hours talking about Filipino building techniques and design. He shows me how the plumbing is all buried in the concrete walls. Electric is partially buried in the walls, partially run, outside of any plastic conduit, across the plywood ceiling and partially in plastic molding attached to inside walls. Generally, only one or two outlets per room are provided. Extension cords are spaghetti on the floors.

The walls of the typical Filipino home are concrete. Stefan explains that they use four inch wide ‘hollow block’ set into mortar. Rebar is run through the block and more concrete is then stuffed into the holes of the hollow block.

The mortar holding the block is pretty iffy-looking and looking at the outside fence/wall show real gaps in the mortar, which proves his point. However, in a house the walls, inside and out, are then ‘wrapped’ in a smooth, fine mortar with no rock in the mix. It goes

on as if it was a ‘lath and plaster’ job with the mason feathering the result as smoothly as his craft has advanced.

In the common, humble Filipino home, this might be the end. But before the wall is to be painted in a nicer home a ‘skim coat,’ which really is plaster, is applied to the wrap before the wall is painted.

The result is a very sturdy structure, with smooth walls, but there are two problems with it.

As it is not a double wall design, there is no way to put the electric and the plumbing in without burying it in the concrete. And, as there is no double wall there is nowhere to place insulation. On top of that, concrete is a heat sink. It has all the cooling capacity of an oven. The whole place is hot! Filipinos may be used to all this heat, but I see no reason to live this way!

The idea of running the electric lines across plywood and outside of conduit isn’t that much different from how we run electric between studs in the US, except: the wires here are not double shielded; there is no ground wire; they don’t seem to use junction boxes, and; they connect everything with twisting the ends and securing with electrical tape. No one here seems to even know wire nuts exist. This seems like a recipe for electrical fires.

Maybe Stefan’s explanation isn’t really the standard. Maybe it’s just what he has gotten used to. I really need to see other homes. I need to learn what others have done. He does tell me that electrical fires here are common.

Have I kidded myself about building here? Much of what Stefan has told me rings true with the house we are leasing, but our place has higher ceilings, a far larger lot, larger rooms inside, and nicer finishing touches, like nicer ceiling lights.

Still, our house is also pure concrete and our electric is buried in the walls.

Our bathrooms are bigger and so the shower water doesn't completely flood the floor under the stool, but the floor does get wet.

In a way, I feel like I am waking up to the Philippines that I wasn't paying attention to until now. It isn't that I am sorry I made the move, but more like I am seeing it for the first time.

I was so wrapped up in my life with these girls that everything else was just background noise. I am not regretting the girls. I am not regretting my decision. I am realizing that there are things I need to recalibrate.

My fear about how others would react to the girls may have been way too consuming. Stefan and Mona haven't blinked an eye. Rena didn't seem to have a problem with it.

But are all the expat homes like Stefan's? Is my van an albatross? Will I be able to park it anywhere? This house is way too warm for me. Have I been lulled into a sense of comfort that is not normal?

I am brought out of my reverie by noise. The noise of a motorcycle without a muffler, on top of bad karaoke singing, on top of dogs barking, on top of roosters crowing. I look at Stefan and simply ask, *This noise... is this normal?*

He shrugs his shoulders. *You get used to it. Filipinos are a noisy bunch.*

I really need to see other homes. I need to talk with other expats.

I like Stefan and Mona, but I am ever so happy to be exiting their subdivision. It feels more like a rabbit warren than a housing development to me. These tiny homes, too hot, too close together, on too narrow streets with no place to park... none of it is OK. Not OK at all.

The noise is partially the artifact of the proximity of all the homes being too close to each other. No space means no real privacy. The two hectare lot seems now to be the minimum I might want. If this one doesn't work out, maybe I need to look at a larger lot.

The heat: I can think of a number of ways to reduce the heat inside the house. Any one of them will work. Can I get an architect or engineer here to design things the way I need them done?

I don't think I have even been thinking about the actual process of driving, as I am doing it, as much as I have been thinking about a home, as we pull up to our leased home. This place is not perfect, but compared to Stefan's place, it is paradise. And yet... and yet, I think I can make a sweeter paradise.

I really need to see what these other expats are doing. Maybe I got the wrong idea from Stefan's situation.

Come to bed, Craig!

OK, Lyn, I'm coming. I'm coming.

Yeh, it really is time for bed. It's late. I'm coming, Lyn, truly.

Oh, God... I'm CUMMING!

Hehe, that was good, Craig! I am glad you are feeling better.

Oh, babe, it is you who are to be thanked. I know I have been difficult these past two days. I am sorry. You were wonderful tonight. Wonderful, and sexy, and you have made me happy.

Good you think that. I think we all worried. Maybe you will leave.

I am not leaving. But... there is no way I can live in a place like Stefan's.

Of course! It good for Filipino, but not you. We know this.

I need to meet other expats and see how they live.

We know! Mona gives me some phone numbers. I have texts with three. We can see one of them tomorrow. OK?

Yes, OK. Thank you.

You are welcome, my love. ... Tulog na²⁸! Sleep, Craig.

²⁸ Sleep now

Wednesday morning is wonderfully unplanned. There is nothing on my 'must do' agenda. The new land is being surveyed. Rena has to do research to make sure there is clear title without a tax lien and she needs to make sure that the seller is the sole title holder. Other names on the title will screw things up.

I can't make a counter offer until Rena gets her stuff done.

All the vehicles have been purchased and nothing remains to be done other than license plates. That, I am informed, takes time, and temp tags are on all we have, including the bike I bought on the first trip here.

I am playing around with some ideas about house design. I have seen some design options in my trips to New Mexico and Tucson. It seems to me that what works there might well work here with the proviso that we have rain that they don't have. And I have seen some things in Florida where they do have rain that I can include in a design.

Using a note pad, I am just sketching some things out.

In New Mexico I have seen free standing walls surrounding buildings with cantilevered roofs that extend over a walkway and then beyond the free standing wall. The sun never hits the actual walls of the building.

In the building there are two courses of windows. The ones you might look out of, but do not open and therefore do not allow dust or noise in, and high narrow windows right below the ceiling that are hinged on the bottom and can vent warm air out.

In New Mexico and in Tucson the walls were adobe. But here, where it rains, the adobe won't work. The concrete will, and the wrapping makes the damned thing look just like adobe if painted with the right colors, though that last part is neither here nor there. But adobe is not a heat sink. Concrete is. So exterior heat sinks and/or double wall with insulation is a must, just to deal with the temps.

The rain gutters need to be huge and send water far from the building. A simple downspout will cut a channel from the house out unless the entire building is surrounded with concrete. Both Stefan's place and our leased home are concrete from the walls of the house out to the fence. That resolves the drainage I guess but I don't want that and besides, you just can't put two hectares in concrete.

Besides, I want to avoid encasing the ground in concrete to reduce the heat-sink design problem.

I have seen a design where there were essentially two roofs, one above the other with a couple of feet of air between the two. The upper roof gets hit by the sun; the lower one never does. That prevents the sun from heating up the house during the day. Much like the exterior heat sink walls on the outside of the walking path surrounding the home, the top roof protects the lower roof. Water also never directly hits the lower roof unless the upper one is leaking.

If I build a multi-story structure, there needs to be a veranda with an exterior wall as well, the floor of the veranda being the roof over the ground floor walking path and the roof extending over the exterior wall on the second story.

With such a design, no wall of the actual house should ever be exposed to sunlight.

I suspect I will need some air conditioners. But these might be far smaller than is standard here. The place should really not get that hot.

I scribble and scribble ideas down on paper. How should I deal with the electric and the plumbing?

I take a break for lunch and am back at it when Lyn comes to me.

Rena calls! Survey is good. The title is good. Single owner, and taxes are paid. She asks, is it OK to make your counter offer?

She wants to do the bargaining?

Lyn is laughing. *Yes, she likes doing this, I think.*

OK, sure.

Good. I hope!

You hope we get the land?

Yes! This is exciting!

For a while I am wondering how many windows on the south and north sides, only to figuratively kick myself in the ass. I am an idiot thrice over. First, the design I want will not expose any window to the sun. Next, at this latitude we will get sun from both the North and the South, just at different times of the year. Third, there are no Northerly winds from which to protect. Yes indeed, I am an idiot.

My mind wanders down side streets and blind alleys. Do I want a courtyard? Where does the carport go? Should we raise the top roof to create a covered, open-walled top floor? It's fun to think about but ... sort of the cart before the horse... or is it? I have to have ideas before I sit down with the architect, right? I need to have ideas before I look at other places and see if anyone has tried them already and see how the idea worked out.

I keep on taking notes until Jana comes to tell me it is time to go. We are meeting an expat and his wife for another dinner. This guy is from the UK. His name is Brian.

Brian's bungalow is a far cry from Stefan's. He has a nice piece of land, tucked away from anyone close by. There is plenty of room to park and there is even room to do so inside his large five meter wide gate.

This is no cookie-cutter home. It is well made with beautiful tile work inside and out. Brian's house has the long, cantilevered roof overhanging an outside terrace, though there is no outer wall heat sink. The house is a bit warm, but comfortable. I like it.

The land is incredibly well landscaped. Brian is a gardener in his heart and it shows. The place is a joy to the eyes. Brian, however, is a pain in the ass. All he does, the entire time we are with him is complain. According to Brian, Filipino workers are, in his words, 'crap.' They can't do anything right.

I am looking around and, unless Brian built this place all by himself, the guy is full of shit.

And then the guy starts complaining about the UK. And then about the food here. And then about his useless children back in the UK. Nothing is OK as per Brian.

The dinner is also a surprise. Brian dislikes Filipino food. He insists on British dishes, and then he complains about the cost of groceries.

I thank Brian for his hospitality, for the food and the beer... and that last thank you turns into a full scale harangue!

There is not one damned bit of good beer in the Philippines!

I can't get out of Brian's place fast enough.

4

Stefan's place was crap and Stefan is nice, the opposite can be said for Brian.

I have no idea who we are meeting next. Jana tells me that they have collected two more names and numbers. I may be struggling with each of these visits, but the girls are having a great time. Exactly why eludes me, but it is clear that they are not having any problems.

I noted that Brian and I were served separately from the girls. I wonder how they liked the dishes that they might have never seen before. Well, that was the question. The answer is that they were served Filipino dishes. Brian's wife does not eat what she serves to her husband. I am not surprised.

Craig? We all talk to Ester today and Mona yesterday. I think they both love their guys, but they not like each other. Stefan, she²⁹ speak Filipino and they mostly are with Filipinos. Brian, he not speak any Filipino and he has a bad attitude, but he not want to go back to the UK. Ester, she say Brian is always lonely, but he was lonely when they live in the UK. We not think you like them. We think Filipinos not so different from each other. Why you all different?

Jana, I don't think I am in agreement with you about how Filipinos are all the same. As far as Stefan, Brian and me, well, we are all white, but are you like Japanese, or Koreans, or Chinese?

Why you ask that? That not the same!

Well Japanese, Koreans, Chinese and Filipinos are all Asians. Right? These guys and I are white, but Stefan is a Belgian, Brian is a Brit and I am an American, a Bostonian. These are all different cultures. To you, we are all the same. But to me we are worlds apart. Even Americans can be very different

²⁹ Yes, Jana should have said he, but Tagalog and all the other languages of the Philippines do not have gender specific pronouns. That leads to this type of confusion when speaking in English for many, if not most, Filipinos!

from each other. Different parts of my country have very different customs from other parts. But are you girls really just like someone from Manila?

I not know. Maybe we will think about it. Someone say we to be invited to a party where we to meet an American. Maybe you more like him.

I have to smile. Did she get what I was saying? OK, *we will see. ... So now that you have me upstairs in the bedroom, do you have any plans? Or are we just going to sleep?*

I not let you sleep.

She won't, at least not for a while. She really is a pretty girl. Perfect? Maybe not, but what is 'perfect?' Looking at her makes me happy. Knowing she and I are about to make love, makes me very happy. I know her body now and that means I know what gets her off. She likes her legs played with. She likes her belly licked. She likes a thumb up her ass while being fucked hard.

I have been far more playful with Jana than I have been with Mel. Mel has a nervous disposition and new things tend to scare her. Jana is the opposite. Jana is an explorer. She shares a great deal with Lexi in that way.

Within minutes I am deep in Jana's cunt, with a thumb up her ass as I bite down on her lower lip. Jana is bouncing around. She likes a little pain with her sex and she is getting it now. I smash my thumb in as far as I can and wiggle it around as I pound her cunt.

And within minutes Jana is losing it, crying out, and if I would ever let go of her lower lip, she might cuss a blue streak. As it is, she is drenching my cock and the hand down by her ass.

Our lovemaking doesn't take long. I am not a stud like in the x-rated movies and Jana has probably never seen such a movie with which to compare me. Our lovemaking probably doesn't last ten minutes. But in those ten minutes, Jana has definitely cum and so have I.

I don't think I have anything to prove with her as she snuggles into me. She is happy. This lovely, seventeen-year-old sweetheart may well truly love me.

So, yes, I may have hit a couple of bumps in the road. Yes, maybe I didn't have my eyes completely open before. Yes, it is clearly possible to live in a place that seems like it's next door to hell. Yes, there are some sorry-ass guys here who were sorry-assed long before they ever got here. None of that has to reflect my life here.

I wasn't best of buds with everyone in Dorchester, either. Typically, men my age will only have two or three real friends and it takes a good long time to find those. I don't figure I will even have one true friend here in the Philippines. Oh, I will make acquaintances, sure. And I will be friendly with some of them. But real friends? That's just not likely. I have met a few expats. It is sweet and silly for my girls to think I am going to bond with these guys.

I didn't come to the Philippines to be part of an expat community. Do the girls think I will get lonely if I don't have 'white guy' friends? Is that it? If it is, it's cute on their part and totally misguided.

Jana has fallen asleep, as my mind has been traveling down rat-holes again. It is time to sleep.

Thursday morning is another day without many requirements. There isn't even a party tonight. The girls need to go shopping and, as we have a van to haul bags, I am requested to come along. Other than that, I am uncommitted. It's a good feeling.

I have a text from my personal banker in Boston. The cashier's check has cleared and the money has been wired to my account here. As an addendum to the text, he hopes that this ends up being a good decision. He has his concerns.

I have finished breakfast and am ready to drive to the supermarket when Lyn announces she has a text from Rena.

I am waiting on Lyn to tell me what's up, but Lyn starts giggling and texting back, and then giggling again. The rest of us are all just looking at Lyn, who isn't engaging with anything but her cellphone.

Finally the texting session ends and we have our girl's attention.

Well? What did she tell you?

You won't believe it!

I can't if you won't tell me. What did she say?

She bargained, like you say, but she start at forty.

Wow, that's low. What happened?

The guy say, 'You sure the money is real.' Rena tell him she sure. Ha! The guy say, OK, if the money really here, we can have it for forty tomorrow. But if the money not really here and he has to wait, then it fifty. Craig, we really have the money?

Yes, oh, yes... That's only eight hundred thousand pesos. Absolutely yes!

Really? We can pay tomorrow?

I can but I do not know if Atty. Trujillo has the paperwork ready. We can't close the sale without the paperwork.

Call him!

OK, let's see. ... wait... is her tomorrow, our today? When did Rena have this discussion? Was it yesterday or today?

Oh! I not know! Wait! I will text her again.

There is much I still need to learn about the Philippines. I have no false sense of security that I have anything mastered. What I am sure of is that they themselves live lives of ambiguity. It works for the most part, such as when we are supposed to show up for dinner. But there are times it trips them up. We may have just run into one of these.

We all just stand by, waiting to hear the news. There is a bunch of back and forth and then nothing.

Jana is beside herself. *Lyn, what is she saying?*

She say, 'wait a minute,' she texting the guy. He texted last night, but she was in bed then. She only read it today, So she asking him if tomorrow means today or tomorrow!

I don't want to rattle Trujillo if I don't need to do so. I also don't want to sound matter-of-fact about something that needs immediate attention. And so we wait on all contacts.

The concept of a twenty thousand square meter lot compared to a one hundred meter lot is a little humbling. I will assume that I am not the only expat who will control so much land, but I also will assume that it is not the norm.

I am getting the feeling that my economic forecasting was based on a very different level of need, comfort and concern than for others who are here.

Dido is playfully hitting Li2x. I hear, *Yes we are!*

But Jocelyn is answering back, *Maybe, not sure, Dido. He not say that.*

I am curious, *What hasn't been said?*

Dido thinks we will have a farm. That is why you buy the two hectares.

And are two hectares the normal size for farms?

Yes, this true.

Dido, Li2x was correct. I did not say we will have a farm and this land is not for a regular farm. We can grow some vegetables for ourselves, but no this is not a farm. Do you want one?

Yes! A farm is a good thing. It mean we safe. It mean there is food and money. Why you not want a farm?

Who will be the farmer? You are all in school, except for Mel and me. Mel is taking care of the cooking for us and I am not a farmer. Who will be the farmer?

Oh! I not know. But a farm is good!

I see. Well, this may not be the only land we will buy. If we can figure out who will be the farmer, maybe we will have a farm.

I have no doubt that in Dido's family there has always been the dream of a farm. It makes perfect sense. My presence in a manner of speaking makes no sense. I am the square peg in a land of round holes.

Lyn's phone comes back alive with a new incoming text. *She say, he ask, if you have the money, why not today?*

Tell her to tell him, I need the Attorney to get the paperwork ready. I can't give this guy the money without the paperwork and he needs to bring the actual title to our attorney's office when he is ready.

OK, it is better if I call her. I will explain. This is a good reason. I think it is OK for tomorrow.

Find out. I am not OK with a guess.

She flashes her eyebrows up and makes the call.

There is a bunch of chatting that once again sounds more like gossip than simple instructions, but that is just my culture getting in the way. The call ends and we are ready to start waiting again, but Lyn interjects, *I told her you would cover the cost of her cell load to call the guy.*

I have to smile. She is about to make three thousand pesos and she is worried about five pesos? OK, sure I will cover her cell load. Why not, she is saving me two hundred thousand pesos. I was ready to give her a hefty bonus for the price she negotiated.

The clock is ticking slowly, or so it seems. I have to remind myself once again, things run at a different speed here than they do in

Boston. There, this negotiation would have been wrapped up long ago. They would have asked that I place the money in escrow and then the lawyers would take whatever time they needed to complete the deal.

Here there not only is no escrow, there is no cashier's check. I will be handing over coin of the realm and to do that I need documents, signed and notarized on the spot and at the same time.

Lyn's phone chimes an incoming text. The forty per meter price is good until tomorrow. The guy will bring the deed.

I get on the phone with Trujillo's secretary and explain the matter. She puts me on hold and then, upon returning, asks if I have a good copy of the title. I do and I tell her the copy we have, has been verified. The owner will bring the original tomorrow. That being the case, she tells me they will have the paperwork ready by one in the afternoon tomorrow.

I have enough in the bank account here that, even if the wired cash doesn't arrive for a day or two, there will be no problem.

And so, just like the speed of gathering up these girls seemed outrageously fast, this land purchase is also happening way faster than it would happen in the States.

And then it hits me. Just a few minutes ago I was remonstrating quietly to myself about how slow the process is when in truth the process is blindingly fast. The optics of it all is confusing.

The shopping trip is put off until after lunch, as we have spent a fair bit of time with this.

I know that I need to slow down. There is no way I am going to rush to find an architect or civil engineer yet, but the itch is there. The itch is definitely there. I decide to sit down with a paper and pencil and just draw out some additional ideas. I am no artist and certainly no architect, but I do have some ideas and the property will be big enough that I don't have to worry how to fit the house into the lot.

The land does slope a bit, from one side to the other, but the slope is gentle and won't present any problems.

Craig?

Lexi startles me a bit. I was deep down one of my mind's side alleys again.

Yes?

You building a house on this land? Correct?

Yes. Our house.

How big?

I don't know yet. We don't have a plan even started.

As big as this one?

Yes, maybe a little bigger, but different too. Why?

Just wondering.

Really? Just wondering?

Well...

Yes?

Who cleans it? I mean if we all in school and getting jobs, who cleans?

Ab, so I should make it smaller!

Maybe no, but maybe we think about who cleans. OK?

OK, but you have some ideas, I think. What are they?

Well it can't be my friends because maybe you will want them to go to school. So no one my age, I think.

OK, and?

There are three who maybe it will work. May's mother, Katrina's mother and my mother. But I really don't want my mother here.

*May's and Katrina's mothers have no husband. Your mother does, your father!
So I can exclude her anyway.*

*No, my father not with my mother. They never marry but he dead anyway.
Mother is alone. When Mel gets pregnant then it OK if our mother is here?*

*Maybe. I said once Mel is pregnant that she could visit. I didn't say she could
stay. And, I also really don't think I want May's and Dido's moms in the
same house while I am fucking their daughters. That would just be too weird.*

Lexi is giggling. Maybe you will like them too!

*Really? Lexi, you have a weird brain. You really want me to be fucking their
mothers?*

Why not? They lonely I think.

*You really think they would want to fuck me? Lexi, that just isn't going to
happen.*

Well, we will need maids. No choice, I think.

That puts an end to my drawing. Lexi is correct, but I will not only need at least a couple of maids, I will need a groundskeeper. Maybe I need a far smaller house. I need to think about this.

We are all here and ready to go shopping. Lunch has been consumed and the trip to the supermarket is just about to begin when Lyn gets another text. We are invited to a party. Lyn does not know the person who is texting. It seems that Mona is the connection between the parties. The party is on Saturday, and Lyn provisionally accepts, saying we will try to make it. She texts the question, 'what can we bring?' The answer seems to be, 'nothing, just come.'

If there will be a large number there, it will allow us to duck out more easily if things aren't comfortable. On the plus side, we will possibly meet a number of folk and can figure out whose homes we want to see.

But that's for later, now it's time to go shopping at the supermarket.

I find a shady place to park, with the diesel still running to keep the air conditioner working. The girls have gone inside. I have a book with me, but my thoughts circle back to what it will take to maintain two hectares. It might be turned into lawn and trees. It might be more orchard than open lawn. It might have some farming activity on it. But no matter what I choose, it will need labor.

The same is true for the house I build, but that's not all. Oh shit, what have I been thinking?

Until March I had three who were essentially full time maids: Mel, Lyn, and Jana. Then Lexi graduated and the youngest three were off for their summer break. So, right up through this week, I have seven maids. But school starts on June 3rd, just a few days from now. Only Mel will be at home with me.

My problem regarding maids is not a down-the-road problem. It is a right-now problem. Why didn't I see it?

Lexi has a point that taking young girls raises the issue of why they aren't pursuing an education... and it begs the question of will they be entering my bed. So her suggestion about the mothers has merit. I don't like it, but it has merit. I am not sure. I don't want entire families just grafted on to me. Each mother, other than Lexi's, comes with other kids. I just don't see that working.

5

I am not opposed to older women. How I find them can be resolved, but how many do I need?

I can put off the groundskeeper concern until later, but the maids matter needs addressing as early as this weekend.

My mind returns to Lexi, Mel and their mother. If I don't consider the woman, do I have a problem with my girls? I think I will. And then I hear Jana in my head. I remember what she said specifically regarding what to do about Lexi, before we met the girl. 'Be evil.' Jana's advice was good then and maybe is good now.

Having a quasi-mother-in-law living in the house really isn't going to work. Taking another lover does work... at least I can sell that concept to Lexi, if not Mel. Lexi knows her mother will not agree to that. Why would she? She rejected a far less weird proposal from Lexi's father.

So, I allow the mother to come, and to stay, but with the condition that she joins my bed. She will decline. Mel can feel like I made the offer and so no harm is done. Lexi really doesn't want the gal here in any case.

It doesn't solve my problem regarding finding maids, but it does solve the problem about the mother. And that may need to get resolved before I get the maids.

Two hectares... I need to find other expats who live on larger pieces of land. My best guess is that there are issues I have not considered.

I think back to Stefan's little wall with the glass shards. Brian's has a higher wall with some barbed wire across the top. Both are relatively small places compared to what I am buying. The fact that walls are needed, and the fact that I will not be able to easily monitor all of it from the house, raises some questions.

Maybe I will meet some guys at the party on Saturday night with larger plots.

I finally find that I can read without my mind running off down other paths and get a good chapter read before the girls appear, laden down with bags upon bags of groceries.

The bags are stowed, the girls all take seats, commenting on how nice, roomy and cool it is in here. Lyn who has taken the seat next to me, leans over, kisses me and informs me that they have bought enough to last for a bit.

I had assumed that the lesson had been learned while I was gone, but this is the first time we have been shopping like this. For Lyn, it is a propitious time to comment on that lesson learned.

It takes the girls two hours to put away what it took them three hours to purchase. Five hours plus drive time relegated to shopping. And there are seven of them doing this.

It is hard for me to understand why it takes so much time, but there is no denying that it has. Maybe the preparing of dinner is tied up with it and contributing length of time, maybe.

Maybe it is understanding how to organize a pantry, rather than just get ready to cook what you just purchased.

Dinner is filled with talk about what we will do with the two hectares. Why one would buy so much land without wanting to farm it has them a little confused.

The conversation is between the girls. I am not engaging. My mind is on the need for maids and not on the land. I really don't think the girls even notice that I am not participating.

Just as dinner finishes, I address Mel.

Please invite your mother to visit, as early as tomorrow but at her convenience. We will be attending a party on Saturday night, so it needs to be either before that or after.

I get some surprised looks, but Mel is tearing up more than being surprised.

Yes, yes, of course. Thank you! Thank you so much!

You are welcome.

I get up, grab my book and start up the stairs. Lexi is right behind me. She will be spending the night with me, but that is not why she is trailing me upstairs now.

I am not going to engage in a conversation while on the stairs, and Lexi appears to understand that as she just follows me into the bedroom before sitting down on the mattress and asking the question she has needed to ask from two flights below.

Why?

Why what?

Why you say my mother should come?

How many of you are taking care of the house right now, this week?

Seven? All of us, right?

OK. Yes. And how many will be here to take care of the house starting next Tuesday.

Yes I know. ... Only Mel. But do you really want my mother as a maid? ... Really?

No. While it is true we do need maids, it is also true that I will probably be fucking the maids. But, Lexi, what happens if I don't even give your mother a shot at being here and just hire maids? Maybe you won't mind but, how will Mel feel? How will your mother react?

So you will give my mother the first chance before you hire anyone. You will tell her she needs to be like us and she won't want that. So she will leave, but you will not have refused to consider her. So, ... no one will be angry with you. And because you make it clear that to be here means the person is a girlfriend to you, she won't ever push to stay with us as our mother. That your plan?

Yes. That is the exact plan. Is it a bad one?

It is good. You will allow our mother to visit but not to stay because she not want to be a girlfriend like us. She would want to replace us. You will make Mel very happy because you are fair.

Good. I think we need two maids plus Mel for now. Will it be hard to find maids?

I think it not hard. I know where to look! The housekeepers at the Sidney! Or my school friends. Yes, I talk to them! They not going to college. They will be good!

You thought that because they will be young I will need to send them to school. Correct? Why wouldn't I?

Maybe, maybe not. I was wrong. I think this will work. I talk to them. They not want college. Craig, you will tell my mother she need to be your girlfriend? Really?

Do you have a better idea?

No. What if my mother say yes?

She won't.

How you know?

She didn't marry Mel's father.

True. She really bad to him.

We know she doesn't want the two of you girls to be sharing me. She certainly won't want to be sharing me with you two.

I know. But what if she say yes?

Then, Lexi, I have no idea. None at all.

You not telling Mel this, correct?

Correct. I am not telling Mel.

Good. If she know, she will tell our mother. Craig? ... Come hold me, please. I feel weird. You are the father of the baby inside me. I need to feel you near me. Hold me tight.

And I do. This sixteen-year-old girl will have a child by me before the calendar turns to the New Year. This is no small matter. We will be parents, jointly. Lexi and I have a flesh and blood bond that can never be broken. We are both Catholics and though Lexi doesn't think much of the church, I suspect that the reverence for life that I feel, runs through her too.

The touching is not sexual. It is not urgent. It is not a pretense for something else. It is pure and simple love. We lie back and just rest in each other's arms.

With all the hubbub related to the coming school year, the land deal, the big party on Saturday, and Lexi's mother's potential imminent arrival, we are safe and at peace in each other's arms. Nothing interferes.

An hour passes before Lexi gets up, undresses and takes a shower. I follow after she is done and take my own shower before joining her in bed.

We seek each other's arms again, but this time it is sexual. There is a hungry sexual desire. Nothing is playful about it. Lexi has my member in her hand and she is working it with earnestness. I am fingering her cunt. No coaxing is required. Lexi's need matches my own.

She pulls me up on top of her. Insertion is a mandate, not an option. Insertion is accomplished.

I feel her heat. I feel her need. I feel her hands as they roam over my back. I feel the walls of her cunt as I push in and pull back, repeatedly.

Lexi is growling. Honestly growling. Whatever is happening inside her head is generated by her needs, her emotions, and our efforts.

It has nothing to do with any plans or inspiration I have brought to the coupling tonight.

Clearly, there will be no conception. This is lovemaking in the most raw and primal sense. We are a couple. No one is seeking permission. This is the sex of a mated couple. Lexi knows this. I know this. This is not a sympathy fuck. This is a celebration. Lexi is losing it. I am losing it. ... and, finally, there is cum.

We are sweaty, sticky, out of breath, and blissfully happy.

Both of us get up early, possibly because we went to bed and fucked early last night. Anyway, it's a calm, quiet morning for a couple of hours. But we need to get into gear. I have to go to the bank and pull out almost a million pesos. I have no idea how long that will take, but my guess is that it doesn't happen quickly. It, sure as hell, didn't happen quickly when I purchased the van.

Then, this afternoon, Mel, Lyn and I need to get to Atty. Trujillo's office.

Everyone is excited. In the course of the next few hours we will become landowners of a sizeable tract of property inside the city limits.

I get to the bank with Lyn and Mel. We will get the money and take it to Trujillo's office. I have learned he has a safe. Let him hold the cash until the afternoon. Maybe it will also give him confidence that this thing is really happening.

This is the second time I have walked into this bank to withdraw a very large sum of cash. It won't be unique, but it feels weird, nevertheless. Just like last time, I can't use a withdrawal slip straight away as the money is in a dollar account and I don't know exactly what to withdraw to receive eight hundred and sixteen one-thousand peso bills. (The attorney's fee is two percent of the transaction price.) I sit at a back officer's desk as she runs numbers, fills out the proper pieces of paper and hands them to me for signatures.

Nothing is going quickly. Even after the time it takes to get the paperwork right, it takes us better than an hour at the bank as the cash is finally produced on a desk, counted out and verified at least three times by three different people.

This is also the second time I have walked out of the bank with huge bundles of cash. I'm wishing I had an armed guard with me. Thankfully, it is not far to Trujillo's office.

Once at Trujillo's office, we pile the money on the secretary's desk.

We go through the same process of counting and recounting, before the secretary accepts the cash, puts it in the safe and hands me a receipt for it.

By the time we have completed this, it is lunch time. The closing is right after lunch, that is, so long as the selling party appears.

Lyn is texting the seller, advising him that the money is now in the attorney's safe and we are ready for him this afternoon. We get a promise that he will join us at the law office by two.

Staying downtown, we find a place to eat and return before two, to await the other party who shows up at two thirty.

It takes a full three hours to get all the paperwork right, all the signatures attached to all the multiple copies and to get the cash counted out multiple times again.

In the end, it is done and not done.

I learn only now that I, as the buyer, will be paying the seller's taxes on the sale! The law says it is the seller's tax, but custom here, Trujillo explains, is the opposite, as no one is going to come against the seller in a cash sale and I can't get the title recorded until the tax is paid. Oh, joy.

So I have the duly signed title and properly executed deed of sale, but getting it registered is yet at least one more step. The attorney says if I want, I can pay his secretary to handle all this at the city offices. I may take him up on this, but want to ask around and sleep

on it at least for a couple of days. Plus, I wonder, does Rena do this type of thing?

For today, we are done. At least we are done for the day with the world of lawyers and contracts.

After dinner I will enter a very different world. It is a world I have no business entering whatsoever, and yet I will do so willingly, as will my partner.

Dido is still only thirteen. She is the youngest here. She looks sweet and young and virginal. Two out of three ain't bad, I guess. We are alone in the bedroom. I am undressing her with care. It isn't a race. She is attending to me. I attend to her.

Slowly, all clothing is discarded. Slowly, we take our positions on the bed. Slowly, my fingers move over her body, taking notice of the contours of youth.

She is holding my member gently, and carefully stroking it.

I so want to kiss her. Am I too old for that to make any sense to her? Does she really want to be kissed by an old man?

My lips find hers and there is no recoil. There is searching. There is desire. There is passion.

I feel so lucky at this moment. I have no business being loved by anyone so young and vibrant. And yet, ... and yet I am.

I mount Dido. She accommodates me and I slide into the girl without any fuss. It is smooth all the way down. I hit bottom. I know it because I feel it. Dido winces a bit when it happens.

I back out a little and start fucking in earnest. Dido and I, fucking as if we were just another couple. We are not just like any other couple, but right now, that doesn't matter. She wants me inside her and it is where I intend to stay until completion.

I feel every inch of her pussy. The feeling is beyond erotic. It is hard to maintain and not lose it inside her. There will be more

skilled lovers. There will be more energetic lovers. There will never be a more sweet, open, and completely exposed soul to me as Dido. I count myself lucky to have her, regardless of the reasons.

The sense of pure awe that she is truly mine flows from me and into her, hot, sticky and desired by her.

6

It is Saturday morning. We have a party tonight and no one coming here today that I know of.

However, I note that all around me are in motion, though quiet. An intense effort at cleaning is underway. The gals do some cleaning on a constant basis each day. Floors are frequently swept during the day. On occasion, windows are washed, the counters are scrubbed clean, not just wiped down. The fridge is unloaded and cleaned. Yes, all these things happen but not all at once.

It's Mel who is currently unloading the fridge and it is to her I approach.

What is going on?

We getting ready for my mother.

Your mother is coming, now?

You say she can, so I call her last night.

Why all the cleaning? You didn't do this for your father or Jana's family. Why now?

Ha! My mother, she will check. That why.

Mel, you are over doing it. Just reload the fridge and tell everyone to stop.

Please, Craig, a little bit more. She will be here soon.

Mel, I really think you should....

Please! Just a few more minutes. Please?

OK, OK.

Craig, let me see your nails.

What the fuck is this about? Why does she want to see my fingernails?

Why,

Just show me!

So I do, and Mel is immediately calling for Lexi in her language. Three minutes later, Lexi is by my side with a manicure kit. She is here to clip my nails.

I gather that their mother is going to inspect my nails. This is way over the top, way over.

All this is nuts. It really doesn't matter what their mother thinks. She isn't staying. Yes, I said she can stay if I bed her. But I have no intention of that ever happening. Hell, I don't even know what the gal looks like. It is just that I am sure she will run far away from here as soon as she gets wind of the requirement.

I don't expect she is ugly, not with two very good looking daughters, but she balked at Mel's father, as he is a polygamist. So that makes her position clear enough. I know why she and Lexi's dad are no longer together as the man is dead, but she doesn't sound like someone who is ready to just settle in and build a nest next to the nests of her two daughters.

Lexi has my fingernails done and has now removed my socks and shoes. She is going to clip my toenails. There is no fucking way her mother is going to see my feet, but there is also no reason to refuse the pedicure.

Lexi, how did you father die?

He die of Diabetes.

I see. When?

Two years ago. Mother have to work then as a maid, at the house of the employer. Mel, she the one to be with me.

Where does your mother work?

Here in GenSan.

If she works as a maid, did she need permission from her employer to come here today?

No she have off from after lunch on Saturday to after lunch on Sunday.

So, she will be here this afternoon?

No, her employers are in Manila this weekend so she coming now.

Right now?

Yes, I think this.

Lexi has finished her work on my grooming and is putting her equipment away. Mel and company have stopped their preparations as per my earlier instructions.

Why do I feel like I may have set something into motion that I will wish I hadn't?

But, what is the worst that can happen? I get screamed at? I haven't broken any laws. OK, so she screams. I guess the thing is, just let her scream. She has to stop at some point.

I am over-thinking this. What I really need to be thinking about is what we are going to do about the maids. I suspect Lexi was serious about recruiting some of her high school girlfriends to take on the jobs. But how do I bed Lexi and send her to college, and then bed her mates and keep them as maids?

I don't think that works.

I am not sure how long I have been thinking, my mind wandering down dead ends and blind alleys. Nothing is any clearer. I have no solution. I see paths, but not a one of them produces the outcome I need.

It is approaching lunchtime and the mother has yet to arrive. That doesn't signal much, other than Lexi's expectation that her mother was going to get off work sooner was most likely unfounded.

I am debating if I have the time to get my current book, which is sitting in the bedroom, or if I should just sit still and wait for lunch to be served. But that reverie, which itself appears to have eaten up some minutes, is called up short due to the presence of a guest.

Mel is introducing me to her ‘Nanay³⁰.’

I’m Craig. It’s nice to meet you, but I don’t think I can call you Nanay, so might I know your name.

Yes, Sir Craig, of course, my name is Maribel.

Your nickname is Bel?

Yes! Yes this is true. Very good, Sir.

I am not looking at an ugly woman. I am not looking at an OK appearance. Bel looks just fine. Maybe even better than just fine. I can guess that, about twenty years ago, when Mel’s dad asked her to join his harem, she might have thought she could do better.

Maybe the relationship with Lexi’s dad was far better, though I gather that they also didn’t marry. Much of the lives these folks have lived is hard for me to decipher.

Well, I am sure you want to spend time with your girls, so just ignore me and enjoy your time with Mel and Lexi.

Yes, Sir, I will do this, but I see them before you return here. I see them many times. Sir, I am told you need one or more maids. Is this correct?

Yes, I need help here. All except Mel are back in school starting on Tuesday. This house is far too large for one person. Can you recommend someone I might want to hire? I am afraid that not anyone will want the job, because I will bed any woman who joins us. And I may make that person pregnant, just as I have done with Lexi and may yet do with Mel and the others here.

This is necessary, Sir? That the girl must be yours?

³⁰ Means Mother.

Yes, I am convinced of it. Actually I am not, but I don't want Bel here. I just don't see a positive outcome should she stay with us. I don't think I need to remind her why this will not be a good option for her. That will be obvious. Just let her visit with her kids and she will put an end to this attempt all by herself.

Bel is moving off toward Mel when Mel asks her a question and gets a response.

Sir, my mother has not eaten. It OK if we feed her in the dirty kitchen?

That really isn't necessary. I don't want the woman to stay, but I am not pissed with her. Why would I want to send her away to eat?

No, set an extra place here and we will both eat.

Bel appears to be shocked. Mel appears to be happy and Lexi, who is standing off a way, is giving me what I can only describe as an approving look.

During lunch, I have a desultory conversation with Bel. I am curious about her second partner. She knows I am familiar with the first. She tells me that Vincent, number two, was a decent, hardworking man. He worked as a mason until the diabetes made work impossible.

Even with the government health program, PhilHealth, she couldn't afford treatments and medication. His passing was painfully prolonged and hard to witness. It was actually at that time that Mel and Lexi started their life on their own.

I don't think Bel loved Vincent. He was good, safe and, until the illness, it seems he provided enough money for her children. If she regretted her decision not to stay with her first partner, this second one was not her one and true love, either.

Bel is forty now. In her world, a woman of such an advanced age has no chance to marry or find a mate. All she can do is hang on to a job or find a relative who will take her in.

She has a job she has been hanging on to and was hoping that she might be able to find shelter via her daughters' arrangements. I have killed that. ... Or have I? Maybe she thinks I would not consider bedding her because she is forty. Maybe. But what if, all things being equal, what was distasteful before becomes compellingly necessary now?

Does my bedding her daughters, something I have no bones about doing and the clear proof of my actions in Lexi's pregnancy, ... does that provide enough negative reinforcement to ward off any interest in joining us?

Did I not think this through enough? I had months, years, to formulate a plan before I came to the Philippines. But now I am winging it much of the time. Have I screwed up?

Some things should not be diagrammed...

1

Lunch is pleasant and troubling. At least, it is troubling to me. Bel doesn't seem troubled as much as she seems distracted. If I am running down mental rat-holes, Bel loses her train of thought twice toward the end of the lunch.

Following lunch, Lexi and Mel gather their mother up and disappear from view. Where they have gone is of no concern to me. I have done all I can do to keep her away from here without causing problems for me with Mel and Lexi.

Lyn, Jana, Dido, Li2x, and May have been staying out of the way during all of this, but now they appear and wrap arms around me. It's sweet, appreciated, and unfortunately accomplishes nothing. I care for them as much as they care for me. That goes without saying. But until I know for certain that Bel is gone, and not angling to be part of this household, I remain on edge.

If I need something to distract myself from Bel, Lyn has the answer. We need to get ready for the party and that has my mind remapped for a good 30 seconds before... *Lyn, are Mel and Lexi coming? If not, that is fine. But if they are, they need to say goodbye to their mother now.*

Sure enough, Lyn didn't see the issue either. May offers to 'remind' the two girls that they need to let us know what they want to do. There is no requirement they come to the party. On the other hand, I don't want to make the decision for them and leave them here if they want to come with us.

This party is one where each family brings some dishes. It's like a potluck or carry-in. We were told just to come without bringing anything but that makes no sense. We are bringing dishes. I say 'family' as we were told that there will be children, and assorted

other family members attending. At the least, it is not just couples. That makes arriving with my girls far less of a shock to the others when we arrive.

As we assemble by the van forty-five minutes later, I am seeing something I do not want to see. But this is not the time or the place to sort out the meaning of it.

The drive takes me up towards the town of Polomolok and then down a side road for miles. This road is not paved and is not wide, maybe twelve feet at best. I guess that makes it a little wider than three meters, which Lyn tells me is a common width for a bukid³¹ road. I have no idea what bukid is. There are steep drop-offs to open ditches on both sides the girls call canals. Here there are no cars or vans, but as well as the motorcycles and tricycles, there are oxen-drawn carts. They are calling the ox a carabao.

There are more of these carts than anything else moving on the road, though the term moving is being generous. Creeping is more like it.

Lyn has the directions, but they are like the others she has held for me, unlike any set of directions I have ever experienced before. Maybe if I had lived in the Ozarks such directions would seem similar, but not for me. Every direction requires a landmark. Nothing is given by kilometers or compass.

I am very glad we are making this trip in daylight and suspect it may be one reason why the party is starting so early. We may not be the only ones for whom this is the first time out here.

If I had any concern as to whether other expats lived on larger plots of land, when we finally arrive at our destination that concern is done with. The house may not be large, but the land is huge. It is a farm and orchard. Mango trees filling four hectares, then there are corn fields for another eight hectares. There is fallow ground and there is the ground on which the house and three outbuildings sit.

³¹ Farm

The house is a bungalow, but not a small, cramped one. It is airy, with high ceilings, large rooms and a very large kitchen. The home itself is surrounded by shade trees on all sides. A roofed-over terrace off the front door must be a good twenty feet by twenty feet. I comment that to a fella who 'corrects' me. It is six meters by six meters exactly. Either way, it is large and a number of us congregate there in the shade and gentle breeze to shoot the breeze ourselves.

We are far from the city. I cannot see another landowner's building in any direction. This place is as private as you might ever wish. It is far more private than is the land we purchased.

I am beginning to regret my impulsive purchase when I hear the guy who lives here complaining that he can't get reliable electrical service. His house current, which should be 220V is only 180V most of the time and he is constantly burning out motors. He has no cell service worth a damn. Bottom line is, it's beautiful here but there are real drawbacks when living too far out of town.

He doesn't have a concrete fence around the property. There is one along the two-track path that leads up to the place, but in a way that is just cosmetic, as the rest of the place is just fenced with barbed wire.

I get a chance to query the guy about security. He has some fairly vicious dogs he lets out at night and he's got a shotgun he's not supposed to have. But as he is pretty isolated, there rarely is a problem.

I do get a heads up on a couple of other guys with larger properties, though not as large as this one. And then I find out that one of these guys is here.

I am in the process of seeking this guy out when Stefan's gal, Mona, comes up to me and announces that I have been fooling them.

How?

The girls.

Excuse me? I don't understand.

Mel and Lexi! They are your step-daughters! Bel and we talk about how Bel is yours and you are taking care of her girls!

I am afraid you have been misinformed, Mona. Lexi is very much my girl and the baby she is carrying is mine. If you will excuse me, I think I need to have a conversation with Bel.

Mona is beside herself, almost crying, knowing that some bad shit is about to hit the fan and, though she did nothing wrong, she was the proximate cause of it.

I find Bel with a few gals I don't know. I can see these gals are getting ready to congratulate me on finding Bel or something like that, and she is just beaming with pride; she is, that is, until she gets a good look at my face.

Mel sees me walking toward her mother, but she's too far away to get to us before I start in on Bel.

Bel, I don't know all the lies you have just told since you got here today, but I assure you that you are about to regret saying a damned thing. You are not my girl. You are not in my bed. I am not taking care of our daughters because you are mine. ... Mel and Lexi are mine, not you; Lexi carries my child. Mel will too, soon enough. You do not live with me and, based on your actions today, you never will. Now, as I am not giving you a ride home, I suggest you get walking.

Mel arrived in time to hear most if not all of what I said. Have I lost her? Mel is crying. *'Nay, what you say? Why you say you are Craig's? Why you lie? You ruin everything! Why?*

Lexi has reached us and is trying to figure out what has happened. Mona is here now and it is Mona who is explaining to Lexi. I guess she gets the story because she is truly pissed off and not with Bel. She's pissed with Mel.

You are so stupid! I told you she was lying to you! I told you she wouldn't do what she promised! You never listen! You never learn! She did exactly what I told you she was going to do! ... Craig, don't make her walk back. There

things we have to do tonight to make sure this never happen again. We must leave now. There no way to leave her here and we can't tie her up in the van, but important she not leave without us. You angry with me?

Of all the people I might be angry with, Lexi is clearly not one of them, other than I wish she had just told me what was going on, which she didn't.

Lexi, you, Mel, and Bel get into the van. I will collect the others and make some apologies before we leave.

Lucky for me, Bel does not fight that instruction. If she had, it would have been very ugly. As it is, all of this is more than a little embarrassing.

I see Lyn getting the rest of our crew back into the van. I find our host but, before I can make an apology, he and three other guys pat me on the back and tell me not to worry. Shit happens, and they will look forward to getting together with me next time.

In the process, I get the name and cell number of the other guy here with some property, before climbing into the van and driving slowly, around carabao carts, back to town.

I like quiet drives, especially when it is very slow going. Tonight it is anything but quiet. Lyn is engaged in a screamer with Bel. The screamer is not in English and so I can't tell you exactly what is being said, but I am getting little bits of it because Li2x is sharing some of the evidently juicier bits.

So I can't vouch for the veracity of any of this.

Craig, Ate Bel say, she not had the comfort of a man for five years because the diabetes and then he die. It not fair they have you. They should wait now. She know they already do it, but it should stop with them. They telling Ate³² that she is foolish. Ate not make the rules here. Lexi and Mel not make the rules. You make the rules. All Ate do is make you angry. Ate say it not fair! Lyn say, it not matter. It the way it is. Lyn say, you not want to fuck mother and

³² Here, Ate [ah-TAY] refers to an older female. As Li2x is not a daughter to Bel, she is Ate.

daughters, that why he not want you here. But now maybe that what need to happen. She say you need to bed Ate and daughters to teach Ate to behave. That why Ate cries.

Bel is crying. So I guess Li2x has me reasonably up to speed.

What do you think, Li2x?

I not know. Maybe ask Lexi?

Lexi? You listening?

Yes, Craig. I hear all.

What do you think I should do?

I agree with Lyn. It why I say we need to go back together.

So, you want me to fuck her and throw her out?

No, add her, but your way, not her way. Get Mel pregnant, get Nanay pregnant. She need to learn you make the rules. If you throw her out she will be a problem later.

Mel, what do you think?

You decide, I accept.

Jana?

Lyn and Lexi are right.

Well, girls, I don't rape women. If Bel doesn't voluntarily crawl into my bed after I bed her daughters, I will not force her. ... But, Bel, if you do agree to what Lyn and Lexi say should happen, I will accept you with some additional rules. No more lying. Period. None. No arguing. No scheming to find a way around my rules. If any of these things happen, you will not need to pack your stuff because it will already be out on the street and so will you be. ... Now, for the rest of the ride home, I want silence.

There is quiet the rest of the way. I have no idea what Bel will do. We are pretty much back to where we were early this afternoon.

We haven't eaten yet, but we did bring back the food we had brought to the party, so preparations for supper are trivial. We just put the serving dishes on a counter, and we fill our plates as we would have it. Once again, I want no talking. It's just better that way right now.

I am still pretty well ticked off about what happened. Lexi's sense that Bel can easily manipulate Mel seems to be pretty well proven. If during the day it will only be Bel and Mel, I am seeing the likelihood of major problems.

I really don't like the resolution that Lyn and Lexi have promoted. The problem is, I don't have a better option and the only other option I can think of, and I don't like it, is to jettison Mel and Lexi.

After supper there is only one thing to do.

Lexi, Mel, and Bel, up to my bedroom, now.

I know two of them will go. Will the third one? I am not looking at them. I am looking at Lyn. The girl comes over to me, sits on my lap and whispers, *Fuck Mel and Lexi so Bel see it. Take Bel over your legs and spank her very hard. Then fuck her in front of her girls. Then say, 'The next time I will not spank. I will throw you out without asking you anything. Do anything wrong and you are gone.'* Then turn to Mel and ask, *'Do you understand? Mel, I will not throw you out with your mother. That is what she wants. No, you stay, but you will not visit your mother any more if I throw her out. Do you understand?'*

That's pretty intense, Lyn.

It need to happen. Bel is bad and dangerous for us. She will try to trick Mel again when Lexi is in school. If Bel can't have you, she not want Mel to have you. See?

Yes, I see.

By the time I get to my bedroom, Mel and Lexi are down to bra and panties. Bel has not shed a damned thing.

Bel, are you having sex with me tonight?

She is looking right at me and there is anger there.

Yes, I am.

Then you had better get undressed, at least as much as your girls have done so far.

She isn't happy, but she does get up and the clothing starts to come off. When she is in her panties and bra only, I have a chance to see her for the first time. Physically, there is nothing wrong with her. It is her mind, her attitude that is the problem.

I strip down and lay down. Asking Lexi to mount me from above, I am on my back watching Bel. Lexi is bouncing up and down. She is hot and wet, but she also is pregnant. There is no reason in the world to cum in her tonight.

Bel is looking away.

Bel, look at me. Look at your daughter. Do not move your eyes away as I fuck her hot cunt. Your daughter is my girl. This will never change.

Is this really necessary? Hell, I don't know, but the way she keeps on trying to peel the girls away from me, even after one of them is carrying my kid, has me pretty well ticked off.

OK, so she is watching now.

Lexi has been riding for a while. It's time for Mel. We switch partners. Once again, Bel is looking away. And now I am really getting pissed.

Bel, you will watch and not stop watching or I will have you suck your daughter's tits while I fuck her.

You wouldn't! Still not watching.

Lexi, bring your mother here. It's time she learns who makes the rules in this house!

Lexi moves toward Bel. Bel starts to scream at Lexi. *Don't you dare! I'm ordering you! Leave me alone!*

Lexi, slap her hard and bring her here.

Lexi isn't kind and she doesn't slap her mother. She belts her, knocking the woman over. Lexi may have a pretty well bruised hand, but Bel is going to have a damned fine black eye by tomorrow.

Mel has not disengaged and is still working my pole from above, as Lexi drags her mother, now pretty shaken up, over to Mel and me. Lexi shoves her mother's face against Mel's right tit. There's not much finesse about it. Just a face mashed against a tit, with a girl screaming at her mother to *Suck! ... When Craig tells you to do something, you do it or we will beat you until you do it! You hear me, Nanay! You hear me. Now suck that tit.*

And, I'll be damned, Bel does. She is crying, but she does. And she continues to as Mel cums hard.

I still have yet to cum as I have Mel dismount.

Putting Bel on her back is a non-event. At this point, if I wanted to tie her up like a pretzel, she would not complain.

I mount the woman missionary style, but ask the girls to suck on Bel's tits as I ream their mother. Bel tries to push them away, causing Lexi to rear back and punch her mother hard on the jaw, before returning to the task at hand.

I haven't spanked Bel, but Lexi's punch did it for me.

As I fuck Bel I give her a slightly reworked statement as Lyn suggested before.

The next time we will not hit. I will simply throw you out of this house without asking you anything. Do anything wrong and you are gone.

Then, Mel, do you understand? I will not throw you out with your mother. That is what she wants. No, you stay, but you will not visit your mother any more if I throw her out. Do you understand?

All she does is lift her head off a tit and say, *Yes*, before returning to that tit.

I noted before that there is not a damned thing wrong with Bel on the physical side of the ledger. For having two kids, you wouldn't know it by fucking her. Her cunt is hot, juicy and tight as all get-out. Her breasts are possibly B cup size and firm. There is nothing sagging or sorry with Bel. She may be on the long side as they see themselves, but in the States, she would hardly be seen as old... at least not by her looks.

Fucking her is no punishment for me.

And Bel is not acting as if this is rape. She is trying to get the most out of this. At least on the physical level, as my cum enters her, I seem to have a partner below me.

I don't know if Bel has ever been fucked better or harder. She might well have been in the past. I don't care. All I know is that from now on, unless I throw her out on the street, it seems like, she is mine.

2

Mel still needs cum from me, but then so do Li2x, May and Dido. It's still early in the evening, so maybe there will be time for Mel later tonight. I need to pay more attention to the younger ones.

But, what the fuck am I going to do with Bel? It's not that she is too old. She isn't. She is attractive as well. It isn't the package, it is what is inside the package.

I reach out and bring the daughter she manipulated close to me. Holding Mel tight I address Bel.

Lexi wants me to keep you here for only one reason, to control you. I am not going to force you to stay, but if you do stay, and if you do act like you did tonight, you can expect Lexi or another of the girls here to hit you as hard as you were hit tonight. I won't hit you, but I will not stop them. I think you should go and not come back. You don't want to live here by my rules. To live here, it must be by those rules.

Mel is resting her head on my shoulder. Maybe I am imagining it, but something has changed in the relationship between mother and daughter. Mel has not stiffened or pulled away as I spoke in strong terms to her mother. In the past, she would have. Instead, Mel snuggles in softly and tightly against me.

Lexi is on the bed but a little apart from us, propped up on a pillow, not saying a word, just waiting.

Bel is looking at Lexi as she says, *It is wrong for a mother to take orders from her daughter. Why you make me do this?*

But I am the one who answers.

They don't. These are not your daughters' orders. These are my orders. They are enforcing my rules, my orders. If you hear an order from them it is because the order came from me. Like I just told you, this house runs on my rules.

But you allow them to hit me!

Yes, yes I do. Because it seems like it is needed to get your attention. Bel, I do need maids. The girls all know this. What I do not need is you and your attitude, your interference.

I must think!

No!, comes from Lexi.

Why? All she asks for is time.

She do that when she trying to figure out a plan to get around something. What you think I do all the time to protect Mel. My mother do this always and always Mel is hurt. My mother always like this, sneaky. It why things better for Mel and me when we move away. Mel able to get a job and keep the money better.

Lexi, if she does just one sneaky thing I will throw her out. I won't ask why she did it. It will just happen. So, if you are right, then OK. She will be gone soon enough.

Lexi chuckles. *Craig, my mother never meet someone like you. You confuse her. Me, I understand her but no power. Mel and my father they not understand and she hurts them. But you have power and she not able to do what she do. She think she will trick you into what she wants at the party. Ha! That very much not work. Now, she not know what to do; do you 'Nay?*

I am getting hard again. There are moments when the stiffness comes not from love, or lust, but rather an anger, a need to show dominance. Mel needs my cum, but this hard-on is not for her.

I pull Bel up on her knees, spear her cunt twice with my rod before repositioning and spearing Bel's asshole. Bel bellows and I don't care. I am ramming into her as hard as I can.

Lexi, pinch her nipples hard. Mel, shove your fingers as far as you can, up her cunt.

This is, in a way, a test of Mel. Is she really attaching to me and away from her mother as she indicated before? Lexi's connection to me is not a concern, but Mel's is. Will she do as I have directed?

I'll be damned. Mel has shoved her entire hand into Bel's cunt. Bel is sobbing, moaning, leaking, and quivering. And, eventually I do cum again.

Both Mel and I pull out. Lexi has ended the torture of Bel's tits.

OK, Bel, you want to think? Fine. Lexi, set your mother up in one of the other bedrooms for tonight. Mel, please stay with me.

Both Mel and I need showers before anything else might occur.

I really want Bel to disappear from here. How will Mel handle it if she does? Asking the girl won't tell me a damned thing.

There is no sense fretting about it tonight. I can't do anything more now.

Following the much needed shower, I spend an hour trying to learn what I can about Bel's 'management style' which turns out to be somewhat ruthless. Mel thinks her mother learned it during the woman's early, difficult life. It could well be, but that doesn't help me.

I also learn one other thing. Bel rejected Mel's dad, not because she had a moral objection to polygamy, but because Bel was unable to gain control in that household. Power was the issue, not morality.

Bel faces that same dynamic here, only greater.

Having cum twice already, my body just doesn't want a third act. And, so, Mel and I settle in for a cozy night, gently holding each other until the sweaty heat of flesh on flesh ends it and we simply sleep, separate but close, for a few hours.

I am awake. It's only four in the morning, and dark outside, but I am hard, needing to fuck. Mel is sleeping soundly.

I pull back the sheet covering her; no movement.

I lift up the slip covering her cunt; no movement.

I gently spread her legs and I am having a hard time believing it but; no movement.

I get between her legs and, using my hand, move my member up and down over and then between her labia; subtle movement as her hips push up a little to meet me.

I push in hard; a gasp, a cry *Wha?*, a groan, and then an *Oh, yes!*

Mel is awake now, and right there with me as we make the bed creak in strain. I have Mel's feet in the air as I pound her cunt hard. I feel all of Mel's cunt as I move in and out. She is like a glove I am wearing. God only knows how she would describe it, but she clearly is enjoying it.

I cannot tell you why I woke with such a need, but I did, and it is not abating as Mel and I fuck our way into the early morning. We try this position and that one, I hold her gently and we kiss one moment, only to return to hard fucking a few minutes later.

Sweat and sweaty bodies pulling the bed sheets up, we continue the mating dance. Mel is giggling, *I think you can't!*

Oh, yes, I can.

Then why you not?

All as we fuck on and on.

I feel something building but I say nothing.

Mel must sense something because I hear, *Oh! Oh yes!*

A few seconds later I do finally cum. Hot, sweaty, exhausted and blissfully happy, I have cum. It is done and the need is no more.

While there is the need for a shower, we ignore it and go back to sleep for another hour or so.

Morning brings with it the news that Bel has decamped.

Lexi says, Bel asks all who were around her, as she was in the process of leaving, how it is that they let me fuck them in the ass. According to Lexi, as news that I have taken Bel's ass is news to them, and as I clearly have never fucked them in the ass, and as that realization came through to Bel, well, Bel just lost it and ran out the door as fast as her sore bottom would allow.

Lexi is hanging pretty close to me today. At lunch she sits by me and says, as if talking to her fish and rice, *I never had enough power. You do something, in one night, I never able to do.*

Lexi?

Yes?

Mel's father. He had that power too. That's probably why she didn't stay with him. She couldn't control him. She could control your father, correct?

That it? Not the church? You think it that?

Yes.

OK, I not see that. But maybe you correct. She not come back now.

I hope she doesn't. But I am not sure.

Craig, we need maids. So, what we do? You want to meet my friends?

I just don't see how that works.

Please?

How many?

I will invite three friends.

They're not going to college?

No, all three looking for work as maids, now.

Really?

Yes! This is true!

Lexi, we don't need three maids.

So don't hire all three.

OK, OK.

I don't want to do things in a hurry, but I am jammed up simply because I returned so close to the beginning of the school year, and last year my three oldest ones were not in school. With all that has been happening, the fact that we needed more help simply failed to come into view soon enough and, even if it had come in sooner, it would still be a rush.

This is Sunday. In forty-eight hours the girls are in school.³³ So, yes, I need to hire maids today or tomorrow.

Lexi is texting the three girls. I don't think that this will be the first these three will have heard of a potential opening. It is only the first time they are being told to come.

Lyn and Jana are aware of what is going on and they are informing the youngest three. It is best we have no surprises.

I get a text from Stefan wanting to know if everything is OK. I text back that all is fine. I think we are done, but...

A few of the guys want to know if you want to join us tonight. We get together at a resto-bar here every few days.

Thanks. I would be happy to do so another night, but things are busy here for a few days.

You sure all is OK?

Yes. It's just that we are hiring maybe two more maids today and I don't want to be gone until I know they are working out.

Thought you have three maids.

³³ Classes start on Tuesday.

They will be attending college in two days. They are students.

Oh, wow, sorry. Didn't know. Well, maybe next week?

Next week sounds fine. Thanks.

Who you chatting?

Why do you ask, Lyn?

It another girl?

Really? You are worried I have a new girl?

I worry if we not know her. Best we make sure she OK.

It wasn't a she. It was Stefan. He invited me to meet him and some others at a bar tonight.

You going?

No.

Why?

Because we are looking to hire maids. This is not a good time to be gone.

It OK if you go. Jana can go with you.

Lyn, I don't need your permission to go and why would Jana come with me.

It better if we are there. Not safe for you alone.

I am chewing on that.

Why isn't it safe for me alone? Do the other guys bring their girls?

It isn't! Why you being difficult?

Lyn, I am not being difficult. I am only trying to understand.

Remember the German you meet. The one who had a fight at a resto-bar?

I wouldn't call it a fight, but, yes, I remember.

Maybe he be dead. He lucky he not. Best if we are with you!

OK, I see your point. But as it is, I am not going out tonight. Maybe next week.

I gather Lyn is satisfied with the outcome of the conversation as she moves off. I pick up the cell phone and tap out...

Lyn thinks it is best if one of my girls is with me whenever I go to a bar. Is she being over-protective?

Maybe, but Mona always comes with me. Not all the guys have their girls with them. It's a mix, but it is pretty common and nothing to worry about.

OK, thanks.

When, the first time I was here, Lyn said she needed to vet the girls I met, I didn't see anything hidden in that, and I didn't have a problem with it. But this time it felt constraining. Is it that she hasn't changed, but I have?

Hub?

Craig! You weren't listening!

What is it, Jana?

I am taking your high school girls to the mall, we need things for school. They need new shoes, and supplies.

You need some cash?

Yes, please.

How much?

Up to you.

No, Jana, how much do you need to purchase everything.

Depends.

Depends on what!

How good the shoes we buy.

OK, assume they get good shoes.

Maybe six thousand pesos? I sorry... it is too much.

No, that's fine. Here's eight, just in case you guessed low. Do the rest of you need anything?

No, we have no uniform at MSU, and we have the supplies we need.

OK, well, if you want and there is enough money left over, have lunch at Jollibee.

That gets me a pretty nice kiss, a grope of my member, and a swish of her ass as she walks off.

I'm about to go looking for the book I am reading when Lexi reappears.

They are coming.

All three of them?

Yes.

OK. When will they be here?

Soon, I think. They not far from here.

Lexi, how is your hand? You hit your mother pretty hard last night.

Lexi giggles. Hurts a little, but glad I do it.

You have wanted to do it for a long time?

Yes. This is true. The way she treat my father make me very angry, but nothing I can do. Better to be gone and just not see it, I think.

Each of these kids, young though they may be, has seen a lot in their time. They are not living in a world that essentially has padded walls, well designed guard rails, understanding teachers, advanced medicine, corrective lenses for all who need it, free or reduced lunches five days a week, stop signs and oh, so many things to keep

their young, precious bodies from knowing of harm, seeing harm, or experiencing harm. Oh, sure, sometimes it happens anyway, but those poor souls are the outliers and we pity them for the trauma they have to endure.

Each one of these kids has seen more, experienced more and just had to suck it up. No one is crying for them. It's just life. Get over it and move on.

And that's where I come in. If there is, for any soul, a port in the storm, that's what I am to these girls. Lexi may be more vocal about it, more consciously cognizant of it, but all of them feel it inside.

I suspect Lyn's story, if I were ever to learn it, would tear my heart out. But she keeps it under wraps. There is no profit in sharing her hurt. It's best to bury it, and find the good where you can.

I have found the book I was looking for and, if I can settle my mind enough, maybe I can get a few pages read before three girls appear.

And that is about all I get before Lexi, with exquisite care, quietly appears to inform me her friends have arrived and are on the terrace outside.

Come, Sir, come meet them.

Bring them in, Lexi.

No, Sir, you meet them first and you invite them in. This your house. You must do this.

I am getting Lexi's point and it makes sense. This is a case of first impressions. She wants no misunderstandings based on casualness.

If you were to ask if I remembered or recognized these three based on my one trip months ago to Lexi's high school, the answer is a firm no. Maybe they were there, but I don't have a clue.

Each of them is cute. None are taller than five feet. Not a one of them has an extra ounce of fat on her beyond the bare minimum. None are scary skinny, but it wouldn't take many days without food to make each of them that way.

Craig, these are my friends, Reina, Chrislyn, and Jing2x. Girls, this is Sir Craig.

Each, in her own way, greets me; each is a bit shy. While they are not triplets, even now I can't remember who went to which name. I am sure that will come in time. I only need two, and there are three here. How do I sort out who stays?

Lexi, please bring them in, show them the house and what will be expected.

Yes, Sir!

It's cute. Lexi is being formal. But it makes no sense and I think we need a reality check.

Lexi, whose baby are you carrying?

Lexi almost blushes. Can Filipinos blush? I hadn't given it any thought until now.

It's your baby, ... Sir.

Lexi, you know damned well that you call me Craig. As the father of your child and your bed partner, I want you to call me Craig. You are right to introduce me as Sir to your friends, but my love, let's not hide what is clear to all. Your friends know you are pregnant. OK, sweetheart?

She gives me her eyebrows. Her friends giggle, and all enter the house.

From behind me I hear, *You do right, Craig. Thank you for standing up and saying this is my child and Lexi is my love. You do right now. You do right with my mother. Sorry for the trouble I bring you.*

Come let me hold you.

3

Mel has had a far longer way to travel to get where she is now than has Lexi. Lexi was already emotionally estranged from Bel long before I met these girls. Mel's estrangement has been a very long time coming, but has snapped in to place only within these last twenty-four hours.

Will Mel's estrangement from Bel stay firm? I have no idea. All I can do is hope, because Bel is not someone I want around here.

In case you are wondering if I am lusting over these three new girls, the answer is no. It is probably the case that I may bed one or two of them, but lust after them? Why?

There are already too many here. You think you are so big and macho that satisfying seven girls is a walk in the park? OK, so good for you. For me this is already nuts. Bedding thirteen and fourteen-year-olds, which obviously is a fait accompli, is nuts, all in its own way.

Those three girls, who are at this moment buying black leather low-heel/no-heel school shoes, will be in my bed these next two or three days. Each of their mothers will have a fucking party if I get her own daughter pregnant.

I already have a pregnant sixteen-year-old.

Why would I ever want more? It's not lust that is rumbling around in my head, it's worry that I need a way to shut the doors and keep them shut.

I just got rid of Bel and am lucky to have successfully done that. Lust? No, not lust.

Maybe I should go out tonight. Why did I decline the offer? There is no reason to stay home. I don't need to take all the girls with me, just one or two... oh, but that means May or Li2x won't be with me tonight. That might cause a problem. Yeh, better to not go, but

then, do you see? I am having to arrange my schedule so that I don't cause discord at home! Fuck, no, lust is not a motivating factor here. No, not lust.

The rest of the day I stay out of Lexi's way and, way out of the way, of the three wannabe maids. I haven't decided what to do about them when Lyn sits down by me and tells me that she thinks it will work with the three of them.

Excuse me? Do you think I am hiring all three?

You did. Lexi already told them they are hired.

I see. Well, I didn't agree to that, but I guess Lexi wanted her three as I have three from the other high school. She acted without my approval.

What you going to do. I think it a problem if you change what she do.

I will do nothing. It's too late. How is it going to work with three?

Each one gets a floor. Each one gets a day off but different days. So there are at least two here every day. Mel cooks when Mel can, but when she can't one of the three will be the cook.

So, Mel is only the cook?

She will do the shopping, supervise the girls and be your assistant when you go out. Best you not go out alone! Plus, when we start on the new house, there will be other needs.

How do we know these girls are trustworthy?

That Mel's job. Lexi and I will help Mel. This not your problem. We do it. Craig, how do you know you can trust us?

Hub, good question. I don't have an answer about the beginning. But I have every reason to trust you seven now.

Don't worry, we will make sure. ... Craig, text that guy. You know ... the guy who has the big property you meet last night and want to visit. We have time now.

She's right and I do want to get out of the house for a bit. Why not see if the guy is free on a Sunday afternoon?

It takes only two texts back and forth to get an invite to come over to his place for a couple of hours. I have Lyn call the guy's wife to get the directions.

Once again, the directions are nothing that makes any sense to me, but with Lyn behind me on the bike, we ride out to the place.

I'm glad we have done this. The place is on two hectares, the same size as our lot. The dimensions of the land are the same. Two lots, side by side, each one hundred by one hundred meters square. His house is placed dead center on the land, so that if you run a stake through the center of the house, it's fifty meters to the front gate, fifty meters to the back fence, and one hundred meters on each side, left and right.

There is a graceful drive from the front gate, with a fork half way to the house. One side takes you to a circular drive by the front door. The other takes you around the back. There I find roofed carports hidden from the front view, behind an outbuilding to the left of the house. The guy has three vehicles on the property, but you just can't see a one of them as you drive up to the house as a guest.

Also, back behind the outbuilding is a large Kubota trailer-mounted industrial-sized generator. It looks like it might be overkill, but maybe not.

The house itself looks like an antebellum mansion, rising two floors and spreading wide, with covered wraparound verandas, graceful and, while understated, announcing wealth, power, stability and belonging.

Trees of mango, mahogany, and coconut abound, surrounding the house, and creating an orchard around much of the lot as they extend from the house to the fence lines.

Inside the house, a first floor sala rises up through the second floor, which frames the sides upstairs with overlooking railings and making that sala ceiling a good twenty-five feet from the floor.

Large crystal chandeliers grace that main sala and two separate dining rooms adjacent to it. Each dining room is filled with elegant hand-carved chairs sitting around large elegant dining tables, each table able to seat at least twelve people.

A smaller, and more modest, table and chairs for six, sit just off the other side of the large indoor kitchen. There is a second kitchen in an outbuilding where the meals are prepared by maids.

The foyer way, which I have failed to mention, must be a good forty feet long and ten feet deep. But the wide expanse is not flush with the exterior wall, as an entrance way is fifteen feet square before you get to the foyer.

While on one side of the foyer for most of its expanse there is one of the dining rooms and then the grand sala, on the other side there are state rooms whose windows open on the front side of the house. These rooms are not the master bedroom suite of rooms. That suite starts via its own double doors and announcing the end of the foyer, after you pass a large, circular grand staircase to the second floor at the farthest end of the foyer.

There is just too much here to describe, but walking around this first time, I have a sense of what it must have been like in 1840 South Carolina... and I am in conversation with the 'Planter.'

Outside, as I approached the mansion, I saw folks working as gardeners. Inside, there are two maids in view.

George, I am going to be rude. I guess I don't expect an answer, but can you tell me how much this cost you to build?

Well, it's hard to explain because the exchange rate has varied a great deal since we built this. But in terms of US dollars, about half a million. That includes the things like the chandeliers and such plus the outbuildings and the fence around the property.

How many outbuildings are there?

Four.

How many square feet in the main house?

Ten thousand, but that is because the second floor is partially lost due to the ceiling of the sala.

You have your own water?

Yes, we went down about one hundred and twenty feet and get about forty gallons a minute of good potable water.

The well is included in that half a mil?

Yes.

I note it's a bit warm in the house. There are floor fans every once in a while but I haven't seen any air conditioners.

That adds to why I am feeling it's a throwback to an earlier time. But the architecture alone really doesn't need any help in that regard. There is statuary abounding all along this foyer, but no modern conveniences. There really are plaster casts of roman busts on marble pedestals.

To me, the place is disorienting. For Lyn, who has peeled off to talk to the wife, I can only imagine what is running through her mind.

I think of Stefan's little bungalow, and then this. I wonder... *George, how often do you get calls from expats to meet them at night at bars?*

Never. I stay away from all that.

Reason?

That's nothing but trouble. I'd stay away from them for your own safety. I rarely go out to parties. Last night was the rare exception.

Thanks for the heads up about the potential trouble.

For the rest of my visit, we sit at the table close to the kitchen drinking Gin and Tonics and discussing building permits, taxes, and the way local government works here, plus the politics of getting a well dug.

This may have been the most productive three hours I have had since I arrived in the Philippines.

There are things about George that would not recommend him to me as a friend, if back in Dorchester, but here?... Here, I think maintaining a friendship with him is essential.

As we walk back toward my bike and Lyn, George asks, *Is that your ride?*

It is, when it is just me, or me and another. I have a Toyota van I just bought, as there are eight of us, but I hate taking the van when I don't need to.

Makes sense. Here, it's just Ara and me. Our Land Cruiser works great.

I may need something sized between the bike and the van. I will have to think about it.

I collect Lyn from her tête-à-tête with George's wife and ride back to the house a little before time for supper. Lyn wants to talk and I guess I do, too. I suggest we sit up on my balcony. The idea seems to please her and, so, we climb those two flights and sit in shade as the sun is setting.

Are we building a house like that?

No.

But the land is the same size, right?

Yes. It is exactly the same. And I like how their house is sited in the middle like it is. That much will probably be the same. ... and I guess I like the fact that the vehicles are parked behind and out of sight. So, maybe we will copy that idea, too.

The statues?

No, not my style. No statues.

Two dining rooms?

No, Lyn, we won't have two dining rooms. And I don't think we will have fancy crystal chandeliers like they have.

Good! Oh my God! They would be so hard to clean.

Hub, can't say I thought of that, but it's true.

Ara tells me, George only eat American food. She have to train each girl how to cook for him or there is trouble. We not do that for you. It OK what we do?

Yes, it's fine. I am not George.

You know George has many guns? That not legal³⁴, but he has them.

No, we didn't talk about it.

Ara afraid he will get in trouble.

I see. Lyn, each of us is different. Just because George is from the USA does not mean we share all the same ideas and habits. Ara has George. You have me. Ara might very much not like me. We are all different.

I not think Filipina are so different. We same in many ways.

I see. But I think you are wrong. Mel is not like Lexi and neither are like Bel.

Oh, I not think of that. It true. OK, maybe I am wrong.

And because not all are the same, I need to know if our three maids are trustworthy.

Yes, you right, we will make sure of this.

Lyn's questions and concerns are not only fair, they are nothing other than smart, right, and exactly what any good wife would have asked. That alone makes me happier than I can explain. She wasn't

³⁴ Firearms require permits and foreigners are excluded from permits. However there is a thriving black market in guns in the Philippines. It is possible for a wife of a foreigner to get a permit, but that would be for a sidearm and nothing more.

being a gold digger. She was saying, 'Do we really need all this? Isn't it a little over the top?' She wanted to know if I was really happy or needed the type of support that George needs to be happy.

If I hadn't said it so many times before, I would want to shout it right now. Lyn is a keeper. How does someone so young have so much rock-solid good sense inside her?

I am afraid that the way she got where she is will not have been a pretty picture. No one is this savvy, this good, this young, unless very bad things have come their way and, instead of breaking them and making them mean, it stiffened their spine, educated them and helped them learn what is precious in this life.

I feel it, but there is no way to tell her what I feel. All I do say is, *Thank you for being mine. Thank you for your heart and your head. And, sweetheart, thank you for loving me.*

Lyn comes to me for a simple embrace. It's not sexy. It's not noisy. It is quiet, calm, and meaningful.

As much as I have been struggling, so has Lyn. She has been engaging with other women attached to expats and each has a very different story to tell. Lyn thought we were all the same. She thought she could figure out what she should be doing for me, by asking others, only to come to the conclusion that it isn't helping one bit.

More and more, Lyn is having the same type of awakening as I have been having about GenSan.

For her, I am no longer an expat, a cookie-cutter thing. She can't assume anything based on other expats. She is paying attention to me. So far there have been many surprises for her, because of things that she had no reason to expect based on the way other guys behave. Now, I suspect there will be less of that and more careful attention to what I am up to.

When she said she will make sure the new girls are trustworthy, she isn't seeking to paper over what she might have otherwise seen as an over-active imagination. She will do it.

But, now the embrace ends and we need to rejoin everyone. Supper is probably already on the table.

Tonight there are ten mouths to feed beyond my own. I am not happy about that, but I am the one responsible for needing maids.

If I didn't insist the girls go to college, I would have four maids already. If I hadn't taken that impromptu walk up Aparente Street, I wouldn't have the three high schoolers. If I hadn't been an asshole and told Mel she could join my other two, I wouldn't have Mel and Lexi. It is absolutely all my fault.

So tonight, I hold my tongue and eat my supper. There is little talking at the table, but there is some whispering between the new girls and Lexi.

I am ignoring it as I see no reason to ask what is happening. Jana, however, is possibly hearing more of it and speaks up. Her voice is firm.

Ask him.

There is an equally firm shaking of the head.

*Ask him! Lexi doesn't know. None of us know. He is the only one to ask.
Ask him.*

One of the three has some courage, sort of...

Sir, my friend say she want to know when you will do us.

OK, so I do know what she means, but as she is accusing another of the question she wants answered, I am not going to let her off the hook that easy.

"... I will do you?" I'm sorry, but what does that mean?

Lyn is snickering. Mel is rolling her eyes. Jana just thinks it is funny. Lexi is maybe feeling a little protective and starts to speak.

Lexi, they have voices. Let them speak for themselves. ... OK, now, girls, what does that mean?

Take us to your bed, Sir. When we make love?

Ah, I see. Yes, it is a fair question. I have an answer, but it is not a short one, so please pay attention to all I say, before you even think about asking another question... I told Lexi I needed two maids. She hired three of you. And because she has done so, for now, all stay and work here. However, there will be no sex with any of you while we figure out if all stay. I do not want to have sex with a girl we need to let go. But, there is also the question of trust. I trust my seven girls completely and without limit. But I do not know I can trust you three. ... Lyn and the other girls will tell me if you can be trusted. That may take a while. So while all three may stay, if one isn't working out, she will leave. If one of you can't be trusted completely, she will leave. Once we have figured that out, if you are still here and want to make love with me, you can ask, but I will not demand. OK, any questions?

There is not a sound to be heard in the room. Not one. Not for half a minute. And then Dido giggles. And she can't stop giggling. Her giggles seem to infect May, who starts giggling. And then Jana breaks into giggles.

One of the new ones, I still don't remember who is who, asks the girls, *What is so funny?*

Li2x answers. *You are like me and my friends. We think Craig will fuck us and we are safe. Ha! Yes, we safe, but he not want to fuck us. He think, too many girls already! It take time to get him to take us. Yes, he say we need maids, but that all. He not really want other girls for sex. That why it funny. It true, maybe you will be in his bed, but you will have to ask, maybe many times! Why Lexi not tell you this? She knows.*

Three girls are looking at Lexi. Lexi is looking at me. I only smile back. Lexi looks at Mel and Lyn.

And Lyn asks, *Why didn't you tell them?*

4

Lexi looks at me and says, *Craig, we talked about how the girls we hire need to understand that this might happen.*

We did, but I also said I really only need maids. I was only saying that there was a strong possibility, based on how this house works, that it might not work to have a maid I was not having sex with. That is still the case now. But before anything happens about sex, their ability to do the job as maids must be clear, as well as the issue of trust that I have talked to both Mel and Lyn about. Ask them. Plus, I did tell you I only needed two, not three. You know that.

Craig, this isn't fair.....

Lexi, stop! This is one of the new girls. Sir Craig is right. He not want a prostitute. He want hard working honest girls. Girls who he can trust. Why we not want the same from him. We not know him. He not know us. He is only saying, wait a while. Let us be sure. If we sure then the love will be good and not wasted. You did good. You get us here. It is now for us to show Sir Craig, you find the right girls.

Lyn, at least, has heard what she likes. *Yes, you speak the truth. And you heard Sir Craig correctly. I think we are done with this conversation.*

And what started with whispering ends with silence. Lyn nicely and politely said, *Enough.*

I was not sure who I would be with tonight, but I know now. It will be Li2x. She who from the first time we met was the one to speak to me. Who played the translator last night when I really needed it, and who spoke up correctly tonight. Little Li2x, who is another Lyn in the making.

I am sure I could learn what her life was like. She is too close to it and her mother is only a phone call away. But do I really want to know?

No, there are some things better left hidden.

I am still pondering that as I enter my bedroom.

Craig?

Hub?

See?

Wow. Where did that come from?

I bought it at the mall today.

I thought you were going for school stuff.

True. I got that. But I get this to wear for you.

It is very pretty.

Glad you like it. I talk to my mother. She say, 'Best to make my man happy in the bedroom. I say, how that? She say, look pretty for him. Make sure he know you want to be there with him.'

You have a very smart mother.

Li2x grins and says, Mother say, 'That why I still have your father. You think it an accident or luck? No! It because he never think he not wanted. I make sure he know that.'

Well, I suspect there is more to this tonight than what your mother told you, but she gave you good advice. And in truth, hers is probably better advice than what most girls get. So, am I to understand that you are going to hold on to me for a long time?

Silly. I never leave you. But, Craig, I really need a baby.

Sweetheart, even if you don't have one for six years, you will still be very young. Why the rush?

She really can't answer, or she just doesn't want to tell me. But it doesn't matter. We are going to make love and I am going to cum inside her. From that point on it's up to biology and not me.

The blood-red slip she has on is sexy as all get out. I don't try to take it off her as we get into bed.

I am naked and she's in that red satin slip, as my hand reaches between her thighs and plays with her pussy. I want her to feel good, but Li2x starts giggling.

What's so funny?

Those three girls. They want to be where I am. But I am here. They are not!

Ha! You be careful Li2x or I will have you eating their pussies every night for a week.

How bad do I have to be for you to make me do that?

Why do you ask?

Because, then I will be that bad! Ha! I want to see their faces when you tell them they have to spread their legs for me! Who you think more worried, me or them?

Speaking of spreading legs, kid, it's time you spread yours!

She does and in I go.

Sex between people who actually like each other, can be playful with each other, and have love for each other; well, that's the good stuff.

What I have found, with a girl of fourteen years, is possibly off the charts as to probability, but it has happened.

Is Li2x's cunt hotter or juicier than the other girls here? No. Is she a better lover than the others? No. Do I love her more than the others? No. Does any of that matter? No!

Making love with Li2x is great. My love for her is real. We are bound together as tightly as I am bound to the others here. There is trust and safety. Nothing else matters.

I guess I could tell you how she arches her back as we make love; how she whimpers as her orgasms hit her; how her tongue sticks out sometimes as I pound her cunt. Yes, I could, but that would not put you in bed with her and, quite honestly, I don't want you there. Li2x is mine.

Tonight, that feeling of being a couple is as real as it gets, as she looks up, smiles and, knowing I am moments away from what she feels inside her, says, *Now my love. I am ready for you ... NOW!* As my cum hits her.

That's my little Li2x.

Monday morning brings with it the need to see about the processing of the title. I have no idea what is involved, but if Rena wants the job and knows how to do it, she has earned the right of first refusal. I ask Lyn to text Rena and see if she does this sort of thing.

I am still eating my breakfast when Lyn's text is answered in the affirmative. Yes, Rena is happy to assist. Texts follow texts. It is decided that Rena will come here.

There is no reason to explain the labyrinth of bureaucracy that is involved in processing the paperwork, but there is one oddity I guess is worth mentioning. Hang in with me, as it is a little weird.

Under Philippine tax law, the seller of property must pay tax on the sale of the land, as it is the seller who is gaining the money from the sale, as opposed to property tax whereby each year a landowner pays for the right to retain the land.

But, as I mentioned before, land sales here are cash transactions, and there is no way for the government to know a sale has occurred on the seller side.

The buyer, however, has to register the deed of sale to generate a new clear title. So it actually falls on the buyer to pay the tax, thereby actually increasing the cost of the purchase by a fair bit. To reduce the tax burden on the purchaser, it is fairly common practice

to create two deeds of sale. One is the actual amount, the other, listing a lower price, is provided to the tax authorities.

Now, this practice is so common that the folks at the tax bureau know all about it. So you (or your representative) go into the bureau and present the deed of sale, and the officer says to you, *'This is not the true amount. How much you really pay?'*

You reply, *'No this is true!'*

'I not think so. I cannot process an invalid thing such as this!'

'But it is true! Can we maybe come to an agreement?'

And there it is. ... That's the kicker. The person you are talking to may have a government salary of what amounts to less than seventy-five dollars a month. It is a pitifully small amount.

So you agree to meet the individual at the mall the next day whereby you offer an inducement of, say, what amounts to three hundred dollars. The next week your paperwork is approved.

Welcome to the Philippines.

This person you just bribed is driving one of the only cars in town, because you are not the only one who needs paperwork approved. Just about every transaction of decent size will need the same assistance.

That is not the only person who will be bribed to get a valid deed registered and new title released. There is actually a long line of people who need to be bribed, or you can wait for many years and still never see your title.

It is Rena who explains, over cokes, breads and sweets, exactly how the system works. And now, as she lays out all the paperwork we received from Trujillo yesterday, I see the duplicate deeds with the different sums on them.

As it dawns on me how well Trujillo was looking after me, my understanding is registering on my face. Rena starts to laugh.

See, Sir? See? Atty. Trujillo, he know what you need. He take care of you. He is a good man, I think. ... Sir, I will do this for you correctly. You will see. Do not worry. I know what to do. I know who to talk to. We will do this for as little as possible. This is because they like me and know I always take care of them!

I think what she is saying needs a bit of an explanation.

Rena represents many supplicants and she always uses the same employees, rather than taking whoever is next. In doing that, in taking a little longer to get to the right person, that person knows even more is coming from Rena with future business if they play ball. It's a win-win for the employee and the supplicant. And Rena earns her 'consideration' in the process.

You could say that the Philippine people as a nation lose tax base. You could, but you could also note that this is small-time corruption. The big corruption is skimmed off in the national legislature. Precious little comes back to help the people... and so the people are helping themselves and keep the money in local hands. Small time corruption offsetting the bigtime corruption.

In any event, the initial effort to register the deed and gain our title starts on the second day of June, 2003.

Rena has left, and with her a bunch of the paperwork, though I do retain the true deed of sale, with the true amount, here.

And that gets me thinking. I need a safe. I have 'land trust' paperwork. I have a deed. I will have a title soon enough. I have my passport. I will have documents related to a retirement visa, soon enough. A safe for a firearm? Well, I can think of the firearm later. But, for now, I do need a safe.

I send texts to George and Brian asking about architects and engineers. I have Lyn text Rena for references as well.

I am not ready to build a house, but George told me it is critical that I fence the property as soon as I can. He also said that fences need city building code approval.

It is for little gems like that, that staying close to George is something I will do. Just like the fact that to build that wall I will need a source of water, which means digging a well now. Once the wall is built I can get temporary electrical service to build the house. But it will be better to get the electrical service even before the well is dug.

This, one-foot-before-the-other, type of guidance, for a neophyte like me, is invaluable. How do I know his advice is good? I don't, really.

But am I better off taking the advice of a guy living in a sixty-four square meter home, or a guy who lives where he can't get decent electrical service?

Rena may have a wonderful referral, but I need a way to balance local professional advice against the intellect of a guy who successfully built a mansion with half a mil. Because, for crying out loud, if the local advice is to bury water and electric inside concrete walls without double wall construction or an outer heat sink, well, the local advice is something that will only go so far.

I am thinking about the wall and looking out from my balcony as I do it, when it hits me. I can't start the wall until I know where the electrical service will reach the property line. I'll be damned if I am going to have electric lines overhead on the property. I can just see problems with tree branches as well as the unsightly nature of it.

Once I know approximately where the service needs to come on the property, I can run the needed conduit before building the fence, crossing well below ground level and below where the fence will be. But, from where will the electricity poles come?

I think I need a trip to what Lyn tells me is Socoteco 2, but she says I may need help getting introduced to the right people there.

OK, Lyn, who can get me the introduction?

Rena! She say she know people there, remember?

Rena, again. She is becoming my majordomo and that is a little unnerving. I am putting a great deal of faith and trust in this woman.

It is odd, but you can place a marker right here. Here where everything changes from one thing on top of another to the classic Filipino *'wait a while, Sir.'* Things that have been at a running pace now turn into various types of crawls. Each item on a different, but protracted, timeline.

Tomorrow, the kids all start school and their schedules are intense. I don't see them typically in the morning at all and they barely get home for supper.

Referrals for architects, engineers, and a contact at Socoteco2 take months before anything meaningful occurs. The process of getting the deed registered seems like it has been frozen in time.

The money wired here, from the sale of the Dorchester house, sits patiently at the bank. George and I get together once or twice a month as I watch molasses flow uphill on a cold day.

My evenings continue to be remarkable with my seven girls. Dido turns fourteen, Jana turns eighteen, and Lyn is twenty.

Reina, Chrislyn, and Jing2x are all still here at the house. Each is fine as a maid. In the trust department, there have been no causes for concern, but not a one of them has entered my bedroom for any other reason than to clean it.

The only thing of note is something that has occurred back in Boston. It started with a text late one night, about two weeks after I got the text that the cable TV company was sending a registered letter.

Mr. Byrne, I am checking to see if you have replied to the registered letter you have received.

I have NOT received any registered letter.

Have you refused it?

It has not arrived. I am told I may not see such a letter for a month or two.

Please check with your post office. It must be there.

I will check, but your assumption is parochial and misguided. This place operates very differently than things do in the States.

I hear you but please check.

OK, is there a tracking number?

Yes. It is xxxxxxxxxxxx.

OK it's 11:23PM here. I will check in the morning.

I have a cellphone number for the postmaster at the local PhilPost office and so in the morning I texted the guy. His reply was:

The letter not in GenSan. Arrived in Manila. Now in mail bag on boat. Will eventually be here, Sir. Pls have patience.

I copy and paste the response to the text number in Boston, along with a follow-up that says:

Like the postmaster says, have patience.

OK, got it.

About a month after that the letter arrives. It is not delivered. Instead, I get a text from the postmaster that he has the letter there.

I sign for it and take a photo copy of the GenSan date stamp on the envelope, before opening the envelope and filling out the information on it.

Before sending it back, I take a photocopy of it. I then mail it, take the receipt I got from the clerk at the post office, and made a photocopy of that. Following which, I fax the form, the photocopy of the envelope with date stamp, and the photocopied receipt with

a hand written note on the receipt that it is the receipt for the return mail.

The next day I got a text from Boston.

Problem Mr. Byrne. The company said that it took too long and they have already reported you to the credit agencies. We told them to reverse it. They say they can't. They say you need to request it. We say that is not possible from your location. They say there is nothing they can do. We are holding a hearing on the matter. Will advise.

As of now, that is all I know about the matter. I am not sure I care much about my credit score in the USA. They don't use it here. Still, it pisses me off.

Things do happen here, they just seem to take a long time. Today I got word that my household goods have arrived in Manila and with some 'consideration' offered to the right people I have avoided import duties and taxes. I may actually see my container next month. I am not holding my breath.

Tomorrow I actually get to meet with an engineer at Socoteco 2. I have the plot survey with me and a large map which helps locate the plot. As I am planning to build something that will be considered a mansion here, George has told me I will need my own transformer. I guess I buy that separately but it goes up on a Socoteco 2 utility pole and they have to approve the size of the transformer.

This will be an interesting meeting, as all I really need to know is where to put the conduit. The sticking point may be, depending on the current needed to the pole, the pole placement may vary.

5

Good morning, Sir. How can I help you?

That's how it starts. Sounds good, right? Ha!

Once I tell him what I need, he acts like I was making no sense at all and asks, *How will you subdivide the lot?*

I won't. This is just for me.

It's such a large lot. Not needed for one residence! You will subdivide, I am sure!

I won't. I will build what you call a mansion.

Let me see the plan of your mansion!

They say they can't tell me where to put a pole until I provide them with city approved house plans. I explain that I need the fence up first and want to bury the conduit at least a year before the plans are even ready.

We are going nowhere and both of us are getting pissed off. It is, to say it nicely, a ³⁵caucus race. It would have been a Catch-22 except I did a very Lewis Carroll type of thing. I texted George as we were going round and round.

Please give me permission to use your approved plans to force Socoteco to provide me what I need.

Granted! Good luck!

Sir Engineer, we are in luck! You already have accepted my approved plans!

How can that be?

³⁵ A laborious but arbitrary and futile activity; an activity that amounts to running around in a circle, expending great energy but not accomplishing anything.

I will use the plans of Sir George Williams. You will note that the plan is also located on a two hectare lot.

Those are not your plans!

I just received permission from Sir George to use his plans. Would you like to contact him?

OK, so now he's in a jam. He does have city approved plans. I do own a two hectare lot as in the plans. I clearly know George and have permission to use the plans.

The guy just folds and accepts that he needs to provide the information I am requesting.

Sir, based on Sir George's plans we approved a 50kVA distribution transformer. That requires a feed line from this location. He is showing me a map. But to determine how we get to your property we will have to survey in the field. We will write a report on the needed wire and poles. We will write the specification for you to acquire the proper transformer. Please provide me your contact number. When we are ready to do the field work, we will ask you to accompany us.

So, in the end, I get a promise to work on the issue at some time in the future. I gather I am to pay for the poles and the wire. All I really needed was for the guy to point to a place on the plot map and say, 'Put your conduit here,' but that isn't going to happen.

I have gotten to Socoteco at a little after nine. I get back home almost three hours later and I am tense, irritable and just wired. (The pun is not intended, but there it is, in any case.)

Mel has gone to the store with Reina. Chrislyn, who we call Si2x³⁶ sees me and is about to bring me some lunch, when something she sees causes her to stop.

Sir, are you OK?

I just had a frustrating time at Socoteco. They can be difficult to work with.

³⁶ See-SEE

The girl smiles and offers, *Yes, Sir, they have no heart I think.*

Well they certainly think everything you say is a lie, when you talk to them.

Yes! I know. It very true, Sir. Sir, maybe you will feel better if I rub your shoulders? Do I have permission to do this, Sir?

It's not such an odd request. Since the three girls have arrived I have not even touched them.

Yes, that would be nice.

Come to the couch, Sir. I get a towel because I need to use some olive oil. Please take your shirt off!

I thought I was going to get the informal back rub that is done over clothing and while sitting in a chair. This sounds far less informal. As I am getting my shirt off and Si2x is gathering up what she needs, I ask, *Where did you learn to give massages?*

Sir? That what my mother do at the spa. She do massage. She teach me. If you like, I can give you a real, complete massage anytime you want. I am very good giving massage.

There are massage 'spas' all over town. Asian cultures have a high regard for the medical value of it. When one of my girls gets ill, there is often a request for a woman to come to the house and give the ill girl a massage. So nothing being said is untoward, or sexual. It is well within the norms of the culture.

Si2x is good at it. I can attest to that. In the 30 minutes she works me, she is not gentle, but she is effective. I feel far better. The stress is gone.

The session is purely professional. There is not one moment when I wonder what is up with that. In the end, she cleans me up, wiping the remaining oil off before I put my shirt back on.

Sir, please just sit and relax a few minutes. I will put these things away and make your lunch.

It is all as one would have it. All proper. And yet, I am seeing Si2x in a little different light. I am appreciating her character. So far, the question has been, for all three, is there reason to let any of these girls go? They stayed due to an absence of affirmative answers. It has been the aggregation of negation that keeps them here.

But there comes a time when you just have to say, OK, they have won their spot here. And then what? Well, then they are here as maids, unless they request the change. But, how do they know they have ‘passed the test,’ if you will? We have never told them that the evaluation is over, that they are all staying, as far as we are concerned.

For me, this message has gotten me thinking that I owe them the knowledge that I consider them permanent employees, even if nothing else occurs.

It is not an invitation to my bed. It is a message that any worry they had is over. I like them, trust them and no one will be asked to leave.

It’s odd, but there really has been a dry spell, as I waited on people to do what needed to be done on any number of fronts. Now, no more than half an hour after I finish my lunch, an engineer that Rena has put forth comes to the house.

He tells me about what he has built and how many men he has working for him. While he calls himself an architect, he is also a general contractor.

One of the lessons I gleaned from George and, if I am being honest a little from Brian, is that I do not want a general contractor. I will be my own general contractor.

In this case, I don’t want a guy as my architect who builds those little rabbit warren boxes. Some are bigger rabbit warrens, but that about sums it up. The fact that his numbers are way inflated, from what I have already ascertained from others, is just icing on the cake. I thank him for coming but will not make use of him.

However, because Rena referred him, she deserves to know why I rejected him. These days I have her cellphone number in my contact list. Via text, I ask her if she might find the time to meet with me.

Financially, Rena has been doing nicely for herself handling my business. And she knows I can pay what's needed. That works in my favor when, two hours after I meet with the fellow I have sent packing, she is at the door.

Si2x sees Rena and quickly puts out drinks and snacks, which they call merienda, for us as we talk business.

I go over what the guy is good at, what he was offering, and then go over what I need.

I show Rena some sketches I have of what I am looking to build. She understands there is no match here and apologizes for sending him. I tell her apologies are not needed. I just don't want to offend her. I tell her she deserved an explanation.

And that brings forth a smile. *You value me, Sir?*

Yes, very much.

Sir, I think I know what you need. Not all you foreigners are like you. Yes, the man who come, I think he good for many foreigners, but not you. There a man I think maybe he be right for you. He will do your drafting, and get the plans through the process, but you will build. That right? He mostly build big things.

Yes, that is what I want.

OK. Let me contact him. This man will be good for you.

While she is with me, I ask where we are on the title, but she has little to offer. We are waiting on bureaucrats.

In the end I put some pesos in her hand and thank her for her time.

Mel and Reina have returned from their shopping trip and I am putting away the sketches I was showing Rena when I receive a text from someone I do not know.

Sir Craig, I am Gilbert Mendio, Civil Engineer, Ma'am Rena ask me to contact you regards your project. May we meet?

Greetings Sir Gilbert, Yes I would like to meet. When is good for you?

Is tonight at 7 acceptable?

Yes. That is fine. Do you need directions?

No directions needed, Sir Craig! Ma'am Rena give that to me.

OK, see you at 7.

By six this evening, all have returned home and supper is on the table. I guess Si2x and Mel have spoken about the doings today and that has somewhat filtered to the rest of them in one form or another.

Lyn asks for details, but there is little if anything definite I can offer. Everything is still unresolved, though they do get a kick when I tell them of how I used George's city approved plans.

I tell them that we have an engineer coming at seven. Lyn says, *Really? Maybe Filipino seven?*

OK maybe Filipino seven. ... Look there is something I want to say with all of you here. ... I think I see some frightened faces. That saddens me a bit. ... Up to now, Reina, Si2x and Jing2x have not been told the results of any evaluation. I am going to do that right now. ... No one is making any noise. ... I do see some fright on faces. ... Everyone stays. Everyone. Each of you girls has done a wonderful job here and each of you has earned my trust. There is nothing more to evaluate. As far as I am concerned, the only reason why you would not be here is because you decide to leave. I want you to stay. ... OK that is all.

I see tears. I see smiles. I see hugs. I see a couple of faces with a question. One of them is Si2x.

I look at her and wait.

Sir, that mean we come to your bed now?

No, that is not what it means. It means only what I said it means. Are you asking for permission to come to my bed?

Yes, Sir. I am.

You understand that you might get pregnant? I know that it doesn't seem to happen often as only Lexi is pregnant, but it does happen.

Before Si2x can speak...

Sir?

Yes, May?

Sir, that not right.

What isn't right?

Jana, she pregnant. Mel, she pregnant, Li2x and me, we pregnant.

I look around the table at the faces before me. *Jana, is this true?*

Sir, I miss my last two times.

Mel?

Yes I think maybe I three months now. Not really sure.

Li2x, have you missed yours?

Yes, Sir. Two times.

And you May?

I just miss one time, but I sure.

OK I see. So, Si2x knowing that, are you sure you want into my bed?

Yes. Sir. I am sure.

Si2x, when was your last period?

Three weeks ago, Sir.

That is pretty good news. She won't get pregnant this time.

OK, well, do you want to be with me tonight?

Yes, Sir, that would be nice.

Fine. Once the engineer leaves I will go to my bedroom. You may go earlier and wait for me to join you, or you can go up with me later. That is up to you. ... But before anyone says anything else, I guess I have something to say. If any of you learns you are pregnant, the very first thing you should be doing is coming to me to share the good news. This is not the way I want to learn that I am to be a father! I want to celebrate with you as soon as you know it! I want to talk about baby names. I want to be involved with the mother of my child. I am not a spectator. Next time come tell me! ... Lyn I need a calendar to figure out when each of you is due.

Lyn isn't saying or doing anything. She is just sitting and looking at nothing in particular.

Lyn?

Nothing.

Lyn! What is going on?

Sir, I have missed my last one. Maybe?

It's all of them save Dido. And who knows, maybe she is pregnant and just doesn't know it. What happens next, I just can't explain. I guess it's not embarrassing, or it ought not to be, but I start crying as I say, *This isn't fair. I want to hold all of you right now and I can't! Oh, how I love you all!*

All around me there is movement and then I am surrounded by my girls. They are hugging me.

When the clock shows seven, the engineer does not arrive. And he doesn't for another hour, appearing a little after eight. I don't mention it to the guy. We don't have time to waste on non-productive issues.

I pull out my sketches, the plot survey, my mechanical sketches of subsurface conduit work that needs to come first, including: conduit for a future, where we might actually see communication cables; conduit from the fence to the main house; conduit from the main house to outbuildings, generator, perimeter lighting, landscape lighting; conduit for a gate motor; conduit for electronic gate and remote surveillance; communications conduit from main to outbuildings; sanitary pipe from all needed locations to an over large septic; location of where I want to site the well and related underground water lines to the main, outbuildings and around the property.

I show some concepts for exterior design, interior room layout and scale. Ceiling height, number of floors, number of bedrooms, issues of access, size and nature of kitchen designs, placement of vehicle storage, all get discussed.

At which point I realize I have overwhelmed the guy. He isn't tracking at all.

Sir Gilbert, this will be a big project and it will take a while to complete. Is this something you can work with me to design?

Sir, never have I seen such thought and work put into what I am asked to do. Yes this is a big project. But in each thing, you have ideas that must be understood or the plan will not work. I see this. Yes, we can do this together. But, Sir, some of this we do not want to show to the City. We do not show it because the code here does not speak to it. Much of the conduit work, they must not see! Much of the plumbing outside the main house, they do not need to see. We will not show them the outbuilding plans now.

He smiles, takes a long drink of water that Reina brought him before continuing.

What we will show is just fence and the main building. The first drawing to get approval must be the fence. But that drawing, the one I get approval for must not show the conduit you are burying in the base of the fence. So, yes, I will do this with you, but, if you are the general contractor, you must know, this will take years to finish. Truly, years.

I know. And I know that the last will be the outbuildings. I know I will need to be out there every day.

Yes, this is true. Sir I think we need a ten foot fence around the property.

That high around all of it?

Yes, I think so.

OK, let's work on getting that approved and then we will need the version showing the electrical before we start the work.

We finish up with pleasantries and he is out the door by ten. By that point I figure that even if Si2x is in my bedroom she will be fast asleep. The maids get to bed early and get to work about five in the morning.

Good evening Si2x.

Yes, good evening, Sir.

If I am going to make love with you, I think you should call me Craig.

Sir, after you make love to me, I will call you anything you want!

I reach out and bring my maid to me. I really don't know how this changes us. It will, but she will still be a maid here. A maid with benefits? But what happens when she has a child of mine? What will she be then?

Mel didn't start here as 'the maid.' She ended up doing maid duties by default. This is different. Si2x was hired and is paid to be a maid.

Mel doesn't have a salary. She does, as do all the girls, have an allowance, but that can be added to when needed. A salary is something else.

And yet, once I take her, in two years she will be a member of the land trust. Does she know that? I don't think she has a clue. And should another not ask for my bed, that girl will be excluded from that trust. I will be creating a have and have-not chasm between equally hard-working and dedicated girls.

So, when I say I reach out and bring my maid to me, I am not being mean spirited, I am identifying the confusion that is essential to the very act.

6

She comes to me without any resistance.

Rather than caution and shyness, there is confidence and a forthright bearing.

For Si2x, bodies are her family's business. She understands hers and she knows the basics of what she wants from me, though from all I have heard, she is still a virgin.

The distance between us is gone and she is in my arms. I don't have to put a hand under a chin to lift up her head and kiss her. Her head is up and anticipating that kiss. Her lips are ready to receive mine.

There is neither fear nor joy in her eyes. What I think I see is determination and longing. It is redundant to say, this shouldn't be. It shouldn't and yet it is. But, to deny reality, for the comforts of adhering to the value of an acculturation, makes no sense.

The reality is that Si2x is kissing me, and doing so quite voluntarily. She faces no deportation, no exile, no loss of food, no loss of shelter, should she not choose this path. She is safe and sheltered here.

And barring the possibility that she knows about the land trust, why does she choose it? I honestly don't know, other than she crosses a line from simple employee to something approximating a family member.

If that is it, maybe there is an economic incentive, but it isn't a strong one. Maybe that's why I can't wrap my head around why this is happening. But happening it is.

Si2x has my shirt unbuttoned and is removing it. Her lips are never far from mine for very long. Each act is meaningful, but never detached from the intimacy of lips on lips.

She has her top off now. She kisses me as she unhooks her bra and removes it.

We are standing in the middle of the bedroom. The room is large, but my world now is no wider than the space the two of us inhabit. Everything else is out of focus and meaningless.

She has my slacks and boxers down around my ankles and works with me to step out of them. There are more kisses as her shorts and panties are removed.

Now, skin to skin, it is she who moves us to the bed. Her hands are on me as she reclines on the mattress, pulling me down on her.

Sir, fuck me. Don't be gentle. I want to call you by your name. Do it.

I am already on top of her. That is her doing. Her legs are spread. That is her doing. She is wet. And that is very much her doing. I push in. She shows no signs of discomfort. What she shows is exactly what she showed before, determination.

Nothing is wrong. Her cunt is warm, wet and tight. The breasts are ample for a Filipina and probably B cups. The nipples are large brown flags that stick way out. Her belly is flat and her hips flare out. Nothing is wrong.

No, nothing is wrong, but that does not explain how right it is... and it is right. Si2x is right there with me in every move, every adjustment. Her body and mine are in sync. Her lips, hands, fingers, they all are in the most intimate of ways talking to me, communicating a caring, a love that cannot really be faked.

Yes, yes, it feels good to have my cock inside her, but that is just part of it, not the whole of it, (oh shit, what a bad pun). No, there is more to this. This is a young woman who is staking all that she is, all that she has, in her bet that I am her guy. She could not be any clearer, Si2x isn't fooling around. She isn't playing a game.

I am beginning to sweat. She rolls us over. I am on my back and still inside her.

Craig, just relax and let me do this for a while.

What she is doing is fucking on my member while massaging me. I probably should keep my mouth shut, but I utter, *How...?*

My mother. I see her do this a couple of times. Good, right?

Uh-huh... good.

She is not bouncing on me. She is moving in a circular fashion, pushing my cock around in her cunt. It appears she is enjoying it but not going it to orbit.

Craig?

Hub?

Does she really want to talk now?

You really need to be with Reina and Jing2x. They want but embarrassed to ask.

Si2x, they really have to...

OK, all of a sudden Si2x is pulling me over and yelling, *Hard, Craig! Hard!*

OK, I am not sweating now and can oblige. I am smashing into her, fucking hard as I can, as I hear,

I will bring them. We can both fuck them if you want. You want that? You want us to fuck them together? Oh, fuck me. Cum in me, Craig. Do it! Now, my love. Cum! Cum!

And the heat, the passion, the raw sex, all combine to bring the cum Si2x is asking for. She has it, deep inside her.

Roll over, my love.

Why?

You will see.

And I do. I am getting a post coital massage. I have never even heard of such a thing, but I gather it exists as I am getting one. And all I can say is, I highly recommend it, though I feel sorry for Si2x, as she isn't on the receiving end of one herself.

Sweetheart, you are going to fall asleep as I do this. It is what I want to happen. Do not be embarrassed. ... Craig, which one you want first?

What?

Reina or Jing2x? Which one first?

Why ask me? The first one who asks.

What if they both ask at the same time?

Flip a coin.

You don't have a favorite?

Si2x, every one of you is my favorite. And that is the absolute truth.

OK, relax, I will take care of it. Relax, my love, my Craig.

Morning. It's morning alright. Si2x was right. I fell asleep. I don't think I've moved an inch all night. By the time I get downstairs only four females are here. Everyone else is in class.

Coffee has been made for me and a plate of fruits sits waiting for me. Activity starts in the kitchen, to be followed by Mel bringing me a plate of garlic fried rice, fried egg and tocino.

She wear you out last night?

No more than you do. But then, after the main event, she gave me the most incredible massage. I guess I slept soundly after that.

The other two don't know what to do.

What do you mean?

They both want to be with you but are embarrassed.

Si2x mentioned that last night.

How is this my problem? *Mel, they will have to work this out without me. ... Tell me, do any of them know about the trust?*

Maybe, maybe no. I not talk about it. But maybe Lexi do.

OK, well for now, please don't. OK?

Yes. OK.

Thank you.

Craig, you sure last night was OK.

Yes, last night was fine. Mel, did you cook the tocino?

Why you ask?

Normally, you cook it so the edges have a hard sugary crust. This is not cooked as much. Even the edges are soft.

Which way you want it?

Your normal way, with the crunchy edges.

Mel laughs. OK, I tell Reina how to do it for you next time.

Good.

You going to see George today?

I don't have any plans to, why?

We need buko³⁷. Ara say she have some she can give you.

I'll call George and see if this is a good day to stop over.

Thank you. If this not good for him, I will get it at the palengke³⁸.

I pick up my cellphone to text George, but an incoming text is requiring attention first. A Socoteco engineer asks to meet him at their office and take him and another to the lot. I text him that I am

³⁷ Young coconut.

³⁸ Open-air, public farmers' market.

on my way but it will take about twenty minutes to arrive. All he says is, OK.

I figure my morning is now blown.

Mel, can you wait until this afternoon for me to go to George's.

She can.

George, any chance I can swing by this afternoon. Mel says Ara has some buko for her.

Come ahead. I will be here all day.

OK, Thanks. See you later.

Mel will get her buko and I need to get on the road right now. Well, I do but I can't. Lyn has told me I always really need one of them. She may be right. And, when I tell Mel I have to see some engineers now....

Craig, I will go with you.

I am just meeting with some engineers.

I know. I am coming. Wait!

On one level, it makes no sense. I don't need her. On the other, maybe I do. Will these guys have strong English skills? They should, but do they? And, even if they can speak English, I have noted that there are times that things simply are not properly understood.

Five minutes later we are in the van and on the road. The van, and not the bike, because I am needing to take the engineers to the lot. Based on 'Filipino time' we won't be seen as late arriving, at all. As I drive to get them, I wonder why they couldn't just drive out to the lot. They have the information related to it. They must know where it is.

Is it they don't want to burn company fuel and use a company vehicle when I can provide all of it? We are driving all the way

downtown and then essentially doubling back and then a bit further past my place to get to the lot. This is a massive, close to an hour-long, waste of time, as I have to repeat the process to return them to their office when we are done.

When we get to their offices to pick them up, they have a number of rolled up engineering maps with them. Clearly, they know where we are going.

But even with all the information already there on the maps, we don't talk about the electrical service at all. They want to know where I am from, why I am living here, why I want to build a large place, why I bought so much land, what I am going to do with the land. What they want is gossip.

Once at the lot, we identify poles that have the high voltage we need. They are pointing to a pole which is quite a ways away. I see another pole on the same line far closer to my lot.

It isn't lost on me that I am paying for the poles and the wire, and that once the poles and wire are up, they can use those poles and wire to service others. Essentially I am building their infrastructure on my dime. They get a free ride.

And here it starts getting testy. They want to use the far pole. I want the closer one. They show me their design buildout which, conveniently, they have already drawn and have with them. How about that.

Look, that other side is far closer to me. If you insist on your side, you will need to pay for the extra poles, because I see no reason to pay for more poles that I need from the other direction.

Oh, now, they can't pay for poles! That's not how the system works.

I smile and point out that then they will have to find another sucker to support their plan, I want to use the closer pole.

They excuse themselves and have a bit of a conference, just the two of them.

Sir, you will have to get permission from that landowner, pointing to some private land, to put a pole on that property. We are not allowed to do so. You will need to hire an attorney and I do not think you will be successful. And Sir, we cannot reimburse you for others using that pole, as it is of no use to us. No other party will have need of it. It would be for you only. That not smart!

Just so we don't make a mistake, let's walk over to the property and I will put a stake in the ground where you say I need to place the pole.

That humbles them. It is not the response they were expecting. We do walk over, and it doesn't look like this will be a problem. The owner of that particular piece of land and I have spoken. My best guess is a few hundred pesos and a bottle of rum will seal the deal. Trujillo's fee won't be exorbitant, either.

OK, I think I should have the easement signed by next week. I will get the document to you by next Thursday. So assuming that I get it and we come from that direction, where will my final pole be?

Over on the closest corner.

OK, let's put a stake in there too. I need that because I will be installing underground conduit.

That gets more startled looks.

Sir, you will not bring the power in to the property on poles?

No, I don't want any poles on the property.

Fifty kVA service underground?

Yes. In certified electrical conduit. The run will be two meters deep.

It not what is done here.

Is it illegal or against code?

No, but it only done in commercial building here.

Well, it is how I am doing it. Is there anything else, Gentlemen?

No, this is all. But, Sir, I not think you will get permission to put the pole on that man's land.

Why?

It not normal.

That's it? No other reason?

Yes, Sir. No other reason. But if you can't, we must bring your power from the other side and your stake is in the wrong place for that!

OK, I am not going to argue with you guys any more. Wait a couple of minutes.

I walk over to Mel. She knows the owner and has his cellphone number. She knows what I need and right then and there she calls him. The call miraculously doesn't take long.

He is coming, Craig.

I nod and walk over to the Socoteco guys. *The landowner is on his way. I am telling you something so there is no misunderstanding. You are to say nothing to him, as you made it clear that this pole is for my use only. This is between him and me. Are we clear?*

These guys are a bit pissed off, but also know I am within my rights. They really want me to pay for the longer run, but if they mess things up for me, there could be problems when they go back to their office. They are probably betting that the landowner will say no.

The landowner doesn't have much English, but he likes the fact that I am not going to build a subdivision right next to his property. He's got every reason to help me out, especially as the square meter of land Socoteco says is needed is along a fence line between him and another property owner. There is not a blessed thing he is going to do with that land.

Fifteen minutes later, he's here. I show him the stake. We agree I can essentially buy, though it legally is a perpetual easement, that

square meter for three hundred pesos and a bottle of rum. (I was right about the rum!) I hand him the pesos right then and there.

Also right then and there, I call Trujillo's office, speak to the secretary and explain what I need, hand the phone to the landowner, who gives her what she needs from him and tells us the paperwork will be available for him to sign tomorrow. He tells her he will be there to sign the easement tomorrow afternoon, before he gets back on his motorcycle and rides away.

The Socoteco guys have seen all of this. They aren't so cocksure and arrogant as they were before. They aren't sounding off with the *'you don't understand the Philippines'* anymore.

I just look at them and say, *I think we are done here.*

And we are. On the way back to their office, they are not speaking to me, they are chatting with Mel. I think I know what's up. I know this is going to sound both vain and silly, but I am right when Mel tells me it boils down to, *'just who the hell is this guy and how can he do this?'* In my brain it translates to, *'who was that masked man?'* To the extent that I am an enigma to them, I think it sort of fits.

We drop the guys off and stop at Jollibee for lunch. I have the fried chicken, which is called *ChickenJoy*. It is pretty good. Mel has one piece of the chicken and some spaghetti.

Next stop is George's for the buko.

But you just can't drive up and say give me the buko. George wants to know how it went with Socoteco, so that takes a while. He gets a good laugh about the three hundred peso square meter of ground.

Serves those bastards right. They thought they had a sucker foreigner they could shake down. Good for you! Good for you.

Anyway, what would have been a fifteen minute stop if we were just getting the buko becomes a ninety minute stop before we can drive back home with twenty-odd buko rattling around in the back of the van.

Craig, you were rude to those men today.

Yes, because they were trying to steal my money to take care of their needs and I was unwilling to be robbed.

They not do that!

Yes, they were trying to do exactly that. They can put poles up with their own money if they want to, but they just as soon use my money to put up poles I don't need. Mel, you know the times Lexi gets angry with you?

Yes.

Isn't it because you believe the stories people tell you? Doesn't she tell you that they are trying to take advantage of you?

I am doing that now?

Yes, my love, you are.

Maybe I am not a good person to go with you on these trips. Maybe I say something wrong to the men.

What did you say?

I say I would try to get you to see their needs.

Take my phone and text them in your language that you are in trouble with me for saying that. I am not going to change my mind. Do it right now!

And she does. When done, she puts the phone down and starts to cry.

Stop it. You are not in trouble. I just want the men to think so.

Oh! But you say I am!

No, I said to tell them you were. I never said you were.

Craig. You really need someone else to go with you. I not understand things.

She is right. Mel is sweet but far from savvy. I need savvy.

Erection, lessons in Filipino time...

1

Lyn and Lexi are asking for a private talk up on the balcony. I have no idea what it is about, but if they need it, it needs to happen.

OK, we are private now. What's up?

It is Lyn who asks,

What happen with Mel? She say you get angry with her and she not go with you again.

OK, let me take you through the entire day. Wait until I tell you I am done. OK?

Sige, sige³⁹.

And so, I launch into a recitation of the events with the guys of Socoteco, the resolution I thought I had come to with them, the ride back with them and the conversation they had with Mel, and finally the conversation I had with Mel after we left George's.

Both girls are just listening without reaction until I mentioned Mel's conversation with the guys returning to their offices. At that point, Lexi starts rolling her eyes and shaking her head. Lyn doesn't know why Lexi is reacting and is understandably unwilling to interrupt me to find out why.

But, as I, I think accurately, go over those last events after leaving George's place, Lyn finally comes to the understanding that Lexi had surmised earlier.

OK, I am done. Have I answered your question, Lyn?

³⁹ The word means 'alright,' or 'continue' or 'go ahead.' It is also used to say 'goodbye,' especially so during phone calls.

So you not angry?

No, I am not angry with her. But I do think she isn't the right one to go with me. And, Lexi, I know what you have been doing with, and for, Mel, for so long. You are right, of course.

Lexi feels vindicated, if not a little frustrated, that the problem will never seemingly be over. It's just the way that Mel is made. There is no changing it.

My decision, that Mel is the wrong one to be my assistant in these types of things, is obvious to Lexi. And, Lexi has nothing more to resolve. She knows I am not angry with her sister.

Lyn, on the other hand, is frustrated. She needs to assign someone with me, or I will be out there on my own. And that is something she really doesn't want.

The only other girls here during the day are our three maids. Lyn turns to Lexi.

Which friend of yours be best?

Lexi isn't prepared to answer, but I have at least one insight to offer.

It can't be Reina.

Lexi doesn't seem to react, but that surprises Lyn.

Why?

It's just a guess, and maybe Lexi will say I am wrong, but every time Mel goes to the store, she takes Reina. My guess is that Reina's personality is closest to Mel's and they have just clicked.

Lexi, Craig right?

Maybe yes. I think it right.

So Jing2x or Si2x? Which?

I not know, Ate. Craig?

I really don't know Jing2x well. I think Si2x might be OK. But I have not put her in the position that Mel was in. Mel was being pressured to work against me. I don't know how Si2x will respond to pressure.

Ate, maybe you talk to both?

Lyn agrees. There doesn't seem to be another answer, short of one of my three college girls dropping out of school. Before wrapping up, Lyn asks Lexi if she will talk to Mel and explain to her sister that Craig is not angry with her.

There is some back and forth. Lexi doesn't think she is the one to do that, as she gets angry with Mel at such moments. Mel is likely to key in on that. In fact, my mentioning Lexi's issues with Mel's behavior during that ride back to the house may be one of the reasons Mel thinks I am angry with her.

Lexi says Lyn should do that, too. Lyn is not happy and says if she talks to Mel, Lexi needs to be there too. As far as I know, that's where it is left as we go down the stairs for our dinner meal. Other than one thing I need to ask Lexi.

Have you or anyone else here mentioned the land trust and the details about it to our three maids?

Lexi hasn't and doesn't believe it has come up with anyone else. Lyn thinks that is probably right.

Downstairs things are also in motion. I no more than sit down at the table when, I guess, Si2x must have kicked, or pinched, Jing2x, because the girl jumps like something bit her and then we all hear Si2x saying, *Ask him!*

Jing2x is, clearly, less than pleased at her current prominent position/predicament. She is glaring at Si2x, who with an even countenance, says, *Well? Ask him. What's the worst that can happen?*

Jing2x closes her eyes, breathes deeply, turns to me and asks, *Sir, may I be with you tonight?*

There are some chortles and guffaws at the table and that just will not do.

Quiet! This is not something to laugh at! Jing2x deserves your respect. ... Thank you for asking. I am aware that you have been pressured by Si2x into making the request. What I need to know, before I answer your questions, is ... have you been pressured to ask for something you really do not want?

No, Sir, it what I want, but it is embarrassing to ask, I think.

Yes, in front of so many, it clearly is! Why didn't you ask when I am alone?

I am shy, Sir. Shy to come to you like that.

So, I want to laugh and ask her how this is better, but I hold that inside.

Well then, Jing2x, please come to me by eight this evening and accompany me upstairs.

Yes, Sir. Thank you, Sir.

Before I can even think of how to answer such a weird 'thank you' with an equally weird 'You're welcome,' Si2x pipes up with, *See? How hard was that?*

At which everyone at the table just starts laughing, even Jing2x, as she is being playfully punched and patted by those next to her.

Sir?

Yes, Reina?

Sir, me too.

You too, what?

Your bed, Sir.

Ah, OK. I see. Yes, Reina. Tomorrow. OK?

*Sige, salamat.*⁴⁰

Everyone, but Si2x, is looking at, and talking with, Jing2x and Reina. But, like a hot pink neon sign against a dark desert landscape, a message of, 'if it needs to happen, I will make it happen' is written right across Si2x's face.

I give her a nod of the head, acknowledging the reality of the message and all the meaning that it imparts.

By way of lights above me, on our roofed-over terrace, I have been sitting and reading. I try to take a few hours out here after dinner each night. A book, a rocks glass with rum over ice and, most evenings, a gentle breeze of warm, but not hot, air.

Many evenings, I will then retire with one of the girls, but these hours are mine alone. And I do so tonight until just before eight.

I am expecting Jing2x to come to me. In that she does, I am not surprised.

Nor am I surprised that Jing2x is shy. That much was made clear earlier. What am not expecting is that she needs a chaperone. Hers is Si2x.

Now, I know in the heat of lovemaking last night, Si2x said she would be with the girls, but I honestly didn't believe her. I didn't even give it a second thought. At the moment she said it, I discounted it as foolish lovemaking hyperbole.

But here she stands with Jing2x. I smile. I can't discount it now.

That Jing2x needed the courage to even appear at eight is, in my mind, evidence that she really isn't ready for this in so many ways. Still, I know there is no way I can tell her to just leave and go to bed alone tonight. I am going to have to bed the kid.

⁴⁰ Basically meaning, 'OK, thank you.'

Thank you for bringing her, Si2x. There are some things I need to speak with you about tomorrow, but now it is time for Jing2x and me to get acquainted. Just find me in the morning, OK?

There is confusion on Jing2x's face and almost an eye roll from Si2x.

No, Craig. We will all be together tonight. I told you last night, this is how it will be.

Si2x, please wait inside. I need to speak with Jing2x alone.

I get eyebrows and she does as requested.

I do not know what Si2x has told you, but there is no need to have her with us tonight. I am sorry that she is inserting herself into your time with me.

No, Sir. I ask her to come. Please allow it.

You really want your most intimate moments with me to be with Si2x right there with us?

Yes, Sir.

OK, I guess. Let's go.

I have no problems being with two girls, but I don't understand this with Jing2x. I am not sure I need to, so why am I wondering?

When we get to the bedroom I am about to take control. Si2x can be there, but this is about Jing2x and me. And in that, I am wrong. Si2x takes Jing2x by the hand, moves her close to the bed and undresses the girl.

Jing2x is just standing passively, allowing it all to happen. Once the girl is naked, Si2x removes her own clothing and then places Jing2x on the bed, Si2x behind her and sort of half lying, reclining against the pillows and the headboard.

Both girls are on their backs with Jing2x's head on top of Si2x's loins.

She's ready for you, Craig.

Well, that much seems obvious.

I disrobe, mount the bed and then the girl. Jing2x has not said a word. Oddly, she is not scared, or slave-like in her behavior toward me. Jing2x is animated. Her cunt is already wet. She is smiling as I enter her and seemingly happy as all get-out as the fucking starts. She pays no mind to Si2x, who is playing with the girl's tits, twisting Jing2x's nipples. I'm pretty sure Jing2x was a virgin from the signs on my bloody cock.

I have no idea what the relationship is between the two of them, but, clearly, there is something going on that I don't understand.

Jing2x is strong. Her leg muscles are tight around me. Her back arches and she now pulls her legs up in the air. She wants more penetration.

Si2x is talking.

Are you going to do anything Craig asks you to do, bata⁴¹?

Oo, Ate.⁴²

Anything, bata?

Oo, Ate, anything. I do it.

If you don't, what happen to you?

You will beat me, Ate. I know.

Tell Craig what you really want. Tell him now!

Sir! I want a baby. Truly. Give me a baby.

The girl is squirting! It's like a garden hose just got turned on.

Jing2x, are you my girl, or are you Si2x's?

⁴¹ Kid

⁴² She is answering "Yes" and using a sign of respect for the older or more important girl.

I am yours! Sir, only yours. That never change. Si2x only makes sure, no girl does you wrong. She say she kill any girl who hurt you. We believe her!

I am still plunging my cock into the girl as I hear this, and I have to admit, it sends me into overdrive. Way too soon, the girl gets my cum.

But it is time to see if the claim that she is not Si2x's girl is really true.

Si2x, suck my cum out of her.

Will she?

She does and as Si2x is eating cum, I move to Jing2x's lips and get a chance to kiss her. She, it turns out, is a damned fine kisser.

What a fucking weird night.

Morning sees Jing2x gone from the bedroom but Si2x is still here. She is showered, dressed and waiting for me, I guess.

I think I need to understand what happened last night and why Jing2x said you would kill her.

Sir, the first night we here, you make it clear to me you not want prostitutes. Remember?

Was that you, that night, who made the comment?

Yes! It me.

OK, and?

Jing2x's mother, and, Craig, my mother, they both work at the spa, and they both prostitutes. Reina's mother, she a drug user and a prostitute, no normal job. We three, we make friends because no one else want to be with us. We meet Lexi and she is nice to us and so, Lexi is a friend like that, but not for the other reason. Then Lexi find you and we think, see Lexi is a prostitute now, just like our mothers!

Si2x is crying a bit. She wipes her eyes with the back of her wrist and continues.

You leave and we think, see we are right! But she still live here. She still have money from you. She get nicer clothes to wear. Then we see she is pregnant. We ask her, what she going to do when the child come? She will be alone. She say that not true. You are coming back. I tell her I not believe her. So, she show us the texts from you. We not know what to think. Maybe life just not fair! She a mistress to a foreigner and we have nothing. Then she send for us... Ha! I think OK, you just want to fuck many girls. You have money, why not! Better than being a maid. So we come.

And that night you learned something?

We learned we not here for sex. We here to be the maids! We learn that the other girls, they protect you, keep you safe. So I think, OK, this is good. This is very good. We need to be smart. That night I tell them. They do anything to hurt you, I kill them. No stealing, no lying, nothing, we be the good girls you want. Then our lives will be like Lexi's. Yes, that is our plan. Maybe you will be strict, mean, we not care. We are safe now. But you not strict. You not mean. You nice and sweet to us even though you never touch us, not once. So, something else happen. We all fall in love with you.

She is crying again. I wait.

I am worried. I think, if we show the love, maybe you throw us out. I worry my friends will make a mistake. You not say we can be trusted. You not say the work is good enough. What if they do something that makes you think we not good? So I tell them again, you do anything wrong, 'I kill you!' This man too good. Do not make any mistake. We all love you, but until you said we really safe, I not want any of us to say anything. Then when you say it, I the one who make the mistake, not them!

How?

I ask if that mean we are in your bed!

Well, it wasn't how it should happen, but it wasn't anything that would get you thrown out.

Yes, I know now, but I feel so bad then.

OK.

Once you make it clear how it to happen, I know, we all in your bed. But the others, they scared that if they do something wrong I will kill them.

And that is why you were here last night?

Yes.

OK, I understand. And now I have another thing I need you to do.

What that?

When I go out like I did yesterday, with Mel, ... in the future, you will come with me, not Mel.

Mel do something wrong?

It doesn't matter what my reason is, Si2x. It matters that you represent my interest, and not those of others when we have meetings with others.

Of course! Why I not?

OK, that is all I needed to talk to you about this morning. But I do have a question, about Reina. Do you feel comfortable talking about the other girls?

What you want to know?

Have you had a problem in the past making sure others do not take advantage of her?

How you know! Who tell you?

Is it true?

Yes. Craig, how you know this?

I didn't. I was guessing.

No one guess that good! How?

When Mel goes shopping she takes Reina, and that is the problem we have with Mel. She is a good sweet girl, but others can con her. So I was thinking, maybe Mel likes Reina because their personalities are similar.

Hala! That why you replacing Mel with me!

Yes. That is why.

So, you love Mel, but somethings she not good for?

Exactly.

So, now you know about Reina but Reina still stays?

Yes.

Craig, I will watch Rena for you.

Just like Lexi watches Mel, when she can.

Oh! I not know.

Yeh, well, now you do.

Si2x, are you going to be with Reina today?

Up to you.

Sure why not. I will take her later this morning. Tell me, were you OK eating pussy?

Yes, I am OK with girls.

Do you like it?

Truth?

Yes, Si2x, I always want the truth.

I like it, but one of your other girls likes it a lot.

Who?

Dido. ... Craig, you want to start your day with a nice massage?

The idea of starting a day with a massage is not something that had even crossed my mind. But, I have to say, it is great. As Si2x is massaging me, she explains that her mother was primarily a massage therapist (though certainly without any training that I would consider a formal type).

But most of the fees for the sessions stay with the spa proprietor. Her mother needs at least five clients each night just to make ends meet. Many nights she has only three or four clients. And some nights she can't work. For special clients, to supplement her income, she provides special services. While not every massage therapist does this, most do. There is no way to pay the bills, otherwise.

Only those who own the spa don't have the financial need, anymore. Si2x insists her mother is a good woman just trying to keep her children fed. I see no reason to argue with that assessment.

2

The message this morning has a secondary effect. I am horny. Does Si2x know how to produce that effect on men?

I am at the dining table, finishing a breakfast of rice, and last night's Pinakbet with buko juice and coffee. And... if I wasn't so damned horny, it would be a wonderful, peaceful morning. I haven't been so damned horny, for no reason at all, since I was a teenager. This is truly strange.

I have every intention of being with Reina a little later, but later is not now, and now the only one who is near me is Mel. It's not that I have anything against enjoying some time with Mel, but there is just so much I can do in one day.

On top of that, I don't know how Mel is feeling right now. Have Lyn and Lexi spoken to her? If they have, how did it go? So far, while Mel has interacted with me, getting me my food, she has not said a word. I am trying to think... I am not sure she ever talks much in the morning. Am I over-thinking this? Is everything normal and I am just worried that it isn't?

I have finished with my plate and the juice. Mel clears all but the coffee away from the table, I gather, putting the dishes in the kitchen sink, though I can't see that from here. But, she comes back in and sits down by me.

I know what I do wrong, Craig. Lexi and Lyn say you really not angry. That true?

Yes. I am not angry.

Lexi say, I am too kind. My heart too soft. What is good in a person, sometimes, that same thing can be bad. You think she right?

Yes. That is true. You have a very good heart. A sweet heart. But sometimes it is required to have a hard heart. That isn't something that is easy for you to do.

Craig, it best you have someone else go with you. I not want to be a problem. I love you. You know that true, right?

Yes, Mel, I know your love is true. I accept that you are not the best one to go out on some of the trips with me.

Yes! You need someone who can have a hard heart sometimes.

I agree.

So, I decide you must choose Si2x! She the best for you!

Why her?

Craig, it cannot be Reina. She like me I think.

I just have to smile. Mel is not stupid. Being sweet does not mean she has no self-knowledge. And, it does not mean she can't see traits in others. There simply are things she can't do.

I am curious, and ask her, *Why not Jing2x?*

She OK, but Si2x the best.

I see. OK, I will tell Si2x to come with me next time, which may be later today, if the easement is signed at Trujillo's office.

Thank you.

You're welcome, Mel.

Craig, when you take Reina?

I was going to do it soon, maybe right after lunch, why?

Reina and me going to the palengke as soon as she done upstairs.

Mel is referring to Reina's duties as a maid, cleaning on the second floor.

I see, well I guess it will have to be tonight.

OK, I tell her that. She want to know.

That seems to be all she needs to say or learn, as now she is out of the chair and walking toward the stairs.

I am beginning to think that morning massages are very bad ideas. I am still horny. Hoping that returning to reading will take my mind off my carnal desires, I take my coffee and decamp to the sala.

Reading is not working. I am fidgeting around and just can't get comfortable.

Craig, there is a problem. Reina is busy today. I know you said you will take her early today, but you need to wait until tonight or another day.

Yes, Si2x, I am aware. Mel and I spoke about it. ... How good are you at giving head?

I not know that? What you mean?

I mean sucking my cock.

Oh! I never do that. You want?

Have you seen it done?

You mean, I see my mother?

Yes, I guess, that is what I mean.

Yes, I see it. You want to shoot in the air, or me to swallow?

Will you swallow?

Yes, it cleaner that way I think. You want here, or upstairs?

Here?

OK.

I suspect Mel is upstairs helping Reina get done so they can get to the palengke. Jing2x is on the third floor. I am alone here in the sala with Si2x and doubt we will have any visitors.

I get up from the easy chair and drop my slacks and briefs. It's not the sexiest of moves, but it is what happens. Once I am back down in the chair, Si2x gets down to business.

She may never have given head before, but the human body is hardly new to her. She has seen her mother give head and who knows what else.

She knows my cock needs moisture. There not being a cunt to provide it, she uses what she has, her mouth. She transfers some of that to her hands as she strokes me while sucking.

As a rank amateur, she is showing professional chops: taking me deep, though not down her throat; keeping her teeth away from me; sucking hard while stroking. Has she heard her mother hum while she gave head? Si2x is humming as she sucks.

She has my balls in a tight grip and a pinky finger playing with my buttole.

I was horny before. Now I am way more than that. I both want to come and at the same time do not want to stop feeling this damned good. I am looking down on the top of the girl's head as she goes about her beginner but master class on giving me head.

There is something about how well Si2x knows how to talk to my body that's a little humbling. And when she takes the hand that was on my nuts to place her fingers one at a time on the top of my thigh, one... two... and then as she sticks out three she has me cumming, I am in awe, truly in awe.

She isn't quite done. She continues to suck me as I wilt, sucking any vestige of cum that might remain before detaching from my cock, and looking at me, with a smile, to ask, *OK na?*

To which, I have learned in these few months here to say, *Tapos na. Talaga, tapos na.*⁴³

⁴³ Finished. Truly done.

She stands up and pulls on me to get up and redress. *Don't worry about tonight. I will give you another massage!* And gives me a big smile.

Damn, she is a cute little imp. It's a good thing she is my imp. I suspect she would be dangerous if she wasn't.

I decide to return to the sketches. Now that I am able to do anything at all but fidget!

And, now that I know where the electric comes in, I can finalize how I want the conduit to be placed. I am going to bury the four inch diameter electric conduit in a trench a good two meters down. Above the 'entry main' conduit for the electric with some dirt between it and the lower conduit, I will run a two inch diameter conduit for communications lines. I may not use that conduit for a good long while, but I suspect sometime in the future I will. If I don't, well, no real harm done.

I will bury the water lines from the well to the main house a meter and a half down and the lines from the main house to the outbuildings a meter down.

The sanitary pipes from the outbuildings need to drop one inch every four feet. I can't find a simple rule of thumb based on a meter. So I will calculate everything based on feet for this. Degrees of slope exist, but for me they are pretty much useless.

George has told me that code requires that I take the highest elevation the house sits on and add fill to bring it up half a meter. It has to do with issues of flooding. There will be no basement here. It also means one side of the house may actually need two meters of fill, or more!

It will affect the placement of the septic tank and the potential exposure of sanitary pipes. And now, because of that, I am thinking I may need two septic systems.

One system for the main house and one for some of the outbuildings, as they will start at different elevations and the slope of the sanitary pipe might make connections to just one very

difficult unless I dig one five meters deep and have the pipes from the different buildings enter the first chamber at very different levels, and thereby causing the pipes between the next chambers to be placed very low.

I had not given thought to the slope problem until just now. Man, what else am I missing? Shit! Yes, I am forgetting I need communications conduit between the main and outbuildings as well as the electrical and water.

I am going to need a real sense of where the outbuildings go right from the get-go to make sure the conduits are placed at least partially correctly.

They can't go all the way to any outbuilding in the beginning as the exact location of each, and where conduits need to enter them, will be for the future, but the conduit runs need to come out from under the main house in the right way and out from under the main house foundation before I pour that foundation. Once the foundation is in, if I have missed something, I am screwed.

And that is how the rest of the entire morning is consumed. These things take on a life of their own. Getting it right, means right and on paper at the very beginning.

By the time I am ready for lunch, Mel and Reina are gone. It is Jing2x who makes lunch for the three of us: Si2x, herself and me. Fried eggs, bihon, and white bread isn't high cuisine, but no one is going hungry.

This lunch is a first, in an important way. It is the first time I have sat at the table with the two of them as lovers. I am no longer Sir. I am Craig.

They are at ease and there is teasing and some ribald comments about what Reina is in for. Both girls want to be there for my time with their friend. Once again, it is something I was not expecting. Sure, I know that Si2x will be there and pretty much the 'why' of it. But having Jing2x there too, is totally unexpected.

We talk a bit about the problems I had with the guys at Socoteco and also about Mel's reaction to their pressure. They both agree that Mel is an older version of Reina.

I suspect we are talking far too long over our lunch. But I am enjoying it and I see no harm being done. Yes, they still have maid type duties, but I am not sweating the details. They know what needs to be done.

We are still at the table when my cellphone chimes notifying me of a new text message. It is from Trujillo's secretary.

Sir Craig, Your utility easement is complete.

*I am coming to pick it up right now.
Thank you.*

Si2x, we are going to the attorney's and Socoteco. Do you need to change first?

What we taking?

My bike.

OK, I go change right now.

It doesn't take her long before she is ready. Traveling downtown via the motorcycle is far faster than taking the van. I leave Si2x with the bike and go up to Trujillo's office. The cost of their services for the easement is only two hundred pesos. If only attorneys in the USA were so affordable!

From Trujillo's, we ride over to Socoteco, parking the bike in a safe, guarded parking area. After a little bit of confusion as to which of the connected buildings we are looking for, we enter the correct one to offer up the easement.

Though I had made it clear yesterday that they would have the easement, based on their chat with Mel, and in spite of her text later (did she really send one?) they seem genuinely surprised to see me with the easement in hand.

The guys ignore me and start chatting with Si2x. She is being nice and friendly... until she isn't. And it isn't a slow progression.

It's a switch that has been flipped. Si2x is tearing into them and it is clear that they are not happy. Another man comes over to intervene and says something to her, possibly scolding her.

That's not having the effect the guy expected. He turns to me and says, *This young lady is accusing these men of serious wrong doing! Is this your accusation, Sir?*

Sir, since I have no idea as to what is being said, there is no way I can say that it is. And, Sir ... who are you? How are you involved in this?

The guy is the 'supervisor' of the guys we have been dealing with. And the story, as he rolls it out related to his understanding, is totally wackadoodle.

Sir, if that is the story you have really been told, you need to hear what really happened. ... I still do not know what was said between Si2x here and your men, but if it still needs to be discussed once I am done relating what I have to say, then I will ask you and Si2x to discuss it in English. I only ask, respectfully, that I be allowed to say what I will say, without their (I am pointing to the two assholes) interference. And, Sir, shall we sit down? I have always felt that sitting makes discussions calmer.

Yes, yes, let us sit and you tell me what you think happened.

As we sit down, I ask for the map we all were looking at yesterday. The guys really don't want to get it, but they do. It only takes ten minutes to go over the entire thing, including the money paid yesterday for the easement and the actual signed easement I have in my hands.

What comes next is pure Filipino.

Sir, it seems to me that our engineers were just looking out for the benefit of our people. But I can see your point of view. You are right. You should not have to pay for more poles and wire than actually needed to get to your property. It is

also not normal to acquire an easement as you did. It is for that reason that my men did not believe you.

Even after they saw the money change hands?

Well, Sir, yes I see your point. But this easement says it is only for your use. This is very unusual! Very nonstandard.

As I have already told you, your men said they had absolutely no interest in bringing power in from that pole and would not pay a cent for it. This easement is the result of their statements.

Do you understand that you are denying many other Filipinos access to vital services by enforcing this restrictive easement?

Your men said there was no reason to have power back there. Are you calling your own men liars? I am not doing so, as this easement is completely in line with their statements yesterday.

I see. So you will not consider using the poles we suggested?

Are you paying for all the poles needed to offset the difference between the two directions?

I am afraid we cannot!

Well, then, why should I consider changing my decision?

I see. Very well. We will proceed with this work on our end and let you know when the paperwork is ready for you to proceed.

How long do you expect it to be, before we can proceed?

Sir! Maybe forty-five days. These things take time!

I hope you do not delay because of this disagreement. Is there now a need to discuss what Miss Si2x said?

No, Sir, I do not think it will be needed.

I thought not. My best guess is that the supervisor knows his guys did all they could to pressure me and that it just backfired for them.

It was bad luck on their end. And so, it was best to just lick the wounds and move on.

Si2x and I take our leave of the place. I decide I do not like Socoteco.

As we walk out I ask Si2x what she said that got them so angry.

I say what they do is corrupt. It immoral. Why do they think it OK to steal money from a foreigner? They say I don't care about the Filipino. I tell them that true Filipinos are not corrupt like them. ... It true, Craig. What they do is wrong. They know it wrong.

What did the supervisor say to you?

He tell me to apologize. I ask him, what his problem? Is he corrupt too? ... I almost laugh when you ask him if he calling his men liars. Yes, they are liars. Maybe, the supervisor not know what you tell him. Maybe, this is new to him. I see him look at his men like saying, 'you want to prove this man wrong?' They not want to try. Or maybe the look is, 'Why you so stupid to say what you say yesterday to the foreigner?' I not know.

If I had any doubts about Si2x in situations like we just experienced, I have none now. I may not be happy with Socoteco, but I am pleased as all get-out with this girl.

The ride back to the house is a nonevent. Things go smoothly, and having one of the girls on the back is like riding alone. You just don't notice them, with the exception of a gentle hand, maybe on a shoulder. They are not 'holding on to you.' For them, sitting on a bike is second nature. I have seen girls ride on the back of bikes sidesaddle while texting. If it wasn't scary as hell to see, it would be entertaining.

As we walk in, Mel is right in front of us, asking Si2x if they gave her any trouble like they gave her yesterday. Mel is not being snarky. She really cares and is worried for Si2x.

Si2x thinks what happened is something to be celebrated and so, giggling as she goes, launches into a rendition of what took place.

Mel is mortified. When Si2x gets to the part where she is telling about asking the supervisor if he is corrupt, Mel is freaking out. Fearful for Si2x, she wants to know what happened to Si2x after calling them corrupt. When we tell her nothing happened, Mel is honestly confused. How can that be?

In Mel's world, standing up means you get knocked down. In Mel's way of thinking, this just doesn't happen. Everyone will hate you!

In Si2x's world, if you get knocked down, then stand the hell up again. And if there are people who hate you, well that's their problem.

3

Tonight is Reina's night. I know she is looking forward to it, and she has honestly proven herself in all ways that matter to me, while here. She has earned her place with us. What is bothering me about the girl, isn't the girl, it's the mother. I have not heard any of this from her. What I have heard is from Si2x. What does Reina think about her mother? What does she want to say? Is she even willing to engage on the subject?

I am in my bedroom at eight in the evening. These girls are typically in bed by this time at night. The life of a maid in a big house like this pretty much demands being awake in the early morning. That typically means around four AM, thereby predicting early sack time.

All three girls appear and, without comment or discussion, Reina is undressed, following which, the other two disrobe. I guess I need to as well and follow along. Jing2x and Si2x place Reina as was done last time for Jing2x.

I mount the bed and mount Reina, who is a very pretty girl. Is she unique in features? No. It's just that everything works and nothing is wrong. She is pretty in the simple way that you might consider her a prototypical pretty kid.

In a way I am thinking back to Bel. There was nothing physically wrong with Bel, but with Bel it was what was in her head that was causing me problems. I hope, and have no reason to think otherwise, that Reina will not bring me problems ... but the story I have been told about her mother makes me concerned. Should I have vetted the girls better?

I am deep in Reina. She seems happy with that. I stop moving, but still fully inserted. Now, my questions start.

Reina, are you my girl, or are you Si2x's.

I give her a few pumps.

Yours, Po.

I give her a few more pumps. *What happens if you do wrong?*

Sir, Si2x, she will kill me. A few more pumps.

Why will she kill you, Reina?

Because I am weak. I allowed to be here after I promise to do as Si2x and Jing2x tell me to behave.

Why are you weak? More pumps.

I not know how to explain... but my mother, she very bad.

Why is she bad?

She do drugs. She drunk mostly. She steal. She do sex for money. She not good.

Are you going to invite her here?

No! I tell her, if she come, the others will kill her, really, they do it.

I pump some more. *Do you think she believes you?*

Yes, I sure. She know how she hated by my friends.

I am fucking her hard now.

Do you know why your friends are here, now?

Yes! I must tell you the truth, or they throw me out.

So are you mine, or theirs?

I am yours, Sir. They here to make sure I stay yours always and not make mistakes.

All while, we are talking, I am fucking her.

She is getting wetter and wetter. It makes little sense. The talking, the fucking, the getting wetter every moment, and all through it all her tears are getting more intense.

From now on, Reina, you are mine and you will obey me. If Si2x or Jing2x gives you an order, it is because the order came from me. Do... you ... under... stand! I ask as each utterance is punctuated by my cock slamming into her cunt.

Yes, Sir, I understand.

Good! I look up at the other two and say, *OK grab on to something and let's take her for a ride.*

And they do, as I give Reina all the pounding of cock that her cunt can take, in missionary position.

All the girls swore that they were virgins before I entered them. There is evidence to suggest it is true, though it can be faked in a number of ways. Still assuming the truth of it, there is probably only so much Reina can handle in her cunt the first time, as the other two torture her breasts and ass.

Reina may have cum. I am honestly not sure, but I can't go any longer and I deposit cum inside the girl. I hope this isn't a mistake.

Filipino time.

Once again we are waiting. Waiting on the deed to be processed. Waiting on the engineer I retained to get back to me. Waiting on Socoteco for paperwork of some sort. I don't even know what type of paperwork.

I spend some time with George. I show him my sketches of the subsoil work. I am flattered as he tells me he wish he had thought all this through before he started to build.

When I tell him what happened at Socoteco, he tells me of a rumor he has heard.

Well, I call it a rumor, George insists it is the truth. He claims that the engineers there get a kickback on every pole they get some poor bastard to purchase. The word is that if ten folks need service, they must put the poles up out of their own budget. But if fewer than ten need it, the customers must pay for the poles. Still, once the

poles are up, the company can connect whomever they want to the poles. So their job is to push the installation of poles before there are ten individuals making requests.

They got screwed this time because the pole sitting on my property won't be available for anyone else to use and the one before that is on the easement that they are shut out of... and that means no kickback to them. So instead of kickbacks on twelve poles, of the five poles going in they will only get kickbacks on three of them.

Assuming the rumor is true, if I had agreed to the long route, even the pole on the other side of my property would have been useful to them. So kickbacks for three poles as opposed to twelve.

And again, if that is true, the supervisor was probably as corrupt as were his men. Either way, his men were truly liars at the very least. But, like I say, if true, then all are corrupt. I have no idea if it is true. It could just be a mean-spirited rumor.

We have May's mom over one evening to celebrate May's pregnancy. May's brother is four and her sister is ten. The sister really misses her Ate. It's not going to get any better going forward from what I can see. The mom is truly joyful, kissing me on the cheek and hugging me. I don't see the kids much. A bunch of my girls, along with May's sister, have taken the boy and disappeared inside the house. There was a father, but I gather hers was a common-law arrangement and the guy died in a motorcycle accident.

Dido's mom comes over on a different night. There are three kids here and, once again, no father. So the woman had four kids and never seems to have married... it's nuts. Of the three, they range from eleven to five. There are two girls and a boy still with the mom.

Once again, the mom is thrilled with the prospect of a grandchild, though as far as I know, Dido is not pregnant.

Last to come over, on a Saturday evening so that the father can be with us, is Li2x's family. Here there are two boys, ages nine and ten,

and one girl three years of age. The father is getting seriously drunk on dark Tanduay Rhum as the night progresses. For some reason their rum is spelled with an 'H.' I have no idea why it is. But he, as we might say in Dorchester, is in his cups. And considering it is rum we are talking about, that phrase might even be quasi-historically accurate for the early Boston area.

The mom is consulting with my girls about things she might have that we can use for the infants to come. Each of the moms seems to indicate that we will be seeing more of them. I am not sure I am happy about that, as a development, but doubt there is much I can do about it.

I am now concerned about the mothers of Si2x, Jing2x and Reina... especially Reina. If Si2x's defense of her mother, and maybe Jing2x's, is accurate, the prostitution is essential economic salary enhancement. It may not be a matter I need to concern myself with. But Reina's mother is, according to all three girls, a drug addict, an alcoholic, a prostitute, and a petty thief. I do not want the woman anywhere near here.

I know the woman has been told to stay away. Will she? Will she if she gets word that her daughter is pregnant?

The thing about Li2x's and Dido's moms is that they have no free time during the day. Work and children keep them very busy, so I really don't expect to see them at the house unless we feed them. And that gets me to something I have left out of this until now, and I am not sure why. Each month those three families each get a fifty kilo bag of rice from me.

Maybe you will think I am bribing them, but you are wrong. I never offered rice, not once, and I wasn't bargaining for the girls. I didn't want them here. Only after the first night they were all here, even before I agreed the girls could stay, did I hear and learn enough to know how much just the gift of some rice would mean to them. I just felt sorry for them. A sack of rice may seem cheap to me, but not to them.

I am wondering now, should I not do the same for my ‘new’ three? Before, they were just maids. They earned a salary. It was an economic arrangement. And, as such, families of employees are, in most ways, not the responsibility of the employer. Yes, in the USA some family members might be able to take advantage of employer-connected group healthcare plans. On Thanksgiving or Christmas, maybe there is a turkey for the family. But in most cases, that is where it ends with employees.

These girls are more than that now. They are no longer employees. But, I really don’t want to have anything to do with Reina’s mom. Still, how can I give rice to the other two and not to Reina’s mom? How?

I think I need to discuss this with all of them. It is true that I don’t give rice to the families of Lyn, Jana, Mel, or Lexi. But Jana’s family and Mel’s dad both don’t really need it, I haven’t met Lyn’s family and she steadfastly doesn’t want to even mention them, and in Bel’s case, she can go to hell for all I care.

Plus, my first four know I have been giving rice to the families of the young ones all along and have never said anything to suggest I am being unfair. Maybe I am and I will hear about it now.

I figure dinner is the best time to discuss it. We typically are all here only this one time of the day. Pulling any of them away from something that they clearly need to be doing, for the sole purpose of doing this at another time, and for my convenience, just seems a little bit too arbitrary and unfair.

Girls, I have been thinking about something and need your views on it. No one’s viewpoint on what I want to discuss can possibly be wrong, no matter what anyone else thinks. OK?

Jana looks up and, without any fear, simply asks, *We have a problem?*

No, but I need your views and guidance on something. I don’t want to make this decision alone.

I see a little worry creep into the younger girls, but Lyn speaks, loudly and clearly. *No one worry! No one is in trouble. I know Craig in this way. He is respecting you. You must listen and help him!*

Thank you, my love. Now, let's start with me discussing something that happens now. ... I provide fifty kilos of rice to the families of May, Li2x, and Dido once a month. No other families get rice. But those families get the rice every month. ... Lyn, Jana, Mel and Lexi know this. So far, none of them have said I should include their families. Each of their family situations is different and I think I know the reason why rice is not given to each, but maybe I am wrong.

I wait for someone to correct me but nothing is said. All are waiting.

So, assuming that does not change, I have three girls added now that are the same age as is Lexi, whose mother will not get rice, even if Jana's and Lyn's did. I am sorry, Mel, but that is the way I feel.

Mel simply nods, but Lexi adds, *Well, duh! Why would you?*

I have learned a little about the mothers of our newest additions. While you three are not new additions to this house, you are to my bed. And in each of your cases, your mothers are struggling, really struggling. Two mothers, according to you, are good women. One, even by your telling, Reina, is not. So, do I provide rice to them? If yes, to just two of them or to all three, even though the third will never be allowed to come to our home? ... OK, I need to hear from all of you.

Lyn asks Jing2x, *How much would it help your mother?*

Jing2x starts to cry while looking at me. *You will do this for us? Really? My mother, she will pray every day that God protects you.*

Lyn looks at Si2x. *How about you?*

Ate, maybe Craig not saving her life, but maybe you saving her soul if this happen. I hope it do.

Lyn turns to Reina, *And you, Reina?*

Maybe you will kill her if this happen. Reina is weeping as she tells us, I think she will die.

How, sister? How will this kill her?

Ate, truly, she will sell the rice for more drugs or drink. Yes, she will die or die faster, anyway. Maybe that a good thing. I not know. The weeping is quietly continuing.

Lyn looks at the other girls, one at a time her eyes meet each of them, before speaking. *Now you know why we all must help Craig decide. Some decisions are hard. This one is hard.*

Jana asks, *Reina, how you know your mother truly have a bad heart? Maybe she lost hope. Maybe having the rice gives her hope. You know what we say, Rice is Life! Maybe you are wrong.*

Li2x asks, *Jing2x, Si2x, do you two know Reina's mother?*

It is Si2x who answers, *Yes, little sister, we know her. She has a mean heart. She is cruel. She beat Reina bad many times. Maybe we wrong but I think, Jana, you hope too much. This woman is evil. But maybe, it better she die soon, not later. I not know.*

Lyn wants to know if Jing2x agrees with that assessment. She does.

I have a question I don't want to ask, but I must. If rice is given to the other two mothers, will Reina's mother learn of it?

The three who are best to answer this tell me that she won't have a clue.

I do not want to do this by a show of hands. I will give each of you a piece of paper. On it I want you to write a number. A 3, a 2, or a 0. These are the numbers of mothers who will get rice. If it is unanimous, then that is what we will do. If it isn't we need to talk more. OK?

All seem OK with this. I hand each of them a single square piece of paper off a small note pad I have. A pencil gets passed around. And then a pot gets passed. The pieces of paper fall into the pot.

One at a time, I remove the slips and read out the number, before putting the paper aside and removing the next.

The first slip has a 3 on it, but it is crossed out and a 2 is written next to it. *Two*, I say, and move to the next. This slip is hard to read the number is so small, but it is a *Two*. Slip after slip has the same number, though two more initially have a 3 but the number is crossed out each time. I have a consensus.

OK, so rice will be given to two mothers. I am guessing, but are your mothers buying NFA rice⁴⁴?

They are.

This, of course, will not be NFA rice. Once a month I buy the sacks and we use a tricycle to deliver them, but that is local to here. Your two mothers are in Calumpang, correct?

They are, and that is way too far for a tricycle.

So we will take the van and deliver the rice to tricycles closer to your mothers. You will be the ones to provide the sacks. I will not be with you. I will wait for you to return from the delivery via tricycle. You need to arrange with your mothers for a good time for us to deliver the sacks. This month I am set to buy the rice tomorrow and so that works out well. I will buy five sacks instead of three. We can deliver as soon as tomorrow afternoon or any time after that; both mothers can take the delivery at the same time.

So, now I have three girls crying.

Seeing Reina cry is the tough one. Could you make the decision she made? Could you have done what she just did?

No matter how rotten, stinking, evil your mom was, could you have done what she just did?

Do you think she is wrong? I hated this, from beginning to the very end. None of it feels good. None of it.

⁴⁴ Government subsidized low cost low quality rice for indigent families.

But... doing right is not always the seemingly caring thing to do. Consequences matter. Maybe you haven't had to weigh the choice as Reina has, but she clearly understands the issue better than many 'do-gooders.'

And, for what it is worth, as I continue to meet missionaries and other do-gooders here, I am developing a deep dislike of them. Yes, sure, some good comes of their actions, but I see far more bad shit coming from it than the 'good' they claim to be doing. I especially dislike the religious types. Is it heretical to say that? But, truly, God damn them.

We, however, may not have fully considered the outcomes of giving the rice we will provide.

Both Si2x and Jing2x are hoping that, given rice, their mothers can put the prostitution aside. They will, in the girls considerations, now 'have enough' without that. But will the prostitution stop, or will the mothers simply become better fed part-time prostitutes?

These women may have developed patterns of behavior that are not amenable to easy or simple change. How will my girls respond to future events, if they play out as I can potentially foresee that future?

Craig?

Yes, Jing2x?

Sir, why you not meet our mothers?

There are two reasons. The most important is that this gift of rice needs to be seen as coming from you and not from me.

What is the other reason?

I do not want your mothers to think that they can come to me and solve their other problems. I know they will have many problems, but I can't be the answer.

But you see the mothers of the youngest ones!

Yes, and I did that in the beginning, because I hoped they would tell their daughters to stay with them and not me!

But Sir, are they asking you to solve their problems? You say that my mother will.

Yes, they have asked on occasion. I have had to say no to them. That has been very hard on my girls. You can ask them about it. But I really do not want to discuss their personal problems with you or anyone else. What is personal should stay personal.

Yes, OK. Thank you. You are right to respect their privacy.

It has been an issue. Both Dido's mom and May's mom have tried to 'bribe' me into providing more support by offering their next oldest daughters to me, with the assumption that I would want the girls. It was frustrating for me, embarrassing (I think) for my girls and God only knows what the kids who were being offered thought of it at the time. It smacked of sex trafficking to me and I want no part of it.

There is a difference between a girl asking to join and a parent offering up a child for financial gain. Yes, there might be financial gain for the parent in the first instance, but that was not the proximate reason for the request.

Still, the economics of it is tricky. What if the girl offering herself up is aware that, in doing so, she is making life easier for the rest? I suspect you can drive yourself crazy with such questions and there are no easy answers.

4

There has been activity on multiple fronts.

It is now close to the end of November, and I am now the father of a baby boy. We have named the brute Oscar.

Lexi is doing fine and is a very happy mother with all sorts of assistance from the other girls. But the assumption that school could be handled with all this happening was far too optimistic. Lexi has made it through the first semester, but she is done for a bit now.

Bel, it seems, knows about the birth, but the woman is not welcome and has not seen her grandson.

As Lexi's dad is deceased, and she has no other siblings, Lexi's support system is that which is here in this house.

Oscar eats, sleeps and shits. That is all we are asking of him.

I am a proud father and don't really want to say much about that other than, I couldn't be happier.

I have seen the engineer. He came by two weeks ago. I gave him my sketch of the conduit and he will make a mechanical drawing of it. We discussed time frame and I now have a small, if incomplete, roadmap.

First on the list was the need for the formal title of the registered deed of sale. We got that last week. It only took over five months! Whoo-hoo! A couple of folks tell me this is fast. I guess Rena is to be thanked.

We need a city approved plan for the fence. I have a promise that I will see this next week.

Also next, and maybe at the same time, is the electric. We want electric service available before we sink the well, as we will need it

to run the pump motor. There is some promising news related to that. There is word, via Rena, bless her, that we are needed at Socoteco and to come today!

Then, assuming the electric is in, we drill the well.

Once we have water, the excavation for the conduit begins. The construction of the fence commences as soon as critical parts of the conduit are in place. That should not take long.

After the fence is up, we need city approved plans and a building permit for the house. I hope to have that ready even before the fence is finished, but we are not close to being there yet. The work on the house blueprints has not really started in any meaningful way.

These days, all around me are pregnant girls. Five of my first seven are so bred. The other two are, Lexi, who has had hers, and Dido, who simply isn't with child. I am not able to describe the feelings. It is a combination of: prideful; humbling; embarrassing; and scary, all at the same time.

My three last additions might be bred, but it is too early to know, or at least they haven't told me if they are. In any event, if they are, they are not far enough along to show.

And the issue with the rice...? It is too soon to draw any conclusions.

It has been far longer than the month I was promised in regards to the delivery of my things from the Dorchester house. But my container of household goods has still not arrived. I am told to expect it soon. It's another example of timeframe issues here in the Philippines.

Right now, Si2x and I are riding down to Socoteco. Si2x holds on to a folder of all the paperwork we have related to Socoteco and the land. The originals are at the house in a safe I purchased. We have only photocopies with us.

Once again, when we arrive at the multi-attached set of buildings, it is not clear where we should go. The place is a maze.

It takes a good fifteen minutes to learn we need to sign a contract for the construction of the poles. Someone I have never met before hands the document to me and almost immediately I see a problem.

The pole on the easement is mischaracterized and would allow for Socoteco to connect others to it. That is specifically prohibited on the permanent and limited easement agreement.

I point that out and am told I must meet with their attorney. And so we have a forty minute wait until the attorney is free to meet with us.

We enter her office. It is possibly the only separate and walled room. From what I have seen, all the other desks are in large common areas. Right from the start, things do not go well.

Why are you refusing to sign this document? We made special efforts to do this for you and to accommodate your special demands!

Ma'am, have you actually read the easement agreement? Related to the pole referenced in your fifth paragraph?

It is an easement! What is your problem?

Have you read it?

Why?

Read it please.

Don't be rude to me, Sir. You are only a guest in our country!

I have no intention of being rude and am sorry you find me rude, but I must insist you read the legal document, as you are questioning my actions and that document will explain why.

She isn't happy, but at least she is reading it. Once, over quickly and, then, slowly and more carefully.

This document is unacceptable!

Why? It is exactly what your employees demanded from me.

Are you accusing Socoteco employees of writing this?

With all due respect, Ma'am, I didn't say that. I said they demanded I get an easement for me and no one else, or they could not install a pole on that land.

They told you this?

Yes.

I don't believe you!

Believe me or not, Ma'am, I am telling the truth.

Why would they ever say such a thing?

I can give you a complete answer. Do you want it, or are you going to continue yelling at me and calling me a liar without any basis?

How dare you insult me! You are not allowed!

And you are allowed to call me a liar?

Alright! Tell me why I should not call you a liar!

So I take her through the entire thing. I describe the way they wanted to go, involving twelve poles and the way I wanted, requiring five poles. I explain that the engineers said it wasn't possible to use five poles because I couldn't get an easement, and further that they didn't prefer that route as it would serve no one but me on the last two poles. That no one else would be able to attach to a pole where the easement was needed.

I explain that I negotiated for the easement with the landowner with her employees standing right there. The negotiation, which they witnessed, was with the clear understanding that the easement was for me and no one else. I comment to her that the owner asked, was I sure that it was only for me, because he and I are

friends, and that was the only reason he would do it. He wasn't interested in helping out Socoteco.

And once that agreement was struck, at that very moment, in the presence of the engineers, I gave the man the money for the easement. I add, as a coda, there are two witnesses, a girl who was with me and the landowner. *So, would you like to call all of us liars?*

The attorney goes apoplectic. She starts demanding I return with a different easement. I tell her if she wants a different one, she can go and try. I have a perfectly valid one and have no need, especially because of what her own people said. No one else can connect to the pole in any case. Further, the landowner will not give her a general easement. He made that clear at the time.

You are acting against poor Filipinos by denying them access to that pole!

Ma'am. Once again, I am not denying anyone, the landowner is. Second, your people said they wanted me to pay for seven more poles than I needed because there was no easement. Why were they demanding I pay for all those extra poles if an easement on the land for which I eventually negotiated an easement could have theoretically served any other Filipinos? Ma'am, respectfully, were your men lying to achieve financial gain by tricking a foreigner? Do we need to investigate what their motives were in the lie that you are implying they made?

There are a few words between the attorney and Si2x, but I gather it doesn't improve the attorney's position, because all she does is harrumph when the conversation was over.

The rest of the meeting isn't any more cordial, but I do get a contract that is modified, after more waiting and an hour later, which I can sign.

And after that? Do I have a clear path to the next step of getting electrical service? No. I am told to wait for further notification.

Once we are out of the building I ask Si2x what had been said between her and the attorney that I didn't understand.

She want to know why I was with such a rude and unpleasant foreigner. I tell her, he only rude to people who lie or try to steal from him. To everyone else he a sweet and nice man. ... She say, am I accusing her of lying or stealing? I tell her, maybe she protecting those who do. Everything you tell her true.

I really don't like Socoteco.

And now it's 'wait a while' again!

And while I am waiting, it occurs to me that I didn't mention I have been to Manila. I have an SRRV retirement visa. I had to deposit some cash into an account at the Development Bank of the Philippines, and the rest of it was no problem. There is a minimal annual fee, but nothing of any consequence. It is done and no need to visit the Bureau of Immigration any more.

In another thing that seems to have slipped from my mind, I realized that I had never heard from the agency in Boston about the cable TV company and the hearing. I texted but did not get any answer, so one night I made a long distance call via my cellphone.

It turns out that the person I was dealing with is now gone from the agency. There was a hearing, and the cable TV company acknowledged that I had most likely been telling the truth, but they had no way to accommodate that situation. Nor could they reverse the negative credit reporting that had already occurred. They promised to stop any further bad reports, and to develop a process for future cases, but there was nothing they could do for me.

And so for the next seven years I will have derogatory information at three credit reporting firms. There is no way to clean it up and the only answer is to ignore all of it and live my life here where no one is looking at those scores.

And there you have it. It doesn't matter if you are in the USA or the Philippines, there are systems that are simply fucked up. It's not that one place is better and one worse. It is just how this world is.

On the ride home from Socoteco, Si2x tells me I need a massage. She is so right! I am tense and uptight.

As a general rule, never refuse a massage when one is offered. I am sure there are times when that advice is not appropriate, but there can't be too many times when it is.

Si2x's massages are always wonderful, and so today, as I am feeling particularly in need of coming to peace with the world, the concept of a massage as opposed to a drink makes all the sense in the world.

As an added benefit, it turns out that it will be a four-handed affair with Jing2x making it a team effort. Two students of massage who learned the skill from their own mothers.

They have me strip down and they strip down themselves. Towels are laid across the bed and I am belly down on them. No modesty towel is required as I am oiled up.

They start, one on my legs and one on my shoulders. It is a long, slow process. There are no additional patrons waiting in an anteroom, there is no financial inducement to finish early or exactly on time. Every muscle, every joint on my body is individually worked. Even the joints in my toes get individual attention. And that is even before they roll me over and start on the front of me.

A good massage is not like a soothing back rub. It can hurt a bit. Your body is stretched and moved in stressful positions. But the end result is far more effective than any gentle treatment. Depending on how it is done, different outcomes result. You can be put to sleep. A limb that was chronically cold will now be warm. Or you can become incredibly horny.

That last result is something I had experienced twice before, but I am not thinking about it as this massage starts and continues.

I may not be thinking about it, but that evidently is the plan for the day, because I typically don't get erect with these massages, as there are those stressful body positions and a modicum of discomfort in the process. But today, I am hard and horny. I know they can see it. I also know they are not paying attention to it.

I am getting hornier and hornier as the minutes roll so slowly by. I have been quiet about it, so far, but there is a limit to what I can take.

Seemingly moments before I am about to tell them to stop this sexual torture, Jing2x lowers her cunt on my member, bathing it in her hot, wet canal as Si2x starts tongue wrestling with me.

I would like to tell you this was the beginning of a long and languorous session of lovemaking, but that would be a lie. In no more than five minutes, I am cumming inside Jing2x and promptly fall fast asleep.

Tension? What tension!? I feel fine.

The days that follow are ones of inactivity. We await more contact from Socoteco. A basic plan for the fence, without the conduit mechanicals showing, is approved by the city. We have our first building permit. But until there is electric service we can't start.

Then, close to Christmas, we are told, by Rena, Socoteco has been waiting for us! No one bothers to tell us, of course. Are we supposed to read minds?

We are told we have to have a structure up with a breaker and wire all the way to a temporary pole at the lot line before they will move a hair for us.... Fuckers! That could have been done long ago if anyone had mentioned it.

By now, most of my girls are heavy in their pregnancies. They are mostly five or six months into their terms. It's a sight to see!

There are serious discussions about schooling. There are also far fewer girls I am bedding these days! Not that I am complaining. Lexi isn't quite there yet, but four are still good to go and happy to have more of my attentions.

As to demands on my time, all of a sudden I have gone from little activity, to a great deal.

We are busy with home schooling issues and figuring out what to do about college, while at the lot I am moving a Bahay Kubo⁴⁵ there and hiring an electrician to get me wired to a small, ten foot steel temporary electric pole designed to take a meter.

Plus, hey, it's Christmas time and there are parties and visitations with Li2x's, Dido's and May's families.

I have also received two cryptic messages passed to me from Si2x's and Jing2x's moms. They want to visit.

I have been meeting with my civil engineer, Gilbert Mendio. We have been firming up the plans for the main house, and that has also allowed us to extend the conduit runs subsurface because we know now where the main house utility room will be.

The drawings are not ready for city permitting, but I don't need them to be yet.

I get the hut on the property and it is wired up, but now nothing can be done until after New Year's.

Jing2x and Si2x decide to go visit their mothers for a day as I have not agreed to have them come here. I know I have put these girls in a bind, but I also know how, once the mothers move out of their angle of repose, they will come tumbling down towards me.

Having Si2x and Jing2x gone makes Dido and Reina supremely happy, as they get unimpeded access to me for a couple of days.

I remember one of the girls telling me that she thought Dido swung both ways or possibly was more a lesbian than not. I have no idea. She has always been good with me and I have every reason to believe she gets off good and hard when we make love. Still, might there be more to learn?

I ask both to join me tonight. Reina seems ok with it and doesn't display anything but welcome acceptance of the invite. Dido is not

⁴⁵ A native hut of bamboo with a thatched roof.

pushing back but is a little surprised, possibly. I have only been with her one-on-one. She has never been in bed with me and a girl.

Though Dido has been with me longer, Reina being two years older may make her a little more astute, plus Reina may also be of the mind that Dido might like girls.

There is no school tomorrow, and so we have all the time in the world tonight. I decide to start early, anyway, and we are all three in my bedroom by eight PM.

Do I have a special girl, of these ten? No. But that is not to say I don't care for them. I do. In a way, each of them is special and tonight, as I am with these two, I am more than happy they are here.

As soon as they come in, both get real kisses from me and tight hugs. We joke around a little bit. Dido, who says she is sorry for not being pregnant, gets reminded that it means more bedtime with me. That gets her giggling a bit and, as she is giggling, I start undressing her. She is OK with that, even when I ask Reina to help me undress her.

Once Dido is totally sans clothes, I turn to Reina, while saying, *Dido, help me make fast work of undressing Reina!*

And Dido does hop to it. We have Reina naked in short order. Before I say another word, Reina tells Dido to help with me.

I move us over to the bed and, after kissing each again, suggest we make a love circle. Reina simply doesn't know what I mean but she is not tipping her hand. Dido does ask and, after kissing her again, I tell her, *Sweetheart, you suck on my cock, Reina will suck on your pussy and I will do Reina's pussy by mouth. See, it's a circle.*

Reina, still not showing any surprise, gets on the bed, making room for both of us, and I get right on as well. I haven't asked Dido or Reina if either is OK with it, and 'it' is happening. So, whether they really want to, or just don't want to rock the boat, both play along.

Dido does know how to give me head and she is doing just fine. Reina starts eating out Dido and is given plenty of access. Dido is not denying Reina anything. I am having fun with Reina's cunt, but it is just playtime. After a bit I call, *OK, reverse positions!* Will Dido go after Reina's cunt, or will she shy away?

Dido goes right after Reina's pussy. She is not being shy about it. Reina, who is ostensibly giving me head, pulls her head back and just moans. I pull off Dido's cunt and tell Reina to get into a sixty-nine with Dido, which she does.

They are going after each other for the better part of fifteen minutes when I pull them apart and tell Dido, *Kiss her and play with her breasts while I fuck her.* I get firm eyebrows.

I take Reina in missionary position, with her legs gathered up in my arms, as I fuck the girl. Dido has Reina's lips, as the two start swapping spit. I swear Dido is manic in how she is kissing Reina. Reina's hands are now on the back of Dido's head and Dido's hands are around Reina's. I am just the vibrator below.

But though that might be my only role, I am a vibrator that can cum and I do just that. Reina has cum running out of her cunt. I pull Dido off Reina's lips and tell her to suck my cum out of the girl's cunt. I don't have to ask twice.

Reina, who has already cum a couple of times, cums hard on Dido's tongue and mouth.

Dido's face may be a mess, but she is one happy girl.

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Dido, do you really want to be with me, or would you prefer to be with only girls?

No! I am yours! Only!

It's OK, Dido. You are always safe and you will always live here for as long as you want. I am talking about sexual love. Do you prefer girls?

No!

But is it OK if we have girls when you are with me?

Yes, that OK. Craig, I am yours, truly.

I know, in your heart, you will always be mine. I do not doubt that, my love. I am just asking about the sex.

Craig, no! I love you, so sex is with you.

OK, OK. I understand.

Good. I not like it when you scare me.

Yes, OK.

There is no way she can separate sex from love, and love is to me, if for no other reason than I am the anchor for her world and there is no viable replacement anchor. So how she catalogues her desires is a mystery to me. I know females turn her on. I have seen it. But what she and I do with that is unresolved, at least for now.

I have the two girls with me a second night in a row, and this time I don't do anything more than kiss Dido. I spend my time fucking Reina while Dido is also doing Reina.

I have Reina on her knees and am fucking her dog style. Dido has access to Reina in all sorts of ways. She takes advantage of that. Reina gets her tits sucked and mauled, her clit attacked while I am

inside her. Reina is presented with Dido's cunt as Dido is under the girl doing some playtime with Reina's clit.

Once again my cum ends up inside Reina and, once again, Dido sucks Reina good and long, bringing forth orgasms. If Reina is a happy and wiped-out kid, Dido is thrilled too. And yet, if you ask Dido, she is mine.

When Si2x and Jing2x return, there is a pall over their countenances. One at a time, I pull them aside. Did they have fights with their mothers? Are they upset with me over my refusal to allow the women to come here? Are they simply sad to have to leave them again?

The answer in both cases is the same and none of the above. I start with Si2x.

Sweetheart, are you sad you had to leave your mother again?

Why you say that?

Well, you are sad. That much is clear.

It show?

Yes.

Oh, I not know.

But you know you are sad, right?

Yes, Craig, I know.

Is it something I have done, or can fix?

Si2x shakes her head and laughs at the same time. *There nothing anyone can do.*

What do you mean?

Remember what Reina say about her mother and the rice?

She said if I gave her mother rice the woman would die. Is your mother dying because of the rice?

No, silly. It not that.

Then I am confused. Why did you mention Reina?

She say the rice not change who she is. It just make her more able to do what she want.

OK, and how does that relate to you and your sadness?

Craig, I think if my mother have rice that the prostitution will end. She will not need the extra money.

And?

It not end. Maybe it even worse. She not work at the spa as much now.

I see. Do you want me to stop the rice?

I not know, maybe no. If this what she want now, I guess it what she want. She not dying, so no, we keep giving it, I think.

Have you learned anything?

You mean that doing good can make things bad, or maybe just not better?

Yes. That is what I mean.

Yes, just like with Reina.

Do you understand why I don't want your mother coming here?

Yes, it would be bad. The more you help the worse it will be and bad for us too, I think.

So, are you OK with me?

Oh! Why you ask that? If you not be you, then maybe I become like my mother. I am lucky. We all very lucky, I think. Craig, hold me, please.

I do hold her. Then we kiss, and hold, and kiss, and then...

As I slide into her cunt, Si2x is crying, but the tears are of relief, not bad stuff. The rhythm is slow, steady and slow, as we nibble on each other, taste each other's lips, gently touch the other's face... I gently cup her breasts and roll a nipple between two fingers. Her fingers are in my hair, grabbing on as if it were a handle she best never lose.

She whispers my name, over and over as if it were a magical incantation to ward off evil spirits.

The point is not to make babies, but rather to never lose hold of the other, to remain connected now and forever, to be sealed. She refuses to ramp the passion too high. She does not want an end to this. I am not pushing for an end, as we continue on through the night.

But end it must, and there comes a time when planning simply cannot dampen the passion any further. Cum leaves me and enters Si2x. ... And then we sleep, exhausted and happy with each other.

The next day I am with Jing2x and it is the same story once again. I am incredibly sad for them and for the logic that told me that this might well be the result of our actions.

And like last night, Jing2x and I fall into each other's arms, seeking those things that we all seem to want and need: safety, security and love. Two of those things simply boil down to economic realities and the third, is it not often a perceived result of finding the first two?

I am no more or less than any man biologically. No better or worse than many Filipino men. So if economics is not at play, how do you explain all that I have here with me under this roof?

Jing2x's legs have spread wide for me. She doesn't have to swallow her pride to do so. She is happy to be fucked by the man who takes care of her.

My cum on her thighs is a badge of pride for her. She is mine and there really isn't any gap between saying that and noting there are

nine others here who feel the same way. Might there be in the future? Sure, but not now.

How it all plays out I can't tell. I am not a soothsayer. But for now and what I can see down the road, I don't think we will see any of them leaving, at least not soon.

A week before Christmas, we are able to get DSL Internet and a landline telephone in the house. We also finally get my container from Boston.

With the help of some young men that May's dad is able to round up, we move a bunch of stuff that was already in the house and pile it all up in a couple of rooms on the second floor.

In place of that, my stuff is now surrounding us, much to the delight of the girls and to my relief. My stuff includes my computer stuff, which is here with perfect timing for the Internet connection.

And the pasta maker is here, along with all my other kitchen equipment. If I can find the time, I might make use of it.

Up until now, I have been pretty much unable to see what is happening in the rest of the world and what was happening with my investments.

I am not surprised that the Apple stock hasn't moved. That clearly was a bad investment! But the Cisco stock has really taken off.

As I look at it right now, it has almost doubled in value since I got back here!

I can't touch a stick for another fifteen months but, unless the bottom falls out, I will have a windfall in March of 2005. The Cisco stock has split so many times since I bought it that each share I purchased now represents thirty-six shares.

Each share right now is worth over nineteen dollars. So that one share I purchased for under a buck in 1995, due to all the splits, is now worth seven hundred two dollars. And since I had purchased

ten thousand shares back then, my investment in Cisco today is worth over seven million dollars.

That gets me thinking. I have a nice chunk of cash in the bank here, but I was concerned with long term issues, and being cautious on the size of the house we are going to build. It now occurs to me that I don't need to be that cautious. I can build what I want and the investment will be there to make life good for all the years to come.

I text Gilbert.

Find I have more cash for the house and outbuildings. Need to do some expanding.

Yes, Sir Craig, happy to hear that. We can meet after New Year's.

The girls are way excited to learn about the Internet. There is this new social media site called MySpace. I check it out and then introduce the girls to it. The girls tell me that their friends are on Friendster. They get accounts on that one.

My interests are more on the financial side, though I do find I am able to get back into my email account, which is a pleasant surprise. Once there, I find six months of crap emails I have to sort through, but I do get it cleaned up.

Doing nothing but catching up via the Internet and unpacking boxes upon boxes of my stuff consumes the rest of 2003. And we welcome the New Year in a way I had not expected.

I have seen some fireworks for the New Year in the past but, unless you live in the right place in the USA, you aren't going to see any fireworks this time of year at all. We do our big displays for the Fourth of July. Not so in the Philippines.

There actually was a fair amount of fireworks here on Christmas Eve, but New Year's Eve is a whole different level of crazy when it comes to the thing.

Fireworks, the big types, are not cheap; even here you can drop a fair bit of cash, over what amounts to one hundred bucks, on good size displays that might have 45 real rockets in a box that go off one after another. There are even larger displays and, if you want more than thirty seconds of excitement, you might be dropping one thousand dollars or more.

These are mostly very poor people. So who, in God's name, are these people who are living in every sector of the city and for over forty-five minutes shooting off rockets, of the real big-deal type? This is fireworks in the round. I don't care what direction you look, there are huge displays going off.

These rocket displays are commercial size in nature. I am stunned. The girls tell me that this is normal.

The girls... all are fine. The pregnancies, which all of them really wanted, change the dynamics of the house. I love them and they love me, but it is different.

We are a large, happy family, with caring and good humor, but the dynamics are different. They are nesting. I don't know how else to say it, but a woman who is nesting is different. Maybe when I have more time with them I can explain it better.

I am continuing to share my bed with just four girls, but with the new understanding about Dido, I never have her alone and am rarely inside her. Nevertheless, she is in my bed just about every night. It doesn't matter which of the three I am with, Dido is there too unless she is having her period.

And so, in a way, I am both down to three girls and I have a constant consort, Dido. She feels like she has been elevated to a new and quite important status.

Five days after New Year's, Rena tells me there is more paperwork for me at Socoteco. And so, with Si2x in tow, I journey down there, once again totally flummoxed about who to see and what it is about.

They present me with the specs on the transformer I need to purchase and who to contact at Socoteco once it is purchased, plus an invoice I need to pay, for five poles and wire.

The cost of all five poles and all the wire comes to forty-seven thousand pesos, or a tiny bit more than one thousand dollars. I can't believe my eyes. This is incredibly inexpensive.

Si2x and I run to the bank, pull the cash out and return less than two hours later. We pay the invoice and receive a pile of receipts and official documents in return.

The next step of this dance requires a trip to the place where we purchase the transformer. The location of the company was provided to me. I have no doubt that it is a sweetheart deal, probably with someone high up at Socoteco. Anyway, the fifty kVA transformer sets me back only fifty-two thousand pesos. Another run to the bank and back to the vendor that same day seals the deal. I text the Socoteco party that the unit is ready for pickup.

I get a text back saying.

Sir, this is very fast. You surprise us. We not expect this. You want it done right away?

Yes, please.

Now the question is, how fast is right away?

Just when you are ready to be disappointed, you get a very pleasant surprise. Two mornings later, I am out at the lot and one pole is already up. In the next two days there are five fully erect poles.

It takes a week to see the wire strung. I guess that is a different work crew. The transformer is not in place yet.

I get another call from Socoteco, I need to come down and put a deposit down on 'my' meter. I ask about how much and, while it's not free, I have the cash in pocket. In a couple of hours, that is done.

The next day the transformer is hung. We don't have service yet, but I suspect it is time to get the well started.

I assume that, even though I have the name of a good driller, it will take some time before he is ready and, to the extent that he is on another job right now, I am not wrong. But we do meet and I get the skinny on what I need to purchase, and where I can look for the items.

The well is not expected to be too deep. All I need is a one horsepower motor on a submersible pump, the parts for a control box, and four inch pipe that will become my well casing. We talk about the strength of the pipe. They are using the North American specification standards and the driller wants Schedule 40 steel pipe. He figures we will need only six lengths, based on the location of the lot. He will be ready in two weeks.

I find most of the parts. The pipe causes me some confusion. I have found Schedule 40 four inch pipe, sure enough, and I think, great! And so I ask, *How much is it?*

Sir, do you that Heavy Duty or Light Weight?

I want Schedule 40.

Yes, will that be Heavy Duty or Light Weight?

OK, so I know something is horribly wrong. *What are the wall thicknesses of each?*

Sir?

I either need both the ID and the OD of the pipe or the wall thickness.

We not know.

Well I don't know the answer to your question until I know the measurement of both the Heavy Duty and the Light Weight pipe.

Sir, we can ask the bodega⁴⁶ and see if they can measure it for you.

Good. When will you have the answer?

We not know.

Can you text me the results?

Yes, Sir, we can do that.

The next day I get the measurements. I check the North American (US) Nominal Pipe Size [schedule table online](#). The Heavy Duty is the real Schedule 40. The Light Weight is Schedule 30. And one is twice the price of the other. They claim the steel pipe comes from China with both labeled as Schedule 40, one as Heavy and the other as Light. If your head didn't just have a minor explosion, all I can say is, mine did. And then I order the Heavy Duty.

I am damned lucky the Internet connection is up and I have a computer here now.

While I put my order in, I delay the delivery until the driller is ready.

So far we still don't have the electric service turned on. I am wondering if I asked for the driller too soon.

Each day I wait for electric service, and so far nothing. The transformer has been here for two weeks. The driller now says he will be on site in seven days.

Things are getting too tight. I may be trying to get things done on too narrow a margin, which is not allowing for mishaps. I need to remember that this is the land of 'wait a while.'

Still, the day before the driller shows up, the electric is installed. We have power.

All along I have been calling this man the driller. That's what he calls himself. But that is not what he is. He is a pounder. He isn't

⁴⁶ This is not what you think! In Tagalog it refers to a warehouse.

going to drill the well. He is going to pound the casing into the ground and, using trucked in water, or water from a close neighbor, wash the dirt out from the inside.

And there is no large truck. He has a small diesel engine connected to a device shaped like a smooth drum to wrap rope around so as to lift a heavy steel weight and drop it on the top of the pipe. I wish I had a picture to show you how it is all done, but I am having visions of Mad Max and the Thunderdome right now.

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We have water and electric. What else could we possibly need? It isn't February yet and the work has begun with the excavation and the fence.

I am working with Gilbert on the new, far larger, main house. I figure, considering the size of the family, I really need more bedrooms, and everything else needs to be larger too. Plus an expanded roofed-over area for vehicles.

I am noodling around with what I will do with the rest of the lot and how I will care for the grounds. And, with the knowledge that I actually need folks out there all night, starting now.

Once again, I find that I have had a blind spot, putting off something I should have already resolved.

It is frustrating, as I need an answer yesterday and I don't have a clue. I am deep in self-recriminations when I get a tap on my shoulder.

May, my sweet fourteen-year-old heavy with child, is seeking some attention. Looking up at a face fuller than when she was not pregnant, but no less lovely, I can't help but smile. I may be having problems, but not now, not at this moment as I look at her.

Yes?

Mother is outside. Will you speak with her please?

OK, but ask her to come in and get us both something to drink.

She may be pregnant. She is not disabled.

Three minutes later, May's mom, Gladies, is sitting down by me with a coke in her hand. May has provided me some rum over ice.

Good evening, Sir Craig.

Good evening, Gladies. What is on your mind?

I think you have a problem and I can fix it.

I have to smile. I have no idea what she is selling, but that is a classic sales tactic the world over. I have no idea what problem she is going to announce I have, but this will at least be entertaining! This type of thing is really no different from TV commercials in the US by drug companies who seem to invent new illnesses and then convince you that you should see your doctor to see if x medicine is right for you!

And what is my problem?

You need someone out on your lot all night and all day. If you don't have that, everything will go missing!

Goddamn.

You are right. I am aware of the problem. How do you propose to fix this?

Me and Shara, we can do this.

Shara is Dido's mother. I know the gals talk to each other and to my girls. So, in a way, I guess I shouldn't be surprised that they came up with this. They have been looking for a way into my world for a while.

How?

If you hire security guard for eight hours a day you pay six thousand pesos a month. But you need more than that! You need all day and all night. So you pay us the same, each. When I am out there, Shara will watch my girl, Lanie, my boy, Sherwin, stay with me. When Shara there, I watch her girls. Her boy stay with her. We swap back forth one day there, one day back. With that money and your rice, we not need other work.

A guard has a gun. Do you?

You buy one. We will share it.

That's not legal.

It done. Easy. You need one anyway. Truly.

Well, I have no idea how to get one and I don't want to be deported.

We get it for you. No one know it yours. Promise.

Do you know how to shoot?

She laughs. Pull the trigger!

There is a bit more to it. There is a safety and you need to load it and cock it.

You will teach us! It OK.

The construction will take more than a year. Are you sure?

Sir Craig, I ask my daughter, if she tell me some you not want her to tell, it my fault not hers, please.

OK. I am not sure I have any secrets here, but OK.

Sir, this will take you two maybe three years.

And you want to spend every other day for two to three years in a bahay kubo?

Sir, it true you building other building for gardeners?

Maybe. I have been thinking about it.

So, you build those and we can stay in them. You want gardeners. We can do that. You pay us for that, we do a good job and you will be sure no one steal or take advantage of you. Because you are the father of our grandchildren!

And there is a great deal of truth in this. In fact, I can't find any error at all, except maybe one.

OK, I have just one question. How do I fire the grandmother of my child if the work isn't any good?

The gal smiles. Sir Craig, you love my daughter? You respect her responsible behavior. Where you think she learn that from? There will be no problem.

Just so I am clear, until the outbuildings are built you will be staying in the bahay kubo. And after that in an outbuilding, not the main house?

Yes.

And you are not trying to get me to bed Lanie?

You want her?

No! Gladies, no! Even if she was older than ten, no! I want to make sure you are not asking me to add anyone to my life in that way.

OK, then, no.

When can you start?

Tonight.

Really?

Yes. Lanie is already with Shara and my boy is here.

OK, you will need a cash advance, a pot for rice, a bag of rice, and some cups for water. The water is running, but there may be a bit of sand still coming up and you have to turn on the pump each time you want water. It comes out of the hose very fast. There is an electric light in the babay kubo. Are you really sure?

Yes! Yes! I will be near my grandchild! God bless you, Sir Craig. Truly, God bless!

God bless? It is a weird thing, isn't it? I have her barely teenage daughter well and truly knocked-up and she is blessing me because I am allowing her to stay in a place currently unprotected by fences on an isolated piece of land, without a toilet, every other day for a year or more. Regardless of whether God would actually bless me, why she wants that to happen just sort of boggles the mind ... until I consider it as a long term investment.

All investments are risky by their very nature. Consider my investment in Apple. There was a brief moment about three years ago when it actually looked like it was going to pay off, but that was right at the end of the tech bubble and right then they did a two for one split. And now? Well, two shares together aren't worth much more than the one share before. I would have done better just having my money in a savings account at the neighborhood bank.

Gladies is offering to invest her time and her future, her life, in taking care of me and my property, in the hope of securing a permanent position that will provide her with food, shelter and security for the balance of her life, as well as give her immediate access to her progeny.

I have been in her world for almost an entire year and, as far as she is concerned, I have not made any missteps. She is banking on the hope that her read of me is accurate.

As investments go, it's not a dumb move.

So, both you and Shara have your own places plus, you go to the lot every other day?

We think maybe we share one place. Better that way. Easier for the girls.

I give Gladies two thousand pesos as an advance and ask May to assist in providing utensils, cups, plates, two pots, a water jug and some rice. Once done, May is to put it all in the van. I will drive Gladies out to the site and show her how to turn on the pump.

We already have a basic latrine set up, and I will see to it tomorrow that we add some extra privacy to the structure.

As we drive out, I ask Gladies, *How much does a handgun cost?*

She laughs and says she is not sure but will text Shara. Maybe Shara will find one and tell me.

The law in the Philippines prohibits non-Filipinos from owning a firearm and it is a serious crime to be caught with one. To get one legally a Filipino must apply for a permit.

The simple truth is that there are many illegal firearms in this country. The murder rate of people being gunned down proves it, that is, unless you assume that every murder is carried out by a licensed individual, and I am not buying that nonsense.

We get Gladies set up and return home, one huge hole in my plan filled in a way that had not occurred to me. I am very much aware

that this may be a very big mistake. I have been resisting adopting these families. I have just done what I said I would not do.

As the work on the lot progresses, I come to realize that I need to be there every day the entire time the workmen are there. I had hired a man to put in the conduit and the fence for a set fee, called a modified pakyaw⁴⁷ price. I am to purchase the materials. His pakyaw covers labor costs only.

As we proceed, it becomes clear that, while the foreman of the job is trying to be accommodating, and he really is, I can see the tension in his estimation of profit and the reality as I make changes. Clearly, the pakyaw is not working for him. He wants a second pakyaw to do work on the house. I assume he will build in a far larger margin this next time.

Once the fence is done, I decide I will pay a daily labor rate only and essentially become a true general contractor, as I will need more than masons and carpenters as we go forward. No more pakyaw work.

But my presence at the lot has other impacts. Impacts on my life with the girls. As I am out of the house six days a week (the only day off here is Sunday) I see my girls very little. Add that to their nesting behaviors and, while I lie down with three of them plus Dido on any given night, even on Sundays, when I am home, I do not spend much time with them.

They are not separating from me as much as they are becoming mothers. And, as January becomes February, Reina and Si2x have now announced their own pregnancies. They will still come to my bed for a few months, but I know how it will play out as they get further on in their terms.

⁴⁷ My Filipino to English dictionary says this means 'wholesale' but that is not the meaning here. It is a fixed price which included both time and materials.

My college kids are saying that school needs to wait for a while. My maids are signaling some relief in knowing when they can't do the work for a bit, someone else can.

So that's one side of it. The other side is that I am with Gladies and Shara each three days a week for ten hours a day. Plus on Saturdays, their daughters are also on the lot. I am spending more time with these two women than with my own girls. As the construction on the fence looks like it will take close to a year to complete, this is a change that am not really prepared for. Neither Shara nor Gladies is old in any real sense. Shara is twenty-nine and Gladies is thirty-one. Both are nice. But the level of familiarity is becoming an issue. It is a bit confusing. They are too young for me to consider them mothers-in-law, yet I am clearly fucking one of their daughters.

They flirt with me. What am I to do as they do that? They tease me that, as all my girls become pregnant, what ever will I do? Oh, geez.

I talk with Gilbert about getting the outbuilding done earlier, but he pushes back; it will cause problems as we will be less able to accommodate changes in the main building. We need to concentrate on that first.

But I don't want these gals having to hang out in a bahay kubo that isn't theirs, as I am in it every day, the workers hang out around it at lunch and they have no place for their personal stuff, as too many are in and out of it all day long.

By March, as it is clear that the fence itself is a major project and the house will then take two years beyond that at a minimum, I purchase two more of these huts and set them up with water hoses connected to large barrels. We dig another latrine for the gals only.

It is all temporary, but it is a maybe three year temporary compromise. I am thinking that I will not see them as much during the day. No dice. They use the huts I purchased for them as theirs, but during the day they hang out with me in the first hut.

At home, March has come to an end as has April; no one will enroll in school this coming year. There will be some home schooling for

the three high schoolers. Plus, there are now five new babies at home. I may be the proud papa, but the mothers are, well, they are being mothers, and not mates.

Lexi, who I had hoped would return more fully to my side, is too involved with this cabal of mothers.

Dido, who isn't even pregnant, seems to have been sucked into this so much that I am mostly with Jing2x at night and no one else. While I love Jing2x, how long before she becomes pregnant and I lose her?

I can only hope that this will settle down a bit, but for now, I feel very much on the outside in my own home.

May comes and goes. The fence is barely half done. There is no change in how life is at home. The babies are demanding a great amount of time and the mothers are being mothers. I think Jing2x is pregnant, though she hasn't said anything. But she hasn't needed to take time away from my bed since March. So, based on that, she is two to three months along now.

Sundays now see Lanie, and Dido's sisters, Mica and Dina, here at the house, fussing over the babies. It's so much a madhouse, mothers, fawning girls and babies that, Sunday, I hang out at the lot with Gladies.

In a somewhat dour mood I make a comment that it seems like the only ones who aren't lost to me over the babies are Shara and her.

Gladies smiles and says, *Craig, we have our own na. Not need more, OK? But, our daughters, they want.*

Well, your May has hers, and I am not sure Dido can conceive. Besides, she prefers girls to men.

Ab! Truly? Dido want that?

Sorry, I should not have said that.

But it true?

Yes.

It OK. You like her anyway?

Yes.

So she staying even that true?

OK, I guess there are times that smiles come even when the mood is sour. It's economics again... she wants to make sure, for Shara's sake, that the deal still holds.

Yes, she stays. She never says no to me, Gladies. It's just that she prefers girls.

OK, I see.

I think that, by my saying what I said, she can accommodate my decision, that Dido is safe, more easily.

But Sir, before I not mean May. I know she have hers, of course.

Then who? They have either had babies or are now pregnant.

I mean Lanie, Mica and Dina.

I really do not want to even talk about such a thing. Gladies, really, they are too young and I already have too many girls.

Gladies smiles and doesn't say another word, but later, as I sit reading a book, she comes up behind and rubs my back. It is not a massage, but it is a laying on of hands, and it is something that has not happened before.

I guess I should push her way, but it feels good and I feel a little isolated, even with all my girls. I have hope that, in our new home and as the kids are older, I will have my girls back more with me. But, for now, there is this feeling of being really alone while surrounded by all these girls.

The back rub continues and I just drift. The weather is warm. The breeze is inadequate, though an oscillating fan blows the warm air

over us. It is midday and, being Sunday, we are alone on the lot. Other than the crowing of roosters in the distance, all is quiet.

I just put the book down and accept the touch that is being offered without comment. It is so nice.

I seem to have fallen asleep, because Gladies has my slacks unzipped and is removing my cock, as I gently awaken with the warm breeze still urging me to just relax and rest. What-the-fuck, I do. Might as well. It was going to happen anyway, wasn't it?

Gladies takes my cock between her lips and deep into her mouth as my member grows and grows. She is not in a hurry and, in an entirely languorous manner, she has me drifting while being hard as a rock. She is drifting up and down on my cock, me drifting in and out of dreams as it all continues.

It continues for a long, long time. And as I come out of this dream world yet again, now late in the afternoon, I find my shaft deep in Gladies' cunt. Oh, fucking hell. And I cum hard.

Construction, connection, and change...

1

Did you plan that, Gladies?

You needed it.

That is not an answer.

Yes, I answer.

Are you going to get pregnant now?

Ha! No. Period ended yesterday. No chance today.

Oh, Jesus, I hope so.

It true. If I in my fertile days, I just use my mouth. No babies from me. Promise.

I have been chewing about what transpired last Sunday all this week. These two mothers will be living with me going forward anyway, at least on the same land and in my employ. What the heck. If this is what Gladies wants, so long as there aren't any more babies, I guess, no one is being hurt.

I make it clear to her on Tuesday that nothing is to happen when the workmen are here. She seems OK with that and this Sunday she won't be there. It is Shara's Sunday out there.

A week passes and nothing at home has changed.

At the house, I decide to have a serious discussion with Lyn. I really need to get things back on track. The construction will take a long time, and the little ones will be little for a few years, too. Things can go off the rails in that type of timeline.

Sorry, we are busy, Craig, can it wait?

No, Lyn it can't. And for the record, everyone is 'always busy' these days.

But the children...

Yes, I know, Lyn. It is always... 'the children, later please.'

Oh. You angry.

I'm sure not happy, sweetheart.

She's scared now. That much I can see.

Come sit with me, away from here.

Where we go?

Let's go to the lot. It is quiet there.

She gets up and is following me out the front door as Mel and Jana ask if she has done something. She tells them to take care of whatever it is as the door closes behind her. She says nothing more as she gets on the bike with me. There is not a word on the way out to our place. When I arrive, Gladies sticks her head out of her hut and sees the two of us before retreating again.

Sitting just where I did last weekend when I fucked Gladies, I look at Lyn who is sitting near me.

Lyn, your life as a child was very difficult. More than hard. There was pain, maybe not much food at times and many other problems. You have never told me this, but I think I am right. Am I?

Yes, it true. Maybe worse.

And the same was true for the other girls. Each of them sees her life as it really was and says, 'Not my child! This not going to happen to my child.' And so, every sound each child makes, each movement of each of them is watched and anything that might even cause one of those babies to cry, is dealt with, removed, made better. 'No bad thing will happen to my baby!' you think in your heart. ... but, my dear love, my sweet Lyn, it really is possible to ruin a child if you go too far to take all challenges away from a child. ... What all of you are doing out of love, will in the end do great harm. And your lives become devoted to

undoing the pain of your early lives through a child who has not known any pain. That is something that can never be. All that will happen is that you are cutting yourself off from that very thing which gave you the freedom from that pain. You have all made serious mistakes and it has to stop.

Lyn is bawling. Between sobs, she asks, *How you know this? How? How you know my heart?*

Am I wrong?

No, no! How?

I didn't. Not for many months. But I finally came to understand. You are all good mothers, but you all need to back off. No one is going to hurt our children, so long as you don't hurt them by spoiling them. It really has to stop, Lyn, and it has to stop right now, not later, not in a while, not when it seems right. No, it has to stop right now. Immediately.

I see. Craig, it is hard.

I know it, but because you love your child you must stop the damage you are doing. I have six sons and daughters and each of them is being damaged. It has to stop. And Lyn, I expect you and the other girls back in my bed. If it is your fertile days, we will do oral sex only, but I expect you to remember our love and rebuild that connection with me.

I not forget it!

Really? When was the last time we were together? When was the last time we kissed or even held hands? When?

She starts bawling again. I just allow it to continue. She needs to take ownership of this. If I comfort her now, I stop that from happening.

You still want me?

Lyn, I am going to assume that means you know you have screwed up and deserve my unhappiness. Yes, I am unhappy. But, you are and always will be mine. I need you to remember what that means.

So, you still want me?

Yes. Are you going to fix what you have broken?

I must.

Do I need to have this talk nine more times?

No, I will talk to Jana and Lexi. Then we will talk to the others.

When?

Jana and Lexi tonight. The others tomorrow. Craig, I really sorry. What you say about my life, that very true. Very true, my love. Good that I know you know, I think. It OK that you hold me, na? Please?

I do hold her. I have really missed the touch of her against my skin. We just hold each other and rock back and forth for a good half an hour before getting back on the bike and riding to our house.

When we get back home, Lyn precedes me through the front door and calls out for Lexi and Jana. Heads appear and Lyn announces, *Follow me*, as she heads for the stairs.

I hear, *But the children...* followed by Lyn saying, *I say follow me now!* And then two girls are running to catch up.

I have possibly done all I can do. The rest may rest with Lyn now. I will just have to wait and see. But having done 'something' I feel more at peace with myself. That alone is a good thing, I think as I pick up a book and open to the page I was last on.

Tomorrow is Sunday. I think, considering all that might be occurring here, it is best I spend at least one more Sunday at the lot.

I have not seen Lyn come down. I am not sure what room they are in but I am tired and ready to stop for the evening, so I will maybe get an update from her tomorrow morning about how it went tonight. I don't want to interrupt her if they are still in the middle of it.

I enter my bedroom to find the three girls, with cheeks and eyes red from crying. I say nothing, for the simple reason that I have no idea what would be the right thing to say.

Lexi looks at me and simply says, *We were wrong, Craig. We know it. We made a big mistake.*

I say nothing, and look at Jana. She wipes her eyes and offers, *We will make the changes. Promise.*

Lyn looks on me, still unsure and worried.

Promises are one thing, but the proof is in the doing. And that is something that requires actions, as well as words. I am glad to hear what you have said tonight, but carrying this out with your children and the others, that will be hard. It has to happen.

There is really nothing more to say now, and I wish them all goodnight as I want to go to bed. Jana and Lexi both give me kisses as they leave the room, and I am expecting the same from Lyn, but Lyn wants something else.

It OK if I am with you tonight?

Yes. I'd like that.

Good. And then with a smile, *This not my fertile time.*

It really has been a while since Lyn was in my bed. She has regained her shape from after the pregnancy. That entire episode is behind her. What was behind her until tonight, was any connection with me except via our child.

She comes to me and, with lips brushing mine, her hands unbuckle my belt. My hands softly touching the sides of her head. It begins, new again, a reintroduction. We explore places remembered, but from another time. Her breasts are different now. Her hips too, maybe, a little different? Tongues touch. Breaths exchange. Skin against skin. A newness. A sense of welcome.

I enter Lyn, a first time, a new time, a time after the last time. Before she was but a girl. Now she is the mother of my child, a daughter. Now she is a young woman. A woman with responsibilities and I... I am her man. She is moving with me.

Making what is, ours. A dance. Two dancers, the music shared and steps harmonious. Partners.

She who told me... *Sir, if you have a girlfriend, you will want to stay. I sure this.*

She, below me now, is the very proof of her words. I have stayed.

The dance tempo increases. The pace hastens the climax which we know must come, as we build to it. If we are not moving to it rapidly, then we are doing so inexorably. And knowing, it must not be the last time. It must be repeated time and again, lest we lose what we have now regained.

As her perspiration-covered hips accept my sweat-covered torso one last time, cum exits me and enters Lyn. Not to make a child, but as a token of the love I have for her.

With that, we lie side by side, unwilling to move and resolute in the belief that we are truly lovers of long standing.

Sleep comes, welcome and with dignity.

Good morning, Shara.

Good morning, Sir Craig. All OK na?

I don't know. We will see.

Ah, trouble at home?

Why do you ask?

My Dido, she text me last night. She say maybe something wrong but she not know.

I see.

So, there trouble?

Shara, there are things that need to be fixed. I hope they will be.

Anyone leaving?

I hope not. I have not asked anyone to leave.

So my Dido, she safe?

Shara, they are all safe, at least I am not removing safety from anyone.

OK, good to know.

So, you like Gladies and me better now?

What do you mean?

Sir, you want a back rub, maybe?

Oh, I see. You want what Gladies wants?

Why I not?

Maybe you already have a boyfriend.

No, why you think I have?

I have no idea what your life is like.

No time for boyfriend. Just work and children. Wala na.⁴⁸

So since I am here, you think, well, he is better than nothing?

Why you say that? We love you! All, yes, all! Why you say a mean thing?

What do you mean all?

It true, all.

I am sure I will not get any more clarity. I decide to just give up trying.

You want to be my lover even though Dido is my lover? You really want to share me with your daughter?

Why not?

Well, don't you find it a little weird?

⁴⁸ Nothing else now.

Why that? How you think I have Dido and Dina and Mica?

How?

My father. He have my mother and me. Same bed. Sometime he do her, sometime he do me. It normal I think. Maybe it better. We stay together.

Is it perverted that I am getting hard as she tells me this? On one level, I can't believe it, but I suspect she is telling the simple truth. And if it is true, is this why she was pushing me to take Dina and Mica? Is it also true for Gladies? I thought she had a common-law arrangement that ended with a motorcycle accident. Is this why there are no men in the picture for these gals? No, this has to be a one-off.

For Shara... it's all about economics. If you have only one bed and only one bedroom for the whole family, this has to be the result often enough that it isn't too uncommon.

It's funny in a way. There is this ancient taboo against incest which must mean that it has been a thing, right from the very beginning. So, as families become more affluent, even in ancient times, no different than current times, and they tend to have separate sleeping arrangements, which makes actual incest less common among those folks, while remaining common among the poorer. Ergo the jokes about Ozark virgins being the ones who could outrun their brothers.

And oddly enough, it works in reverse as you climb the economic ladder. There, the need to keep the money and power in the hands of those who already have it, argued for pairing of close consanguinity.

It all boils down to economics. It always does.

Craig?

Yes?

What you thinking?

I think that, if we make love, very soon after that you will push me to take Dina and Mica.

So we will?

Will what?

Make love?

I didn't say that, Shara.

But we will?

When was your last period?

Ten days.

Ten days ago?

Yes, that what I say!

Well, then, no we will not make love.

Because you not want another baby?

Yes.

It OK. I take you by mouth. If you want, do my behind. You like that, yes? I hear you do that before but the girl she not like. I am OK for you.

Let's see what you can do with your mouth.

And that is the very last word said because Shara simply squats down between my legs, frees my member from my clothes and gets down to the task. This is not something that is new to her. If she has a gag reflex, it isn't evident.

She has me going and rock hard too darn quick for this to be the work of a novice. Have I missed something? Is there more to Shara sexual proficiency that I need to consider? Is she more like Si2x's mom?

I guess I have to break in to the good feelings, so to speak and ask what is, pun-wise, a pressing question.

Shara, how did you learn to do this?

She looks up with a big smile, and informs me, *My Nanay tell me I am hurting Tatay when I do him. She teach me. She say, better this way. No more children then.*

Are you sorry I asked? I am, sort of, I guess. Anyway, Shara returns to her mission. She is very good at this. Almost too good. I feel nothing but maybe her cheeks and her throat. Never, ever have I ever gotten head like this. But I decide to test her claim that she will take it in her ass. Why not?

I pull her up, and tell her to strip as I step out of my slacks and boxers. I have her kneeling on the bench as I finger her wet cunt and drag what moisture I find back to her rosebud. I find a fair bit of moisture, though I am sure the initial entry will be a little dry and painful for her.

I slide my dick over her labia, picking up on it what I can. She is squirming around, maybe hoping I will use that hole in spite of my earlier protestations. But I have no intentions of getting the gal pregnant. Once I have done all I can do to make the thrust as lubricated as possible, I place my member on the rosebud and using a hand, work it in.

Shara groans, winces a couple of times as the initial push is accommodated. But once all the way in, she seems OK with it. I run my fingers up her cunt as I start stroking in and out of her ass. It is certainly tight enough. And now Shara starts to flood the bench and floor below, with cunt juices, as the ass fucking continues. She is grunting now, seeming happy and meeting my strokes.

So, you are mine now Shara? Before, your father's, and now mine.

Yes! Yes!

And you will teach your children to give head like you were taught?

Yes!

And the ass fucking... you will teach your daughter?

Yes! Craig! Yes!

I am pounding her ass, and messing with her clit. This is a lesson in how economic realities modify societal norms. And that is what I am thinking as I dump cum in the woman's ass.

I am happy I moved my clothing far from the bench before we started this. If I hadn't, they would have been drenched.

Once I pull out of Shara, a bit of cum also leaks out. I suspect she will need to go to the latrine, but she doesn't. There is a cloth and she grabs it, pours some water on it, and cleans my cock up pretty thoroughly, along with some hand sanitizer, before squatting down and taking me in her mouth again. I see cum dripping from her ass onto the floor of the hut as she works my cock in her mouth, doing her damned best to resuscitate the poor soldier. Sort of CPR for the sexually disabled and, I'll be damned, she is succeeding. I am getting stiff at least.

When she has me hard enough by her lights, she pulls off and say, *Fuck me now! You won't cum!*

She's right. There is no way I am going to cum again and she clearly wants a good fucking. I mount her on the damned bench.

Did Gladies tell her that I think Dido is a lesbian? How will she react to that? Damn, why am I thinking about that as I fuck this woman? Of shit, I know! Because Dido wants to fuck the women I fuck and right now I am fucking her mother. Oh... shit! Damn I am going to cummmm....

2

That was not supposed to happen.

You angry with me?

Why would I be angry?

You put it in me. Maybe I get pregnant?

Well, let's hope you don't, but no, I am not angry with you.

That never happen with Tatay. He only cum once then wala.⁴⁹

I don't think it happens all the time with me. But something triggered it this time.

What that?

You really don't want to know.

I do. Tell me.

I'm sorry, no.

Please, Craig. What do it?

Something that should never happen.

What? What!? What do it?

Oh, why the fuck am I holding back? Am I afraid she won't want to have sex again? Hell, that might be a good thing! She doesn't want me to abandon her daughter, so no matter what I tell her won't cause her to remove Dido from the house. Is it my moral freak-out? Well, shit, I need to get over that. This is a woman whose children were sired by her own father.

⁴⁹ Nothing.

OK, I will tell you, but it needs a little explanation. Your daughter Dido likes girls more than men. She is fine with me and I love her, but she really likes sex with girls a lot. Do you understand?

This true?

Yes.

But you love her?

Yes.

You have sex with her?

I have, but mostly she has sex with the girls.

Oh! I not know.

There is no reason why you would know. And anyway, I often have Dido with me when I have sex with others. When she is with me, as I fuck the other girl, she does sexual things to the girl at the same time. She likes to be included when I am with the other girls.

And you allow this?

Yes, I allow it often.

That is nice that you are good to my daughter.

Thank you, but what caused me to cum today is my thinking about the fact that Dido likes to be with me when I am fucking another girl and you could be that other girl. And then she would be doing sex with her own mother.

Hububu! Wou, yes! Ha! Seksi!⁵⁰ You like?

What?

You want to try this?

Do you?

⁵⁰ Taglish for sexy, but the pronunciation is a bit different. (Taglish is a mashup of Tagalog and English)

Sure, why not? If you like, we do it!

I really don't think it is that simple. I am sure there is a limit where something is not OK. I don't think I want to pursue the question any further to find the actual boundary.

Craig, what she really do?

Why do you want to know?

Why you not tell me?

OK, Shara. She eats pussy, sucks on tits, kisses on lips, finger fucks in pussies and in asses. Happy now?

Wow, so she really likes girls! Wow. I really not know. That why she not pregnant?

No, it has nothing to do with that. I don't know why she never got pregnant.

Maybe she careful and what day you put it in her. I teach her about that. I teach her so she can get pregnant. Maybe she use it to not get pregnant.

Could be. ...

Craig, you hard again. Do me, you sure to not cum this time! This time it me who think about Dido!

She is right, I don't cum this time but she does, a number of times. Was she really thinking about Dido?

As I ride back to the house, my head is pretty screwed up. Besides the fact that I have nothing to offer any girl in bed tonight, I have no idea what I will find waiting for me in regard to the changes I am demanding. In any number of ways, I wish I have not had relations with Shara and, then again, it was inevitable.

Does Dido know the truth about her own parentage? Do her sisters?

My head hurts, again.

I almost don't want to walk in the door. I almost am sorry I ever spoke to Lyn that January day last year. I am really not looking forward to discovering what awaits me inside this door, as I regretfully walk through it.

There, in a line, are thirteen girls. My ten, plus Lanie, Mica and Dina. They stand there, oldest to the left, youngest to the right. One by one, each comes up to me and performs the honoring gesture called Mano. It is a sign of respect, or possibly asking for a blessing, or maybe forgiveness. It's evidently an ancient tradition that dates back way before colonial times.

No words are spoken. All is silent except for a few babes in the background seeking attention or comfort.

Once the youngest, Mica, who is only nine, finishes, Lyn speaks, seemingly for all of them.

Craig, every one of us has done wrong. Every one of us knows there must be changes made. Every one of us promises to make the changes. We know this will be hard. We know there are times we will cry at having to do it. We know you are right when you told me, we are just trying to do for our children what never was done for us. And we know that it is possible to go too far in one direction just as much as too far in the other. We are sorry.

Thank you. I am not sure there can be a better start than this. But words without actions are just words. I hope that, in your actions, each of you individually are as brave, and good as the words that have been spoken. You all know how I feel and I do not need to say any more about it. As far as the rest of the night goes tonight, I just want a peaceful supper. After that, I need to speak with Dido first. After that I want to speak with Dina for a little bit, if there is time before she needs to get back home. ... I will sleep alone tonight. ... As there is no school for my ten, maybe one or two will come out to the lot with me tomorrow. I guess that's all I have to say. Mel, when will we be eating?

It ready now.

OK, let's eat.

There is some hesitation.

What? I say to no one in particular. All move to get the supper on the table and sit down. I guess each wanted to run to her baby or assist another with a baby, but it is time to learn that not every waking moment needs to be at the service of these children.

Yes, indeed, it is going to be hard.

During dinner, eyes from girls look out around the table and, for the first time in many months, remember what life in this house was like. It will never really be the same, but what did happen was a huge mistake. A balance needs to be found. I can't do that for them. All I can do is point out that there is no balance now.

After dinner I retreat to the balcony in my bedroom. Dido has been there many times before. So this place is neither new to her nor a harbinger of trouble. She knows it is just where I like to be in the evenings.

You want to see me?

Sure do, sweetheart. Come sit by me.

At that, I find a smile on her face as she sits and we look out at the scene below us.

I spent the day with your mother and we did a fair bit of talking. Some of it about you.

I in trouble?

No, not in trouble at all. Some questions, but absolutely no trouble no matter what. ... Your mother was surprised that you were the only one not pregnant. I said that some girls, because of things inside them, just have a hard time or can't get pregnant. It wasn't important to me. You were mine no matter what.

I am glad to know that!

Your mother said she had hoped you would get pregnant and even told you about how to time your days to make sure you would be with me at the best times. That surprised me, but it is fine. But then your mother asked, do I think

you used that same knowledge to avoid getting pregnant. I told her that if you did I was OK with that. It was your choice.

So if I did that, you not angry?

Not at all. It shows you were thinking about if you were ready or would ever want your own kids. Not everyone does, and that is perfectly OK.

That really true?

Yes, and in a way, not being pregnant gives you more access to me and to all the girls. I know you like sex with them.

So, I am really not in trouble?

You are really not in trouble.

Even though you know my secret?

Yes, even though I know that secret. I won't tell anyone. Now, sweetheart, I have a question to ask. Once again, you are not in any trouble and your mother is not in any trouble. I like her.

Truly?

Yes, Dido, truly.

OK, what question?

Do you know who your father is?

Yes, do you?

Yes.

And you are not angry?

No.

Do your sisters know?

Yes.

Do you know what your mother wants me to do?

Have sex with my sisters... and...

And?

You promise to not be angry with her?

I promise.

She wants to have sex with you. But! So does Ate Gladies!

Yes, I know.

Oh, it OK?

Well, do your sisters want that, or just your mother?

My sisters, they want! It true.

What do you think I should do? Do you want me to have sex with your sisters?

Yes! Will you?

Mica is only nine, Dido. That's real young.

Oh, I see. But it OK with us, really.

OK, now Dido, you like having sex with me and the girls I have in bed with me. But you don't want that if it is your mother or your sisters, right?

Could I?

Could you what?

Be with 'Nay if you do her?

You want that?

She giggles, Wow, yes. She was with her mother when her father doing her mother and she help! She tell me. I will do the same! Same for her, same for my sisters.

Same for Gladies?

I can be with Gladies too? Wow! OK.

I am not saying that these things will happen. I just wanted to know how you felt about them.

It OK, I won't tell anyone. Please do 'Nay, please.

Sweetheart, please send Dina to me if she is still here. I will see you tomorrow.

OK. And I get a nice kiss as she leaves.

Five minutes later, Dina is escorted out onto the balcony by Dido, who then leaves the bedroom.

Thank you for sitting with me tonight for a while.

Sir, is there some trouble?

No Dina, there is no trouble at all. I only have some questions. I don't care what the answer is, so long as it is the truth. All true answers are good answers.

Yes, Sir.

Your mother, and your sister, Dido, say you want to be my girlfriend and have sex with me. Is that really true?

Yes! Can I?

[I know you English grammarians wish she had asked 'May I,' but they never do. Yes, I know about the corruption of the English language... but you will just have to get over it. Chaucer had the same worries as you have and you see how that stopped things in its tracks, right?]

Maybe, but you are only eleven. That is just too young. Even when you are old enough, I would want you to work with your mother to make sure you were not with me on days when you are more likely to have a baby. But for now, you are just too young for that.

If I do that, you will allow?

Not yet, and I will not allow at all if you do not agree to try to keep from getting pregnant.

OK, I promise to do what you want.

Dina, do you know who your father is?

Yes, Sir. I know. Did Dido or 'Nay tell you?

Yes. Do you know your mother also wants to be a sex partner with me?

She giggles. Yes, she tell us. ... Oh! If you have a baby with her and one with us... it the same!

No. Similar, but not the same. I am not the father of your mother, nor am I your father.

Ah, yes, I see. But if I have a baby with you and then you do my baby later, that the same?

Yes, that would be the same. It won't happen, but yes, that is the idea.

Too bad it not happen. I think it a family tradition!

Good God, I sure hope it isn't in her family! One generation of it does not make for a tradition.

That is all, Dina. Thank you for sitting with me.

You are welcome, Sir. I hope you make me yours. I pray for it each night.

I see. I am humbled by the knowledge, Dina. Good night.

Good night, Sir.

It just gets crazier and crazier.

*Monday morning, Lyn and Lexi ride out to the lot about an hour after I get there. Yes, there are still motherly duties to perform, but there needs to be a balance. We are sitting in the 'command hut,' the bahay kubo I use when out here and, as Lyn surveys the doings this morning she comments, *You need more workers.**

I can't hire any. It's a pakyaw job.

OK, you can't, but the guy who has the pakyaw with you can. He needs to speed things up.

I tried to suggest it and he's not interested.

Let me try.

Go ahead.

Lyn walks across the lot to have her conversation. Even if the conversation was occurring right next to me, I wouldn't have a clue as to what is being said. There is no benefit to staring at the two figures. Lyn will return here when done and tell me that she got no further than I did.

Instead I turn to Lexi.

I made a huge mistake when I made that walk past Lagao National High School. I am sorry.

What? We love those girls? Why you say that?

Because, now I really must add their mothers and their siblings.

Sisters?

You mean on the lot in the outbuildings to be the gardeners?

I mean to my bed.

Why?

Lexi, who have I been with six days a week and ten hours a day for six months?

Oh.

How many hours have I really been with you or any one of the others in the house during these same six months?

Yes, I see. But you not with Dina, Lanie, or Mica?

I have not.

But Gladies and Shara?

Yes.

They pregnant?

No, or at least I really hope not.

They still to be in the outbuildings?

Yes, because of the boys. Best they be in separate homes.

Before you say the girls too young. These three, they younger.

Yes, and I do think they are too young. Even the oldest of those girls, Dina, is two years younger than Dido when I took her. I am not ready to accept her, not yet.

You would have taken my mother if she was not evil?

Yes, I think I would have.

And Si2x, her mother if not a prostitute?

Hard to say, because I have been trying to keep the mothers all away, but maybe. Still, you know the whole reason Gladies and Shara even met me is because I was hoping they would tell their girls that the kids were too young. Otherwise, they would not have been to the house, over and over again. See? I made a huge mistake.

Maybe. Maybe it is the way God wants it. Right?

I thought you hated the Church.

Yes the Church. That evil. Not God! It not the same. Craig, did you tell Lyn about Gladies and Shara. She not tell us.

No. You are the first I have told.

Lexi just looks out across the field, lifts an eyebrow to some unknown person and says in a very quiet voice, as if only to herself, *I will explain to the family. We really make problems.* And then she says nothing more.

A good ten minutes later, Lyn is back with us. She hasn't said a word. I am not asking. There is no reason to make her admit defeat. I knew she would get nowhere with the guy.

As lunch approaches, the girls ride back to the house. I have my sack lunch with me and have every intention of settling down to a

bite of it when I see Gladies waving from her hut. She wants me to come over. I grab my sack and walk in her direction.

Magandang tanghali⁵¹, Craig.

Magandang tanghali to you, Gladies.

You bring protection today?

What?

Lyn, she come with you again. She was with you Saturday night, di ba⁵²?

Yes, she was with me, but not for protection. She and the others need to understand how things have changed. I started with Lyn that night because, in many ways, she is the leader. ... Today is the result of that change, in part. But I am, this week, letting all know that you and Shara are added to my life. That is what you want, correct?

You doing that?

Yes.

Praise be! Thank God for this, I am sure.

Oh, Father Dan, are you hearing this? Is this the same God that you know? They think the God they thank is the same one you thank and praise. Is it?

So now we your girls?

Yes. You are my girl, Gladies, just like May is my girl.

And Lanie?

Gladies, she is only ten. Too young.

Ha, you say that about my May. You wrong then.

How young is too young?

⁵¹ Good noon, or good midday.

⁵² Is it not so?

Why you ask that?

Well, if eleven is not too young, what is too young?

I not know. If a girl, she wants, it not too young!

So you are saying Lanie wants?

Tama.⁵³ Just like me. I want.

And with that, Gladies tugs at my slacks, pulls them down and then pulls up her long skirt to reveal no panties. There is a big smile on her face.

As the workmen eat their cups of rice with scant toppings under the shade of a tarp here on the lot, my cock plunges into a feast inside Gladies' hut.

And then I do the math. This will be a fertile day.

I pull out much to Gladies displeasure. But I am having none of it.

Damnit, Gladies, I don't want you pregnant!

I see her doing the math inside her head and when she comes back with the number I did, the fight goes out of her. *Do me like you do Shara.*

I think she means in the ass.

Are you sure? Have you done this before?

Do it!

The very first time I ever took a girl in the ass, ever in my life, was an evil thing in anger with an evil woman. Now, in quick succession and for a very different reason, it is at the requests of the women. It is taking some mental recalibration.

But I am now deep in Gladies' ass and she is far from complaining. I am not sure how long I should keep this up before I do some real

⁵³ Right or correct.

injury to the woman. I just don't know enough about it to make an educated decision. Instead, I think of Dido eating her cunt as I fuck her ass, and that does it. I push cum where it really ought not to be. And... I even have time for lunch!

3

I think I will have recuperated by this evening.

At one-thirty, Lyn and Lexi are back at the lot. Lyn sits down right next to me and just sort of hangs on to me, sheltering under my arm. Lexi's face displays a firmness, possibly indicating in one manner what Lyn is indicating in another, that the news about the adding of Shara and Gladies has been shared.

By two-thirty I am getting texts from Jana, from Si2x, from Reina, all apologizing for what has happened and telling me I did the right thing with Gladies and Shara. At three, I get a text from May.

Thank you, Craig. We are really happy now.

A little after that, one comes in from Dido.

Ate Gladies tell 'Nay and I hear from Lexi the same. This day I always remember. Always. Thank you, very, very much.

Lyn and Lexi leave the lot at four-thirty.

Just before I leave, an hour later, I get a text from a number that is not in my contacts list.

Sir, this Dina. I hear from mother that we accepted. I promise I do what you want. When will this happen. I want soon.

Dina, I am not sure when. But I am glad I have your number now. Still, I told you last night, not yet!

Sir, I can home study just like Dido. No problem with that.

That may be an interesting thing to consider when your new home is built here. But not as an excuse to have sex sooner.

It could be before we move, Sir. For both Mica and me. We could spend more times with our nephew.

OK, I will think about the schooling. But no sex for now.

OK, Sir. Thank you for considering it.

I had ten. What madness, to have ten girls is beyond crazy. I am now adding how many, potentially? Granted, not all at once. The kids are way too young but, eventually, unless I can figure out an off-ramp, I am adding five more!

Fifteen. Fifteen women and girls. Is it incest if there is no marriage, and no consanguinity? It sure seems like it ought to be to me. But I sure am no expert on this.

Fifteen. It makes no sense. Yes, I know that, by age thirty, a woman here has to have found the answer to her economic future or she is screwed. Gladies is thirty-one and Shara is twenty-nine. That's close enough for both. I know there is no man in Gladies' life now, and Shara?... her man was her father. Even her little boy is his, and then the guy died of diabetes.

OK, I can understand why there might be twelve, right? But fifteen? To get that adds kids currently aged eleven, ten and nine. OK, yes, not this year, but in the years to come, and the time it may take before the house is complete? There might well be fifteen when all the construction is done!

Might the young ones change their minds? I hope so. Oh, Father Dan, I truly pray that it is so. But, my beliefs, my values, are not the values in operation here.

My values are from a culture and a place that has no currency here. Here, a land where rice is life, and where if a girl can bleed, she can breed, the rules of how life works are different.

I ride home confused once again. As much as I told myself to let go of those guideposts of right and wrong, which I grew up with, it is proving so damned hard to do so.

And here's another lesson about economics. As we grow up, our world and culture are shaped by the economics of our existence while growing up. Those values stay with us throughout our lives, even when our status in life or where we live radically changes.

Folks who grow up middle class are statistically more likely to become 'homeless' than poor folks who have always had to find a way to scrape by when they face severe economic challenges.

That's also why we have the derisive term 'nouveau riche.' People who aren't accustomed to great wealth tend to behave foolishly when they get it.

And that is why the truly rich, when they find themselves financially ruined (in their minds, though not in the minds of others) may jump out of windows and use other such foolish methods of suicide. They simply are incapable of existing without that to which they were born, even if that just means a middle class existence.

Economics creates culture. To understand who we are and what we believe requires understanding how the economic realities we experienced shaped our view of the world around us.

In saying economics creates culture, I am only observing what anyone with a passport, the willingness to travel, and good brain can decipher.

Those whose economic reality is much like their childhood and never ventured far from home, and those with a limited intellect, may well scoff at all this. But that doesn't make the truth less true. It just means there are folks who will never understand.

I live here because of economics. What I have learned is that my research failed to take into account how those same economic conditions would impact my 'social' life.

I had traveled enough prior to all this to have known it. In a way I did know it. I just failed to process it in my evaluation of finding the 'right' place to choose.

Did I screw up?

No, but I am the owner of a very confused mind right now. If I have discombobulated the girls regarding their parenting practices, I am no less discombobulated for other reasons.

At moments of confusion no less profound than this, I suspect my dear dad would have poured himself a wee bit of Jameson whiskey. Well, OK, a bit more than a bit.

Mel might well pour me a rum as soon as she sees me, if it were not for her current state of confusion, which I suspect is as great as my own.

Walking in the door, I see the table has been set. All the place settings are there. While not all the girls are in evidence, most are. I wash up, and all seem ready to sit down as I come out of the washroom.

I don't hear any kids, but all ten of my girls are assembled. I must be showing confusion in my expression, because Jana informs me that Dina, Lanie and Mica are caring for the kids while we have our supper.

Well, that resolves one confusion but creates a new one. This time it is Lyn who explains.

We decide that the girls live here now. The mothers give up the place they rent. Now both out at the lot with the little ones full time. Their girls can walk to school from here, so that not a problem. When we all move to the lot the girls ready for home schooling. Now, the mothers have more money because they not have to pay rent, or electric, or transportation for the three girls.

And with that I get a look.

I am not going to ask why they will be ready for home schooling because the look told me all I needed to know. Lyn expects they will be pregnant.

The immediate confusions resolved, I pay attention to the food on my plate. Please, please, let there be nothing else, now.

Sir?

Yes, Sir?

Sir, are we to follow Dido's family tradition?

OK, so that is what I really did not need to hear. Why would anyone even think to ask this? Still, I decide to be a bit of a pain in the ass. If they are going to mess with my peaceful meal, I can at the very least return the favor.

And to what tradition do you refer?

To be the father of two generations.

Well, that was more succinct than I have formulated the concept.

Why would I want to do that?

It a tradition.

It is one in your family?

No.

Is there anyone here, other than Dido, who has this as a tradition in her family?

Lyn raises her hand. Shit. Well, OK, if that is the case, it might not be a good part of Lyn's life. Maybe she will be an advocate for not carrying the tradition forward.

Since you have this experience in your life, tell me, do you think it is a good thing or a tradition that should end?

Lyn is crying. OK, so this is getting worse as each minute passes. All I can do now is wait for the answer. Having asked her, I can't blow her off.

I want to take a bite of food before it gets cold, but even that will be rude. I just wait. And then finally...

It OK, Sir, you healthy and not die soon.

I didn't expect that, don't know what to make of it, and am really not looking forward to any attempt at fulfilling the tradition. Si2x's question still hangs in the air, unanswered.

There are a number of reasons why I am not inclined to support the intention to pursue what has tonight been called a tradition. First, it presumes that my daughters will want me to father their children. If they do not want me to do so, it would be rape. Second, such a practice can result in birth defects. Third, no one can predict one's health or life span, and the earliest such a tradition might be even started is no less than thirteen years from now.

Si2x is confused. *Why thirteen years? There is Shara and Dido, and Gladies and May!*

But, sweetheart, I am not the father of Dido and May. The tradition you reference requires fathering children from your own daughters. So, thirteen years from now a daughter of mine would have to want me to father her daughter. I don't see that happening.

Oh! OK.

I am hopeful that, at least for tonight, we have come to the end of the matter which is creating ever more headaches for me.

The rest of supper is subdued and peaceful. But, once again, I have rained on a parade. For them, it has been one thing after another whereby I have shown disapproval or acted in a disruptive way due to their actions. No one is joyful.

Mel, preoccupied as she might be, has decided I need some rum. In my hands is a rocks glass filled with ice and a generous amount of Dark Tanduay.

I am settling into an easy chair, a truly comfortable one that comes from Dorchester, when I am bugged by the comment Lyn made tonight. I have studiously avoided learning about her early history as she didn't seem inclined to want to share it with me. But, I really think the time has come. I need clarity as to her comments tonight.

She has read my mind. I was just about to go find her and she is here by my side. There is a faraway look in her eyes, but her hand reaches out and caresses mine. I do what I have seen the girls do, oh so often, and purse my lips towards the chair by me. She smiles a little, nods, and sits and, as she does, releases air from her chest in one long sigh.

My love, it has been a year and a half since we first met. I fell in love with you before I could imagine what life would be like for me here. I have never, Lyn, never regretted that, and I have loved you, intensely, ever since. You didn't want to share the story of your life with me and I decided to respect that. I never have pried or pushed you to tell me about the days before we met.

I take a couple of sips of the rum before continuing. Lyn sits patiently, waiting for me to continue.

But, my love, tonight I find that I must ask you about that which you have held from me. I need to know about your past. I understand that it will be painful for you, but it seems that I need to know. ... I will leave it to you to choose what to tell me. But before you do, do you need a drink? It appears that Mel felt I needed one. Maybe you do too.

I gather she doesn't, as she straightens up in the chair, leaning back just a bit, holding onto the arms of the chair, closes her eyes, and prepares to speak. There is a sense of deep regret in her voice as it all begins to unfold.

My Lola⁵⁴'s her husband, Alfonso, came here in 1953 from Bohol. Two years later, she came with her parents, in 1955, when she was ten. Alfonso had been a fisher in Bohol, but he was given two hectares to farm here. My Nanay says he was a hard worker and the farm was very successful. It grew to eight hectares! He had many workers.

Lyn pauses, as if remembering tales she has been told years ago, gathering them up before retelling them.

He had many children. There were nine of them from his first wife, but she died in childbirth on the ninth one. That is when he married my Lola in 1968. She

⁵⁴ Grandmother

was twenty-three then. She had five more children for him. There were fourteen of them, eleven girls and three boys, and they spanned many decades. My mother was her second. She was born in 1970. Lola had three more, but she died in the last childbirth in 1974. So I not alive then.

Once again Lyn stops.

Sweetheart are you sure you don't want anything to drink?

Maybe a taste of your rum?

She earns a smile from me and I hand her the glass. She takes a sip and, still holding on to the glass, continues.

Alfonso was an important man. But he was also a drunk and mean. My Nanay say the older kids told her that when my Lola was alive, she didn't let him hit the children, but he hit her, often and hard. Some say it was his beatings that killed her and not the childbirth. Even when Lola was alive, because there were too many children Alfonso not allow some of his daughters to marry. Those daughters must take care of the other children. The oldest three, yes, they gone. But not the younger ones.

She takes another sip of the rum.

There was only one boy from the first wife. Eight were girls. Three married and were gone but five remained. My Lola had three daughters and two boys. When Lola die Alfonso not marry again. He take every daughter still there to his bed when she old enough for children. Every one of the remaining girls. All eight girls, including my 'Nay when she was 14. 'Nay had four children by Alfonso. I am the oldest of her four. Each of the eight had at least three. Two had four and one had six! Twenty-nine children from his own daughters

She stops for another drink.

As soon as they were old enough to work, he had them working the farm just like his sons and the boys who married his three oldest daughters and the girls when they weren't heavy with children. More and more he drank. The more he drank the meaner he was. He hit us hard and often. The girls who were born of his daughters who were older than me, had to come to his bed. There was no choice. He was very sick by then. Maybe from the drink. It was an ugly time

and I do not like to think about it. He die when I am ten. There no will, so each of us get an equal share of the eight hectares. But there are more than forty of us by then! My share is two thousand square meters. When I leave six years later at age sixteen, I sell all to one of the boys for ten pesos per square. I put it away, but a week later someone steal it from me.

She takes another drink and hands me the glass.

You have good English. Were you able to attend school?

Yes and I study hard because it always my plan as a little one to get an education so I can run away.

With all you know, why did you say it is OK for me to follow that tradition?

You not mean. You not a drunk. You not force anyone, I am sure of that, so it is OK.

If Alfonso hadn't died he would have taken you?

Yes, I sure of it. He say that.

Where is your mother?

And now the tears flow.

She dead. She die age twenty-four. She do suicide. Priest say she goes to hell. I tell the Priest he can go to hell. I never go to church again.

And now I see why there was no one to invite. At least no one she wants to invite. I can also see why she is never one to attend church.

All Lyn wants to be, is a good parent... but she has never seen a good parent. At least not one who didn't get beaten or commit suicide.

In a way, having all these girls must remind her of the bad shit she left behind. Why is she OK with it? I guess I might as well ask.

Lyn, you lived through hell with a man who had many women in his bed. Why are you OK with me doing the same thing?

She looks at me, stunned, as if I had kicked her.

It not the same! You never make anyone do what they not want to do. Never! You not a drunk. You not mean and bit. It not the same!

So I may see the similarity but she doesn't. To her, this is worlds different.

Is there anything else I need to know?

No, that all.

Yes, and it is quite enough.

Do you want to just sit for a bit? Maybe have a bit more rum?

No, I really want to get back to our daughter.

OK, sweetheart. Thank you.

Lyn gets up, we kiss and she walks off, having just relived a nightmare.

The concept of large families to farm land is not new. It is a worldwide reality. Farm cultures support large families. Alfonso seems to have been a mean, greedy, drunk, but that may be, in a way, only an extreme version of a norm, not a total aberration. There must also have been a driven and hard working side of him to succeed at acquiring the eight hectares. It didn't just fall into his lap.

I am not trying to build a case for the guy. It seems he was a first class asshole.

In a way, what Lyn told me may explain how she was able to adjust to life with me and my budget faster than the others. As a child, she was not dirt poor. She was beaten, that is clear, and she lived in fear. Her childhood was a nightmare, but they were not poor.

Economics, baby, economics. The economics of farm labor. The economics of supporting the maintenance of large groups. It's all

economics. Good shit, bad shit, it makes no difference, it still is driven by economics.

Mel wanders in, sees my glass needs refreshing and takes care of it. That done, she sits down and asks, *Why was Lyn crying?*

She was telling me about her childhood. It was a hundred times worse than yours.

Truly?

Yes, Mel, truly and that is all I will ever say about it. And don't you go prying about it. Lyn deserves her privacy. Mel, will you join me tonight?

4

It's been a while, sweetheart. I am glad you are here.

I think you will ask for Dina.

Why would I do that?

They say you will.

I see.

None of them asked me. All they were doing was guessing.

They also say we need to watch our cycles and maybe not get pregnant again.

Maybe not for a while and not so close together this time.

Oh, OK. But this is in the middle of my month. It is not safe for me.

Well, we can just hold each other, or have oral sex.

Better if I send someone who not in the middle maybe and I come when I am safer. OK?

So, now I am smiling. By my edict, they will choose with whom I will be lying. By using power I have also ceded it.

OK, Mel, I accept defeat. But I want to be with you soon.

You will. I promise.

And she leaves the bedroom, having won the right to choose.

Twenty minutes later, there is a knock at the door. That is weird. If one of my girls is going to spend the night with me, she won't have to knock.

I open the door to find Dina standing in front of me.

Yes? What is it?

I am with you tonight.

Who said so?

Everyone. They say no one but me OK tonight.

I don't believe it for a second. I grab my cellphone and text Lyn,

Get up here right now!

Using the cellphone is the only option unless I want to run down a couple of flights of stairs. Yelling down two floors isn't cool and might not work anyway.

Come sit on the balcony with me for a bit, Dina.

And I walk out there myself. She is stuck. Nothing is going to happen out here and that's where I am. She follows, if a bit reluctantly.

What did your mother tell you today?

She told me, I had to promise to not be with you on my fertile days and I could be with you.

Didn't I tell you by text that I would think about it when you get older, but not now?

Yes, but Mel say I can go up here now.

Just Mel?

No, we talk and decide it should be me. It my time to be next.

Lyn has come in.

Out here, Lyn.

There are only two chairs here, so Lyn is standing and has no idea why I have called for her.

Did you give permission for Dina to be here tonight?

You not asked for her?

No, I absolutely did not. I invited Mel. But, once Mel was here, she said she knew that she is in her fertile days. She really felt she shouldn't be with me tonight. In the end, I agreed that one of the girls who is in her safe days should come here instead. There are ten of you. Am I to believe that none of you is in a safe time?

Why is Dina here?

Ask her, Lyn. Ask her.

OK if we talk in our dialect?

OK, sure.

The conversation seems to start sweet enough. The voices are calm and there are smiles. But that doesn't last long. The sentences seem sharper and more staccato-like. Things are getting louder and more animated. Finally, Dina is crying and Lyn is shouting. I gather she is telling Dina to leave as she is pointing to the door.

Yeh, that's what it is, as the girl skedaddles right out, not looking back for a second look. Lyn is almost in tears again and just plops down into the recently-vacated chair.

OK, what happened?

Complicated, but you don't want her here and so she should not be here.

Well, that much I will grant you, but there was more to it.

It is for me and the girls, not you. I need to do this.

Why?

Because I know you better?

Do you?

I think so.

Do you know that I don't want to see her in this room until she is at least fourteen?

Yes, that is what I told her. I also told her that if she caused any more trouble you will kick her out and she will not be able to even talk to you before she is gone. I told her that the same goes for Mica and Lanie. Fourteen and no younger. ... Craig, I need to go down and talk to the girls.

Wait a bit please. I just want to be with you and feel safe.

You? Craig, you need to feel safe?

Does that sound silly?

No... No. I just not think this before. But it true. For Alfonso, he only think about the pesos and his penis. But you think about us. You think about what life is like for us before and now. You worry for us, maybe more than we do. And then we do this to you. It wrong. We think, he a guy, give him a girl to fuck. In the beginning maybe that true for you. Maybe when I meet you, yes? It me and Jana and then Mel? But even Lexi, you thinking bad idea. No one hear you, I think. Each just wants to be safe in your bed.

They are safe, even not in my bed.

Yes, I know this. Maybe, they not.

Who you want tonight?

Someone who was not part of this mess tonight and who is not going to get pregnant.

OK, I see if there anyone like that. If not I text you that all are in trouble with you.

I didn't say they are in trouble, Lyn.

Yes, they are. I tell them they are.

OK. Maybe you are right.

I get another kiss and she is gone.

Lyn thinks she knows me. Lexi thinks she knows me. Jana thinks she knows me. Si2x thinks she knows me. Each do, a little. A piece

here, and a little piece there, but on a night like tonight, I wonder, how little must it be to have things like this occur?

I take a shower and get into bed. No one has arrived and there has been no text. I have no idea what is happening, but I am tired.

I turn off the light and then my cellphone tells me I have a text.

*Jana safe, but involved
Mel involved
Lexi not safe, not involved
Si2x too pregnant, not involved
Jing2x not feeling good, not involved
Reina too pregnant, involved
Dido, May, Li2x all involved*

OK. Damn.

*I am super angry with Jana.
Lexi is very angry with Mel.
Si2x ask if she can come without sex*

Tell Si2x yes.

OK, night na.

A few minutes later Si2x, who is seven months along, is sliding into my bed, awkwardly.

Do you want your belly rubbed?

She giggles a bit before saying, *It OK, Sir, I just want to be with you. It a bad day I think. Each of us sad. Maybe we happier together, you and me?*

Yes, OK.

It is possibly the best ending, considering what came before it.

Morning has me back out on the lot. To my huge surprise, there must be fifteen new men out here today. Each one is assigned to someone who has been working here for a while. As we had twenty men before, by my count we are now at thirty-five. The guy who has the pakyaw tells me there will be more men tomorrow.

Lyn is a marvel! This may mean we will finish in two months instead of four more. And I should be elated, except for the fact

that Gladies and Shara are also on this lot. I am not feeling particularly warm and cuddly with regards to either of them.

I suspect Gladies has already figured out I am not happy with her because she is staying away. Shara, on the other hand, tries to chat with me first thing in the morning. I suspect I am way more than a little pissed at both of them, and Gladies has had the good sense to steer clear. Just twenty minutes ago, Shara got the full force of my unhappiness with both of them. The rest of the day, Shara plays it smarter and hides in her hut.

Lexi and Lyn join me at nine and stay until noon. Lyn, bless her heart, never mentions the miracle she has pulled off in getting more men here. That is, until I thank her.

She laughs. *It easy. See? No problem. He not angry.*

OK, so how did you do it?

I say to him, 'Kuya, why you want to be difficult? Don't you want to make more money?' He say, 'How that?' I tell him, 'Kuya, this man will build a very big house plus maybe four or five smaller buildings. You not want or need the work?' See, he do. He plan to do that too, he tell me. So I ask him, 'Why you think he will hire you again? He wants you to hire more men to finish the fence and you refuse. Why you think he will hire you when you this way?' He say, 'Why is the man impatient? It will be done!' So I ask him, 'He truly impatient? Or maybe you are difficult? It him with the money!' Finally he understand. He say, OK, tomorrow.

Lyn is a wonder and now, in a way, I can appreciate that more than before.

Lexi has Oscar with her and is feeding him in a sort of casual fashion. When the kid seems to be receptive, he gets something. When he is distracted, she ignores him and doesn't push the food on him. *Craig, do you want to talk about last night?*

I am not sure. What is there to discuss?

You really mean that the girls must wait until they fourteen?

Yes.

But I don't think that was what was going to happen before.

What does it matter? It is fourteen now.

Oh. You are really angry. Maybe it change later.

No, Lexi, it will not. But I do want to understand how it all happened. I don't think all have evil intentions or were out to manipulate me. Something happened that should not have happened ... do I blame both Shara and Gladies? I think they were partially responsible, but I don't understand the events of last night. I know who was involved but not all of the why and how of it... do you? Do you, Lyn?

Neither do.

Lexi, I am concerned that Mel has learned too well from Bel. I am wondering if this was all Mel last night, attempting to manipulate me like Bel tried. But, and this is a big but, I don't know.

Lexi seemed stunned by the question and Oscar begins to cry. She consoles our boy, screws up her face and, her brow knitted, before, *It is the way 'Nay would do it. I hope you are wrong. But what happens if you right? You throw her out?*

No, I said I would not and I won't. But if that is the way she is, I think that I will not be with her and she can't have a big role in the family. I would have to reduce her ability to cause problems.

Maybe she leaves?

Not with our son, she doesn't. Jon stays even if she leaves. But, we are getting ahead of ourselves. I really do not know what happened. I don't want to make any decisions, other than what I have already done, until I know more about what happened. Lyn, you find out from Mel. Lexi, you find out how Jana is involved. I really don't think I would have seen Dina upstairs unless both of those girls permitted it. May, Li2x, Dido and Reina don't have that much power. Once we know how Mel and Jana are involved in this, we can spend time on the others.

Lyn is looking out at the workmen. But that's not what is on her mind. *Everyone at home is scared. You know that?*

I do now.

They wonder who is leaving. It OK I tell them no one leaves?

Yes.

You want to question Jana and Mel?

No, Lyn, I don't. At least not until you have told me what you have learned.

If Lexi say there really no problem with Jana, she come to you tonight?

No. I want to hear all of it and understand it first.

You alone tonight? Maybe, no one not involve has a safe day. Si2x too pregnant and Jing2x is truly ill.

Lexi, is there any reason why we can't be together without sex?

The girl laughs. *That will be nice.*

So that's the decision.

We spend the rest of the morning wondering how many men it would take to finish the fence in one month, and talking about the design of the grillwork that will be on the street-facing portion of the fence and on the gates.

Most of the grillwork designs here are interpretations of the Spanish style, evoking the colonial era.

Our new house, while not a block type 'modern,' is modern in a way, evocative of the Prairie school architecture as seen in the Darwin Martin House in Buffalo, NY, by Wright. I have shown pictures of the house/complex to Gilbert. That house is two floors, the second one being pretty small. Mine will be three floors of rooms with the third reprising the other's second floor. That floor will have a raised roof creating a terrace like open fourth floor.

Our floor plan is nothing like the Wright building. Like I said, evocative, not a copy.

Still, what amazes me is this house I am using as inspiration was clearly built for a cold, snowy climate but has overall design elements that, in many ways, work better here than where it sits.

The roof design provides good protection from the heavy rains we get. It seems well suited to block excess sun from heating the house. There is a large dining room in the Wright design, which we are stealing directly and unapologetically. There are things we are modifying, and one is to create a walled in courtyard in the back with bedrooms opening onto the courtyard from all sides. We will put a fountain in the courtyard, our one nod to the Spanish influence.

Anyway, my point is that a Spanish grillwork doesn't fit with what I am building. I have shown some pictures of mission style / Arts and Crafts Movement furniture ornamentation to Gilbert, to suggest what our grillwork might take inspiration from. It is both spare and special at the same time.

Gilbert tells me I will have very much a one-of-a-kind home. He comments that our house, being made of concrete, will be very different from Wright's work. I then had a lot of fun showing him Wright's California work that was entirely concrete. It seems he was really and completely unfamiliar with Wright. Hard to understand, but there you have it. Still, he is a civil engineer and not an architect, so maybe that was not really part of his background or the curriculum for his degree.

I give up trying to describe the ideas we have been working on for the grillwork with the girls. They will just wait and see the drawings.

Lyn wants to get back to take care of our daughter, Nita, who I am sure is being cared for very well by the other girls. Still, Lyn and Lexi leave at noon, and I have my sack lunch undisturbed today.

It is too soon to really see a relative improvement in the speed of construction here, but I hope it will become clear in the next few days. I want one part of my life to be a little less stressful!

Each day, it seems, brings salesmen trying to tie me into contracts for roofing and windows. Each I send away. I am just not ready to even consider those items. I don't even have the final house plans yet. And though this is not an easy project, if the fence is going to be finished in two months, then I sure need the house plans now!

As I am doing little more than running salesmen off the lot and perspiring, I text Gilbert.

*Fence will be fully up in two months,
with temp gate. Need house plans
completed.*

*Gud PM Sir Craig. Yes, I am working on them
now. Soon Sir I will have them for your review.*

Glad to hear it. Thanks.

Will the fence be complete in two months? Hell, I don't know, but will I really see the house plans soon? This is the land of bukas⁵⁵! Everything, you are told with be ready bukas, and bukas, when you ask, 'yes, Sir, bukas!'

I get that only mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the noonday sun. Here, they break for lunch at eleven-thirty and nap from noon to one, before returning to work until four-thirty. They do start at seven in the morning, so the workmen give you a good four and a half hours and then, later, three and a half which sure does amount to an eight hour day. So the labor is fine, but deliverables? Well, now, that is often bukas. The house plans are quintessential bukas.

As to the labor, it is true that no one gets in a hurry, but they don't stop, either. So it may not look super busy, but under this sun, well, I am not complaining. They do work hard. I am not having a problem with the laborers.

⁵⁵ Tomorrow. (boo-KahS)

At the end of each day, I am here until all the workmen are gone. I walk the lot and make sure all is OK before going home at five-thirty.

The house is quiet as I walk in. The young ones are setting the table and I am told that Li2x and Si2x are doing the cooking. I surmise that Lyn is still talking to Mel and Lexi is still with Jana. I am asked if we should wait for them before we sit down. So, as I have no idea, I text Lyn.

*You want us to hold dinner for a while?
Jana and Lexi are also not here.*

Go ahead. We are all together talking.

OK, let's eat.

5

I really need to learn what has transpired this afternoon. According to the information Lyn texted me last night, Jana should have been the one to come, not Dina. But even if she couldn't, were May, Li2x and Dido also in their fertile days? That's just too hard to believe.

At eight in the evening, I have the four of them in front of me. I am not saying a word. That's their job. I am here to listen. Lexi starts.

Jana is really not involved. Mel asked her to be with you last night but Mia has a fever and Jana didn't want to go. So, last night when Lyn asks Jana if she talked to Mel, and chose not to go even though she is safe, that why Lyn thinks she involved.

Now Lyn takes over.

Mel did ask Jana. She did that first. There was no attempt at manipulation. She knew Lexi was out, so she asked Li2x, but the girl told her that none of them were willing until Dina had her turn. That's where Mel made a big mistake. Lexi, Jana and me, we spend a long time with Mel about this. She argues with us. She say she has no choice. She did the correct thing. We tell her that not so. We try to explain but she not see it.

How did Reina get involved?

She with Li2x when Mel come. Reina supports Li2x.

While I know I will have to deal with the younger ones, for now I turn to Mel who is ultimately responsible for the mess.

Did anyone tell you that I didn't want Dina or any of the young ones?

Yes, we all talk about it the night they come. We know you will say no if asked.

So when Li2x, May, Dido and Reina say you must send Dina first, you knew that I didn't want that, correct?

Yes.

Then, why, Mel, did you send her?

No one else to send!

Did you ask Li2x?

Yes, but she say they won't go. It is Dina's turn.

Did you ask May if she was fertile last night?

Yes! She say what Li2x say.

And did you ask Dido?

Yes! Same! She say what Li2x say.

So, Mel, explain to me, why did you think there was no one else to send? You didn't know that then and I bet you still don't know now. So let's find out. Let's see if you are right on that point before we move on to anything else. Lexi, bring those three girls here right now, but send them into this room one at a time.

We wait. No one is saying a word. If nothing else, I am learning some of the limitations that Mel presents. I am sure it is not lost on Lyn or Jana. As to Jana, I fully understand why she took a pass last night and have no issue with her. Mia was sick. She is the mom, so since she would have been with me all night, that option was not acceptable. She was right to say she couldn't join me. I would have been disappointed if she had.

And it is me who, just this week, imposed the limitation regarding fertile days. While I did not expect we would come a cropper on, essentially, the second night of the rule, I accept that it is possible.

May walks in.

Sir?

Last night, May, was it a fertile day for you? When was your last period?

I started this afternoon.

So last night you were not fertile, correct?

Yes.

Did Mel ask you if you were in your fertile days?

Yes, but I tell her I not go because Dina is next.

Is that your decision or mine?

Yours?

So why did you say what you said to Mel.

Nanay say to send her.

Does your Nanay make decisions here or do I?

You, Sir.

So were you wrong or right last night?

What I tell my mother. She tell me I must.

You tell her I am sending you back to her. If you can't obey the rules here, you can't stay here.

Sir, I promise I never do this again. If mother orders, I will tell her she must talk to you. Truly, I promise.

I see. Well, sit there in the corner and do not say one word. I don't care what happens, you are to say and do nothing. Do you understand?

Yes, Sir.

Lyn, ask the next to come.

Dido enters and stands straight in front of me.

Dido, did Mel ask you if you were in your fertile days last night.

Yes, Sir. She do that.

How did you answer her?

I tell her this it Dina's time to go to you.

But you knew then, I didn't want Dina, correct?

Yes, but mother say you need to get over it.

Dido, who makes the rules here, me or your mother?

You do, Sir.

So, when your mother said to ignore me, why did you do it?

Oh.

Oh, what Dido?

I think I make a big mistake.

You know what?

What, Sir?

You made a huge mistake. Do you want to call your mother and tell her I am kicking you out of here and sending you back to her?

No! No, Sir!

Why shouldn't I?

Sir, please. I know I make the mistake.

Yes, but what happens the next time your mother says to ignore me? She is going to do that again. I am sure of it. I am not happy, Dido. For now, sit next to May and say nothing to anyone. Do not talk to May. Keep your mouth shut until I give you permission to speak.

OK, Lyn, ask Lexi to come in with Li2x.

The two come in. Lyn pulls Lexi next to her and Li2x is placed in front of me.

Li2x did Mel ask you if you were in your fertile days last night?

Yes, Sir, these are my fertile days.

Did you tell that to Mel?

No, Sir, I tell her my friends need her to send Dina to you. That all.

Did you know I didn't want Dina, yet?

Yes, Sir, but they say this important to do.

So you think it is more important to do what your friends want than what I want?

No, Sir, after I do it I think I made a mistake. I talk to Reina and she says it important to support my friends. If I not, I am lost.

I look up and say, Lexi, you know who I need to speak to next. And she leaves the room.

Li2x, your instinct was right and Reina was very wrong. You should not have told Mel, what you did. Are we clear?

Yes, Sir.

Will I have any more problems like this from you?

No, Sir.

OK. You and your two friends may now leave this room but no talking to Reina. Clear?

Yes, Sir.

Once the three are gone, I address Mel again.

You allowed two mothers of those two girls to overrule me. That is unacceptable. I have always said they were too young and they damn well still are! That is why I didn't want them here to begin with! And they are pushing me to take younger kids! You, Mel, you are the adult and I expect more from you than to take that crap from those girls and then tell me there was nothing you could do! ... No one is required to come to my bed. ... No one! ... If they don't want to,

no one is to force that to happen but ... no one may put someone in my bed that I don't want there. Is that clear? What happened last night is not acceptable! It will never be acceptable!

Lyn is frantically giving me a heads up. Lexi is at the door and ready to bring Reina in.

Bring Reina in please.

The girl isn't stupid. She has seen some bad stuff in her life and she knows that she is not here right now to win any award. That being said, she is not cowering. And, in a way, I know why she said what she did. I don't like it, but I do understand.

Do you have any idea why you are here now?

Because of last night?

Yes. What part of last night do you think I want to talk to you about?

About Dina going to your bedroom?

Not exactly. It is related, but no. Not that. Reina, before you came to live here, there were only two people in the world you could trust. Who were they?

Si2x and Jing2x. You know that.

And if they asked you to do something, you would do it, because they were the only ones you were safe with and could trust, right.

Yes, that is right.

Is it the same now?

Craig?

Are the only two people in the world you can trust, those two girls? If they ask you to do something I will not like, will you do it?

Oh.

Oh, what?

I made a mistake.

What mistake was that?

What I tell Li2x last night.

What did you tell her?

I tell her to do something you not want because her friends say it is required.

Yes, you did make that mistake. But, Reina, it is more than that. It is the reason you gave that advice that is the reason you are here. I could simply tell you not to give that advice to others, but that does not solve, for me, the deeper matter. Do you know what that is, now?

Yes, Craig. You are asking, am I really part of this family? If not, can it be fixed, maybe?

OK, that will work as a good answer to the question I asked you. Now, what is the answer to the question you just suggested needs answering?

It is my attitude, Sir. I need to fix my head. You are my love. You are the father of the child inside of me. This is my safe home. They are my friends, but that not reason to go against you. I make a big mistake in my head.

Is it something you can really fix?

Yes. Yes, I can.

OK. That's all I wanted to talk to you about. Thank you for your honest answer, Reina.

I must, Craig. I owe you this. I know it.

Good, see you later. I have some chatting to do with Mel now.

Sige, sige.

Right now I could do with some rum. Damn.

I know exactly what happened and I know where the problems lay. Exactly how I deal with them is an entirely different issue. Sure, I have verbally spanked some of them tonight, but I am not sure if it really fixes anything. My biggest concern is Mel. In a way it is the very type of problem that Lexi has always seen in the girl. She is

well meaning, innocent of heart, and a real problem at the same time.

On second thought, Mel, I have nothing more to say to you. Please leave me so I can talk with the others.

Craig, I am sorry.

Mel, I know you are. Still, you were very wrong and I am not sure that the next time, once again, you will be not be wrong again in a different way, but for the same reason. . . . You want to be nice. Mel, that can be a real problem. There are times when being nice is not what we need to be. It is not something I can teach. I am not sure that you can learn it. I do know that you are the mother of my son, and you will always be with me. And. . . I know I love you; even knowing that; though, you made me unhappy this time.

Mel starts to cry, pulls it together and asks, *Would you like some rum?*

Yes, Mel, that will be nice.

Mel, the quintessential barmaid. I look at Lexi and she looks back at me. We share that same knowledge and frustration. Mel is a good soul with an inability to say no when needed. It is not that she is stupid, though she is not the brightest. It's not that she is incapable of saying no. It's just that she finds the experience so painful that she looks for any excuse to say yes.

There are, by age, seven of you who I consider adults. Of those seven there are only five who behave as adults. As of now, I just don't see Mel or Reina as acting as responsible adults. Do you three think I am being too harsh?

They look at each other. Are they sorting out who goes first, or are they sorting out if they want to differ with me? It is taking a while, and long enough that it is interrupted by Mel, who brings me my rum.

Finally Jana offers, *I agree about Mel, but I think Reina, well, Craig, she knew. She knew why she was wrong. I like that.*

The other two are in agreement that Reina needs a chance to prove herself. Mel, on the other hand, seems to be a lost cause. No amount of ‘growing up’ is going to solve this.

Lexi puts the wrapper on it when she says, *Before, my sister was my never ending problem, every day I had to watch, protect and, sometimes, correct. Craig, I am sorry, but she is your problem now.*

Gee, thanks! OK, well, I think we are done. Jana, I know you want to get back to Mia, so get going.

All go their separate ways and I settle in with my rum. What a fucking day.

Morning brings me back out to the lot before the workmen arrive at seven. As usual, I am the first one here and the last one to leave. Today, it seems like we have a convention here. There must be fifty workmen.

I was figuring two months to finish based on what I saw yesterday. I am readjusting, and I think maybe one month before the basic fence is up. There will still be wrapping to do, but once the fence is surrounding the place, we can begin to start on the excavation for the house and there are still no plans!

Sir Gilbert, Crisis! More men working here now. The fence will be up in one month. This is true! Please, I must have house plans right away!

Gud AM Sir This afternoon I will bring you plans for your review. Where 2 find you?

At the lot.

Very gud Sir I B there then.

At nine, Mia, in Jana’s arms, is here as is Lyn. Jana has a long and wide scarf she ties to one of the cross-pieces of bamboo below the rafters and, in it, Mia is placed. The child seems snug and happy. I ask what this thing is called because it isn’t a hammock.

In a way, it works like a sling you tie around your neck. The sides tied are not at the head and foot of the baby, but on her sides. The middle of the sling pouches down a bit. There is no way Mia will fall out. Jana gently rocks it until Mia is seemingly asleep.

I ask what it is called and Jana says it is a duyan. My Tagalog to English dictionary translates the word as hammock. Well, it is, and it isn't. Jana has tied both ends close together up above, but she says the ends can be spread out more like a hammock, though the child is still sideways in the contraption.

This is the first time Jana has been out here while we are working, and the sight of so many workmen surprises her. I explain what it was like two days ago and how Lyn has acted to speed things up.

Lyn has yet to say a word. She is just looking out and smiling a whole lot.

It's nice spending the morning with them. Mia sleeps soundly for over two hours here, causing Jana to laugh that Mia likes the outside life better than life in the big house. And shortly after Mia rouses, all take their leave.

The men here are stopping for their lunch and rest hour. Midday. I have my sack lunch and a book.

Afternoon brings civil engineer Gilbert to the lot. Dollars to donuts, he was ready to tell me I was exaggerating about when the fence would be done. He doesn't even try...

Sir Craig, these are the draft plans.

And he hands me eight rolled blueprints. There are elevation views; there are plans for each of the three floors; there is a plan for the partial second floor rafters and a plan for the raised third/fourth floor rafters; there are plans for plumbing, and plans for the electrical service; there is the excavation plan; and a plan for the foundation which also shows footing and post details. In short, there is a huge amount of shit here to review.

We take it first, floor by floor. I pencil in changes we need made, at times flipping over to the plumbing and electrical sheets to make marks there. Then we take another look at the elevation plans. I am not crazy about the placement of some windows, which then requires changes on the floor plans as well.

The plumbing plan includes septic, and we discuss enlarging that. I had told him I needed it to be large, and his is far too small. Notes are made. The reason I need a larger septic is that grey water will also go to the septic and then leach out via a large third chamber. It's possibly not quite code-permitted, but it is what I want. What I don't want is a gray-water marshy area on the lot, something I have seen here quite often.

With the help of the guy who holds the pakyaw for the fence and three of his workers, wooden stakes, some red plastic bags we tie onto the stakes as flags, some monofilament line which is used here for laying courses of concrete hollow block, and a 100 foot measuring tape I have, we mark out the exterior dimensions of the house.

I am glad we are doing it. It is clear that we have to reimagine the courtyard in the back, as we are running too deeply towards the back fence. Gilbert and I make more notes and he takes off with the drawings.

The guy helping, Sir Pakyaw, is scratching his head. I look at him, a bit curious about what he is thinking. And then out it comes, as he says, *Maybe three foremen and forty-five workers, Sir. Maybe more! If not, this take a very long time!*

Yes, indeed.

The final count...

1

Shara, you have a choice. You can either, accept my rules, and be one of my girls, or you can move out of here and take Mica and Dina with you. If you stay, you can't pull the crap you pulled the other day. ... And the same goes for you, Gladies. If you can't live under my rules, you can take Lanie and leave. If either one of you two stay, and you again interfere like you did this time, I will kick Dido or May out too. I'll give you until tomorrow morning to make your choices. After that, if you haven't told me that you will accept the rules, I will expect you to leave.

It's real simple, I just can't have it. If it requires drastic action, I will take it. I don't think I will have to go so far as to send Dido or May packing, but some of the younger three and a mom may well have to vacate. I don't expect both of them to screw up, but then again, I can't be sure.

It's a little after seven this morning. They have the rest of today to think about it and they can sleep on it. But I need an answer. I need this fixed.

I turn to walk away from their huts but, before I can take five steps they are calling me back.

Both want to talk, but they are talking at the same time. That isn't going to work.

Stop! You first, Shara.

I accept your rules. I not push you to take the girls. It up to you. I not tell them what to do. They yours.

Well, that makes an eleven- and a nine-year-old mine. I am not crazy about that, but she is right. If she tries to exercise authority over them, we might come into conflict, if only unintentionally.

OK. Gladies?

Same, Craig. Same as Shara.

OK ... I really hope the two of you mean it.

Craig, it OK if you come in the bahay kubo. Shara and I maybe do something special for you?

Not now. I appreciate the offer, but no. Not now. Neither of you are in your safe days. I want no mistakes.

They do seem to get that. I don't think either of them want more children. I know we could have done 'safe' things, but it is better to be doubly sure.

There will be other days, and years, of opportunities to find times for lovemaking.

Well, I thought they got it, until Gladies pleads for just a little time together behind the walls of the hut.

Gladies, are you that damned desperate to get something inside your cunt?

Yes! She says and sticks out her tongue at me.

Shara, take Gladies into your hut and eat her cunt. If she's that in need, I am sure your tongue will do just fine.

Shara is laughing, as Gladies yells out, *Bastos ka*⁵⁶!

I have learned enough Tagalog to know what she has said. I just smile, before asking, *Do you need something longer and harder? Maybe the wooden handle on that ladle might do the trick.*

Why you so mean? She's asking, but laughing at the same time. *Come in na. Come na. We be gud. Come na. No problem. Be gud to us. Come.*

⁵⁶ You are rude!

They are reaching out, grabbing my arms and pulling towards one of the huts. I give up fighting and allow myself to be pulled along and into Gladies' hut.

They get right down to business, removing my clothing before Gladies squats down to give me head and Shara starts shedding her clothing.

That done, she spells Gladies on my organ and in short order all of us are naked. Gladies lips attach to one of my nipples and she starts sucking.

My hands are free but there is nothing I can touch other than their heads. There are times you just have to let go and just float. I choose to do just that for a while. Eventually I pull Gladies' head up and bring her lips to mine.

Shara has not stopped and I am not going to last much longer unless she does. Gladies slides off my lips and whispers in my ear, *In thirteen years I want you to take my granddaughter and give me my great granddaughter. OK Craig? You will see.*

And I realize that, though I have no intentions to do that now, I have no idea what I will become by then. Will it even seem wrong, then? I whisper back, *If I give you another daughter, she might give you a granddaughter. Which is better Gladies? Which do you want more?*

I am getting harder. The need is more urgent, now.

Gladies answers in a raw voice, *Both!* She pulls Shara off my cock, and quite intentionally mounts me, *Both Craig! Give me both!*

And like a damned fool, a few strokes later, I cum inside her.

Shara is screaming, *Why?*

I am still in Gladies. *Tell her.*

And as I withdraw and dress there is a discussion in their tongue. It is still going on as I leave the hut. A good twenty meters later I hear Shara shouting at me, *Me too! Next time, Craig, me too!*

Next time... I think that had better be tomorrow, or even later today. Otherwise, all that will happen is that I will be pestered, day after day. And didn't both mother and daughter claim that they wanted to be together? It seems beyond weird to me, but this damned tradition they seem to have cemented in their heads is best to just be experienced. Maybe we will all accept it was more of an imaginary good than a real-life good.

I hope that is the result. If not, I have no idea where it will take us. But in any case, it will require Dido.

*Sweetheart, do you really want to be
with your mother and me?*

For sex?

Yes, Dido, for sex.

Hihi! Yes! When?

*Is either this afternoon or tomorrow
morning good for you?*

Yes! Hapon⁵⁷!

OK, take a tricycle here.

Hindi. One of the bikes!

*You are too young and you don't have a
license.*

I know how. No enforcers⁵⁸ to the lot.

She is right. The enforcers set up camp on main roads and the way between the properties doesn't cross anything like that. She shouldn't be out riding a bike, but I really can't stop her.

*OK, come at 4:30. The workmen leave
then. We will surprise your mother.*

Gud⁵⁹. OK, sigé.

⁵⁷ Afternoon

⁵⁸ Enforcers are a type of cop with jurisdiction arising from The Philippine Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB). They don't have patrol cars. But they will pull you over for the lack of a helmet, check for registration papers and a variety other things.

⁵⁹ No, she isn't a lazy typist. This is Philippine English / Taglish variant for "good".

I put the coming activities out of my mind for the rest of the work day. The activity on the lot is intense, though not frantic. We need all these men now, as we get the basic structure up, but I can see that, as we get past that point, I will need to scale back the number of workers.

Close to the end of the day, the workmen start picking their tools up and putting things away. It's shortly after four. They want everything tidy when they leave at four-thirty because, at four-thirty, they are most certainly headed for the gate and off the lot.

At four-forty, Dido rides up slowly and puts the bike where it is not in the sight range of her mother's hut. With any luck, Shara will not know her daughter is here.

Both Dido and I approach Shara's hut. Does she see us? I suspect not. Shara has her TV turned on and the sound is pretty loud.

There is no question that she sees us as we step up and into the hut.

Dido, help your mother undress. I can't fuck her with her clothing on.

And that certainly gets the gal's attention. She said she wanted this. Let's see if it was just talk. I am sure it wasn't just talk on Dido's side.

Shara isn't assisting enough for Dido's liking and the kid snaps at her mother, *Mabilis na 'Nay*⁶⁰.

There is no question that we have taken Shara by surprise. And as I am also disrobing, she is getting the idea that this is really going to happen.

Shara is now completely naked as am I. I move her to her bed and lie down with her. I have every intention of taking the woman in my arms and doing nothing but kissing for a bit, but before I do, I tell Dido to, *Strip and then eat your mother out while she and I kiss.*

⁶⁰ Fast Mom. Literally, Fast now Mom.

Then, not giving Shara a chance to even say a damned word, we are lips to lips, our tongues dueling. It is not clear to me if Shara is clinging on to me due to sheer fright or extreme passion, but there is no question that she is plastered to my body and my lips. The kissing is close to frantic on her part.

And then, Dido must have engaged because Shara howls, humps, goes stiff and then just about claws my arms pulling me tighter, all in the space of maybe five seconds.

One moment we are kissing and the next, she is gulping air, and pushing her cunt up to the sky, with Dido's head firmly attached to it.

Dido and I keep this up for maybe five minutes before I move her off her mother and make my insertion. As I do, I pull Dido's head close to mine, and instruct my girl to finger her mother's ass and suck a tit.

Shara is watering the ground beneath the hut, so much is leaking out of her. Orgasms wash over her and my cock is being treated very well in her hot, tight cunt. I know she is in her fertile days. She knows it. We both know I will cum inside her.

Up to now Dido has been giving action to Shara. But now, with a free hand I stick two fingers into Dido as I fuck her mother.

Why is this such a turn-on for me? I seem to be getting harder. My nuts are more painful now, seeking release. Something in me snaps.

I withdraw from Shara and she cries out, telling me to get back in there! But, I put the girl on her knees. Telling Dido to get under her mother and lick her clit, I tell the mother to lick Dido's cunt.

Why in the fucking world would they ever do as I have just told them to do, and yet... they do as I have directed. I am back in Shara's cunt from behind. My balls slapping Dido's face. Dido reaches around and sticks a finger up my ass.

Very soon after that, Shara gets her reward. I pull out, telling Dido to suck her mother clean.

As I get up, I notice we have a voyeur. Gladies is standing in the doorway and frigging herself.

Seeing that Dido has her mother pretty well sucked clean, I reach out, grab Gladies, pulling her into the room, while telling Dido to eat Gladies until she cums good and hard.

That doesn't take long at all.

Dido and I return to the house at five-forty. No one at home is any the wiser and we don't say a word.

It takes only another month to get the basic fence up. We still need the grillwork and there is only a temporary gate, but the lot is enclosed.

We still do not have an approved set of plans for the house.

Currently, I have the workmen doing finishing work on three sides of the fence. It is called wrapping, and amounts to applying a smooth concrete plaster over the block work. We can't do it in the front until the grillwork is ready. I have two welders working on that now. But wrapping produces a wall that looks like it was poured concrete, and not hollow block. All the gaps are gone, hidden under the smooth coat of concrete.

I am getting antsy. I need to start the excavation and the laying of the conduit. We don't need city approved plans for the laying of the conduit to the main house and from there out to the areas where the outbuildings will be.

I have that plan, and pull some of the unskilled workmen plus one foreman off the work on the wall. It is time to get this going.

Two weeks later the city plan is approved, so the jump start we did will go unnoticed.

It's July. I celebrate the fourth with George, at his place. We set off some fireworks, and eat burgers and potato salad. It is a first for my girls. George does this every year, I guess. There aren't many of us guys here. But that is just fine with me.

I have the three youngest with me. George doesn't say a word, but Ara asks Lyn what's up with that. I guess Lyn says that these are the girls of my on-site watchers. We are taking care of their girls until the outbuildings are built. They are not 'my girls.' I guess Ara is happy to hear that.

The party is nice and a break from the lot. Thankfully, the fourth this year falls on a Sunday. Being gone even one workday right now, as we are building the house, is unacceptable to me.

Even with the approved plans posted on a wall by a temporary tool shed, things frequently go askew. It's not all the time, but often enough that I really need to be on site.

Once a week Gilbert shows up and looks at the progress. He rarely even makes a comment.

I have four foremen now and forty-two workmen. Some men only form rebar for floor grids and posts. Others are building forms. Some are making the actual hollow block we are using. Some are screening the sand we will use for the concrete. The site is alive with activity. Every day a few of the girls come out for a while. Sometimes they bring out a lunch for me.

Life has a rhythm these days. Days slide into weeks, weeks into months, and the months slide away as well. My evenings are sweet and stable. We have had no more problems at home.

I am a father nine times over. Both Gladies and Shara are carrying now. I have hopes that this is all of it. Eleven kids is plenty. And as we see year 2004 come to an end and 2005 right in front of us, there are no issues.

The 'ber' months start in September and end in December. The Christmas season is the 'ber' months. A full one third of the

calendar is Christmastime. January comes along and all of a sudden it is like... something's missing! Ah, yes, Christmas is over.

There is another annual thing that happens at Christmastime; your employees get an extra month of pay. Literally, one whole extra month of pay. Not paying can have repercussions. So, you pay it and everyone 'loves you.' You hear an unending litany of '*God bless you, Sir.*' Fail to pay and you are an evil person who ought not be allowed to live here.

I was given a heads-up on this and so all received the extra pay. So, what happens when it is time to return to work on Monday, January 2nd? No one shows up for work. Not a soul. I am told, most are drunk, and those who aren't are hung over. Only half show up on Tuesday. A few more straggle in on Wednesday.

I ask my foremen to contact the other men and find out where they are. The answers are varied. Two have quit. Five think that, as they didn't show up, they are fired. Eight say they will return tomorrow. Seven just don't answer.

We have to hire new men. I am cussing, having double-paid the men, but am told it would have been far worse if I had failed to make the payments.

I know when Brian hears about this, he will go on an '*I told you so!*' rant.

The months continue to slide, one into another. June has come and gone. July 4th is a Monday this year and I told George that I will not be able to attend. One day away from the lot is one day I will regret later. He only smiled and said he understood.

My hope that we would be in the house by sometime in 2005 isn't realistic. It just isn't going to happen. However, I have more than started on two of the outbuildings, the ones for Gladies and Shara. There is every reason to believe that, though the plumbing in those homes will not be connected and working until the main house is complete, the buildings will be habitable by next month.

August arrives. Dina has turned thirteen this week. She tells me she is ready now, if I will only allow it. I am not going to. But we are only twelve months away.

2

December seems to sneak up on me. It is never cold and the rhythm of construction has lulled me again into a semi-mental torpor. I am very much keyed into the doings of the construction, but all else fades away.

Every day I need to be on my toes or little details get missed all too often. So I attend to every detail here and the rest of the world just doesn't seem to even register as existing.

At times, plans are not interpreted correctly and an opening for a window in the hollow block will be set too low, or a conduit comes out through the footing too high up. These are all small things, but they keep on popping up. If I am not here, and not looking, I will pay the price for years to come.

Today is no different. I catch two things that need to be corrected. Nothing catastrophic, and maybe it would not have made a difference in the long term. Still, both were set to right because I was here to catch them.

I have a guard stationed at the front gate under the shade of a canopy for now. No one comes in or leaves without signing in at the gate. No delivery gets through without proper paperwork and the load being checked.

There has been some pilfering here and some disputed deliveries. The cost of the armed guard at the gate, a little over one hundred dollars in real costs based on the current exchange rate, has been offset by the savings on the back end as the pilfering has stopped as have the problems with deliveries.

George asks me if we are celebrating Thanksgiving, which he reminds me, is only two weeks away.

The fourth Thursday falls on the twenty-fourth this year. I haven't been doing anything for the holiday up to now, but George wants

to celebrate with me. I laugh and tell him he can't afford to feed my family.

Now, considering how wealthy George is, both of us know it is a silly comment, and he is insisting. I make noises about being on the lot but, he says, we can put it off until late afternoon and, now that I have the guard by the front gate, I can certainly be gone for two hours!

He's right and so, this year, we will celebrate an American Thanksgiving here in the Philippines, in a house that looks like a scene from **Roots**. There is irony here. The celebration we will enjoy is one we had to leave the USA to experience. I am celebrating with a harem I would not have if in the USA. And we will be doing it in a manner which, at least, gives a passing nod to life in the southern USA prior to 1860.

Do I feel like a pre-civil-war slave holder? I do not. But, I cannot fail to reckon with the economic disparities that existed then and those that exist here, now.

I mean, look at them! Look at my harem and just try to tell me that such things are possible when economies are vibrant, and normal labor rates support a 'middle class' existence.

Look at any nation where that is not the case economically and you will find severe societal problems. You had it in the USA in the 1930s. Just look at the growth of the YCL⁶¹ in that timeframe.

Things can go out of whack fast and, if they don't get put back fast, well, you can get a harem, I guess, depending on how things play out. You can also get civil unrest and dictators. Things worked out OK for the USA that time, but that doesn't mean it always will.

This is a third world country. There has been some civil unrest here for a long time. There is also the need for concrete walls the locals here call fences. But make no mistake... these are not white picket

⁶¹ The Young Communist League USA.

fences, they are tall walls that exist for security purposes. The armed guard at my front gate is not there for social reasons.

George is pushing me to man my gate around the clock. I tell him that Gladies and Shara have handguns, but he is not impressed. He tells me I need guards at the gate with AR-15s or MAC-10s. When I tell him that I suspect that is a little excessive, he starts telling me about kidnappings that have happened and introduces me to Filipinos of some means who have had relatives kidnapped.

I haven't told George about what I may be worth. His concern is simply that the size of what I am building will be the subject of gossip far and wide. It will invite problems. I need to take some measures to add security.

I ask him why this conversation is happening now and not a year ago. George laughs and tells me that many expats talk a big game about what they will build. Most never do it at all, but even if they start the projects, many give up or run out of cash. When he looked at my project these last few months, he decided he needed to mention that he was worried for me.

Can you even get a MAC-10 here?

I have one. And yes, they can be had. Your guards can get AR-15s legally. ... Do you still have girls attending public school?

Yes, why?

They need bodyguards to take them to school and pick them up.

Oh, Jesus, George, don't you think that might be more of an inducement to kidnap the kids than if they just came on the back of a bike?

Hey, it's your life and the lives of your girls, not my life, but Filipino families do this. Of course, those kids are going to the pricier private schools and many kids there are dropped off in black SUV's so it's not so obvious, I guess.

Maybe I will just start home schooling for them. It would be easier.

You can do that?

Yeh, ... that's right, you wouldn't know as you don't have any kids. Yes, it is possible. I have been doing it with three others for a while now.

Didn't know that. Since you are already booked up with that, sure, that seems like a good solution. So, will we see all of you for Thanksgiving?

Sure. Thanks, George.

How many are you?

Fifteen, plus me and the infants and two young boys.

How many seats in your van?

Fifteen.

Damn, Craig, you need a fucking bus.

I guess I would, if we were in the States, but we aren't. Each of the infants will sit on a lap and the way Filipinas cram in, all will fit just fine.

And we all do. The girls refuse to even try the bread stuffing, but they like the turkey and gravy. There is mashed potatoes and all the girls seem to like that. Thanksgiving is a success and Mel announces to Ara and George that we will return the favor, next year in our new home.

Ara smiles and George laughs, Maybe. Maybe the year after that! There is no way you will be finished next year!

I hope we will be done, but he has a point.

The Philippine peso exchange rate is very good right now. Most of the money I have here is in a dollar account. I pull it out in pesos as I need cash. Today I am getting 56 pesos to the dollar. So my money is going a lot farther than I had anticipated.

The economy here is not doing well. Beggars are everywhere in the streets. My girls often comment about that and how life feels so different now.

There is no doubt that they are getting the message, each and every day, as to what their lives might well have been like. That may be the reason why I don't even have to say something in passing before gals are jumping around making whatever it is, real for me.

I am getting spoiled. I am sure if I ever went back to the States, I would either be insufferable, or totally confused as to why nothing was happening, when I mumbled some damn request.

But also, as 2006 approaches, the reality that Dina has already turned thirteen is being advertised ever more loudly and frequently. In nine months she will be fourteen. Nothing seems to have changed regarding her desire to enter my bedroom and have a child. Well, it has. It seems to be increasingly the only thing on her mind.

Lanie is now twelve. So she is right behind Dina. Each year for the next three years I am adding a girl, inexorably moving toward fifteen. And, as they age into the right to enter my bed, the economy is giving them plenty of reasons to believe it is a good thing to do.

The house is coming along nicely. There is every reason to believe that we will be able to move in before 2007 rolls into view. I certainly hope so. There has been word that our lease may only be renewed one more time on the house we are in now.

When you are in this world of building your own home as your own general contractor, the rest of the world falls away. Oh, I am not forgetting the girls. Not at all, but home functions pretty much without me. I go there to eat, wash, make love, and sleep. That's about it. The girls spend time with me on the lot, and that's when we talk about plans, and our lives together.

I love them all, but am so removed from the day-to-day and the childcare that, in some ways, I am a boarder in their home. I had every expectation of moving funds from my investments this year, as I am finally allowed to do so, but there is still a healthy sum in my dollar account here and I just lost track of the time.

My bank balance here is, amazingly, still OK. The Cisco stock is hanging in around fourteen bucks a share and it looks pretty stable. There have been seven stock splits, though none for the last five years.

I am well aware that I am a fucking wealthy man now. The girls don't have a clue and there is no reason to tell them, but since 2001, my ten thousand shares of that Cisco stock have grown to well over half a million shares.

There is no way, no matter what I build here, and no matter how much it costs, that I will ever have a money problem.

And that causes something of a rude awakening. I came here because I was worried about being able to live my life out, in comfort, as opposed to having to settle for a more financially cramped life as an older man.

That worry does not exist anymore. I can live anywhere in the world I might want to, without a concern. Right now I hold what amounts to over seven million dollars' worth of Cisco stock.

Even my crappy Apple stock has gained a bit, though it really is, compared to the Cisco stock over these last twenty years, only a pittance. Still, a share is now worth a little over five bucks. Five years ago, it split two for one and just now it has done the same again. So I have four shares for every one I held initially and each share is worth more than five times the initial purchase price. So it is now worth more than twenty times the initial value.

That crappy Apple stock, which I purchased for just over ten thousand dollars, is now worth over three hundred thousand dollars. Imagine this, there isn't enough value in the Apple investment for me to even worry about it right now!

My economic need to be here, as I understood it in January, 2003, has evaporated. Now? Now, I will never leave. Why? Well, for that answer all I have to do is quote Lyn's sage prognostication: *'Sir, if you have a girlfriend, you will want to stay. I sure this.'*

The only thing that this wealth has changed is that I am not concerned with my budget on the house. It makes the building of it just a lot less stressful. I am enjoying my days at the lot and, weirdly, I suspect I will be sad when it is all done.

George has been out here a few times. He may be the only one who I can talk to about this project who has an inkling about the issues I am confronted with here. Brian, bless his heart, doesn't have a clue.

In point of fact, Brian was out here once, saw all the workmen and almost yelled at me, saying I would be very sad that I had all these men here. My house, he announced, would be a never-ending source of frustration to me.

He has seen fit to not return.

Stefan has not come out and makes odd statements when I see him that he will come when I am done. I am not sure what that means. Does he think I won't be done? Is it an excuse for not having to do a stare and compare? I have no idea.

As of this moment, I have twelve females who come to my bed. That has to be at least ten too many. Am I the only one experiencing such craziness? I hear talk that I am not, but I don't know anyone who is crazy like this.

It must be more common than it appears from the outside looking in. To this day, when I am in and out of the stores buying things for the house, I all but get propositioned.

It happened when I went to a pharmacy and the two girls behind the counter came on to me as a pair, ready to go with me, right then and there. It happens when I go to the supermarket. There it happens as I pass other shoppers and with the gals at the checkout aisle.

Last month I got into an elevator and the elevator operator ... yes they exist here ... a woman of maybe forty, started asking questions. When she learned I wasn't married, even though I told

her I have girlfriends, she started telling me about her teenage daughter as a girl who is available.

Last week, I was in the back of the supermarket, close to the eggs and the bins holding kilo bags of sugar, when a little girl, maybe no older than eight, just kept on smiling at me and following me around the store. Where her mother was I had no clue. So, sure the kid was cute, but there was no way I was going to do anything and, besides her being far too young ... for the love of Pete ... I have too many right now.

My point is, not that I was tempted, I was not, but only that if this happens to me all the time, I can't imagine that there aren't other guys who don't have more than one squeeze.

Are things worse now economically than they were two years ago? Maybe they are. The peso has lost a great deal of value recently.

And that, maybe, brings me back to Dina. She has to be looking around, too. Her seat, as she looks out, is one with a different perspective from mine.

Dina is still going to Lagao National High School. She is around other kids each day. She knows what clothing they have, how much they can afford to eat when lunch comes around, or what they brought to eat from home.

She can see how healthy they are. She can often see how their mothers are doing, when the women show up at school, which is not infrequently in most cases.

My girls can see the beggars on the street when we go downtown. Do they recognize any of those beggars from a past life?

This is their world they are looking at. This is their world without me. What goes through their minds? How do they process it? Are they happy to keep the door shut behind them? Do they wish they could offer a lifeline to a friend?

These are things we don't talk about directly. Never directly. But there are unguarded moments, moments when a word of concern slips out, a thanking of God they are here, there are so many who simply can't be here. I have heard reference to our house as Noah's ark. Even there, I hear mentioned, a quota system was in force.

Are their dreams peaceful or driven by anxiety? Do they feel guilt or are they rejoicing?

I cannot know. It's not that I don't trust my ears or their claims. It is at least partially because we are separated by language. I can't speak theirs, and their command of English is essentially stuck in that of a ten-year-old. It is, for the most part, concrete operational and no more than that. It isn't that they don't have more advanced cognition but, rather, it doesn't get expressed in English.

I truly love my girls. I know that sounds far too facile. I lack any meaningful skill to make it sound heartfelt. I am sure most will think... who can claim to truly be in real, and deep, love with fifteen, or twelve, or even ten girls? I know, it just sounds like an excuse for having a harem.

There are times when I look at myself in the mirror, and, truthfully, I find myself asking the very same question... how can it possibly be?

It does me no benefit to catalog each of their own sweet idiosyncrasies. It makes it no more believable, should I tell you what makes each of them uniquely happy, when we lie with each other.

Would you believe me, even a little bit, when I tell you that even holding any one of these girls' hands is a sure-fire way to calm any anxiety I might have at that moment?

I have known Lyn, Jana, Mel, and Lexi as my lovers for three and a half years. Not one of them is like any of the others. Each of them is special and has a special place in my heart. Li2x, May and Dido I have known for as long, and they have been in my bed for three years. All but Dido have borne me a child.

Every one of them will walk over hot coals for me and, I damn well know it. Every one of them is priceless.

So tell me how any sane man would not be in love with them?

I have known Si2x, Jing2x and Reina for three years, and each of them have been in my bed for more than two and a half years. What I have said of the others, I can equally say of them.

And the two mothers? I have known them for three and a half years. In my hands, they have placed their own flesh and blood. They have bound themselves to me. It could not be clearer. They are mine. Have they caused me heartburn on a couple of occasions? Yes, they have, and I can't conceive of a way that we could have avoided it.

And the last three. I have actually known them for three and a half years, too. In a sense, they are growing up in front of me. Maybe that is the reason I find it the most disconcerting that they want to join the others in what amounts to a harem.

3

By March I have three teams of ‘panday⁶²’ working in the house. Sawdust is everywhere. There are no power tools. All wood work is being done by hand. To be truthful, some of these men have skills that would make an American contractor want to cry. You just don’t see this level of craft in the States... And I am not meaning the hackneyed comment about ‘any more.’ I mean ‘ever.’

You can just sketch something on a piece of paper and some of these men can create a masterpiece for you in a week and for the total sum of \$200 plus material, such as plywood, finishing nails, glue, and sandpaper.

Gilbert is still stopping by each week, but I am getting to the point where I really don’t need him here. The structural work is all done. Sure, there are non-structural elements still being built, but I don’t need him for that.

We find we need to put the floor tile in before we do the cabinetry, and so I go downtown with Lyn and Jana to select the tile. This is a huge order. Five times I select a tile only to find out that they don’t have enough stock!

It is getting frustrating for the vendors as well as for us. In the end, with the help of a guy who does nothing but install tile, he shows me how I can use three different tile colors and designs in a way that is attractive.

We order tile worth well over ten thousand dollars. And, bless the heart of the company where we bought the tile, paying cash. They wanted us to pay an extra four hundred pesos to deliver the order. I just spent more than half a million pesos and they won’t deliver it unless they can charge me a fee. You gotta love the idiot who thinks that is a smart way to thank a good customer.

⁶² Carpenters

I have three teams putting up the interior walls and two teams following, hanging the ceilings. All of a sudden, things are looking more than promising. We might not be totally done, but I am sure we can move in before September.

More months slide by.

I suspect the only reason Dina isn't here on the lot with her mother is because Mica would be lonely. Lyn told me that I should have made the two houses, for Gladies and Shara, big enough for all of each family, but that makes no sense. Consider that, with Shara and her three daughters, each may eventually have a child by me, plus each of those women have a son. That makes for too many in those homes. And that's the case even if I assume no more than one birth per girl. So, no, I don't think that's a good idea. I want my girls in my home. Still, Lyn has asked me to consider enlarging their places and I promised to at least consider it.

It's April and the school year has ended. I have had three girls, Dina, Mica and Lanie, still going to the public high school. But George's caution has convinced me to pull the girls out. They will do home study from now on.

There was some confusion from the others as these three are not pregnant. I didn't want to explain my reasons for fear of frightening everyone. But I found I had to tell them. The results were not what I expected. No one was upset and I got hugs and thank yous.

While I have been focused on the house, Lexi, Jana and Lyn have already completed two years of college and have started their third year.

The economy here is pretty much the same as it has been recently. Beggars abound, and the rare, white-skinned man is going to get propositioned on any given day. Knowing how to say no is the most important skill, and most of the men who come here have never had to learn it before.

As the work on the house reaches completion this year, we are reaching a point where I hope, with all my heart, there will be a final settling in and a calm future.

For a long time, I have been wishing that Father Dan was here sitting next to me, as I tried to sort this out. But I have accepted Lyn's antipathy and Lexi's disrespect for the church, which I have always seen as mine.

The teachings I learned at the knees of the nuns and Father Dan make no sense here. In fact, those teachings are in opposition to any decent respect for a just and moral code. It has taken me my entire life to finally understand how wrong those teachings are. As to belief in God, I accept Lexi's theory. God exists but has nothing to do with the church.

Lyn isn't even that willing to concede that God exists. In Lyn's heart, if God exists, then God is a first class ass.

And if you think I was digressing aimlessly, you are only half right. Yes, it was a digression, but it was not aimless. It all circles back to Dina, Lanie and Mica. This is July.

Next month... in twenty-two days ... Dina comes to my bed. I have already put off her accession longer than I did Dido. Once again, I will likely produce another pregnancy and bring another life into this world. It is nothing but hubris to think any man should father so many children. And yet, it is the natural result of the actions that have occurred.

I need to get right with that. I need to get right with the fact that my girls want more children. Oh, I, sure as hell, can afford it now. Money will not hinder any of this. But how many children will I have?

Damn, my life is just nuts, and I need to accept that and get with the program.

August slides in long before I am prepared for it. In two days, Dina will be fourteen. Dina's mother is just about eight months into her own pregnancy.

All around the house, the gals are making a big deal in their plans for Dina. And, like normal, none of them have consulted with me. Well, I am all for Dina having a great party, but I'll not be the fucking icing on the top of the cake. Dina should have a great party without the issues of joining me cluttering up the day.

This is Sunday and Dina is back from church. I text her.

Sweetheart, please come up to my balcony?

Is everything OK? Please don't say I have to wait any longer.

Don't worry, just come now.

K

A couple of minutes later, dressed in everyday clothing, and with no inkling of why she is here, Dina stands in front of me. She is taller than she was when she was up in this room the last time.

The last time is the time, I, with the help of Lyn, ran her out of here. In the intervening time she has not been here even once.

Dina, you have grown more beautiful every day since I first met you. But, sweetheart, that is not why you are here. If beauty was the reason, then I might be surrounded by girls who were pretty but have bad hearts.

Sir, I not understand.

Dina, do you still want to be my girl?

Of course, yes. I always tell you that.

And what do I always tell you?

You say, wait. Always, you say that. I ask and that always what you say! Wait!

Ask me again.

What?

Ask me.

Sir, I want to be your girl. Please allow this.

OK.

What?

OK, Dina.

We not wait?

No. No more waiting.

When? When we do this? What you mean not wait? My birthday not yet.

Let's do it now. That OK with you?

Really? You not teasing?

Really.

But I not ready!

I smile. I think I know what she means and that's just nuts. How do you dress for something you need to be naked to do?

Sweetheart, unless you are having your period, you are ready. That is, unless you are going to tell me, wait, I not ready!

Dina almost wants to say, wait. But she won't. She knows that. Not now. *What we do, Sir?*

You have a choice. We can kiss first, or we can get undressed first. Which would you like?

Kiss?

Good. I like that. I extend my hand to Dina and she comes to me. Her lips are quivering a bit and I place my hands on her cheeks,

center her face, lift her head a little and seek her lips with mine. Her lips are soft upon mine. They part a bit and slowly our tongues meet. Her hands grasp my biceps. Her head tilts back a bit as she slides her body closer in to me.

Her skin is soft. When I first met her sister, the sun and weather had tightened and darkened her skin. Dina's skin is lighter, softer. She rarely is exposed to the sun and the elements these days. Hers is the body of a girl living in relative luxury and her skin betrays that fact.

The kiss continues, as my hands, and hers, seek a nonsexual but meaningful sense of connectedness. Slowly, an urgency builds in the kisses. She pushes her body more firmly into mine. Hands become more active, more frantic, and needing more of what is not yet there.

She has a top on that needs to be pulled off, over her head. I grab the bottom of it and pull up. There is no resistance. She raises her arms to assist in the removal. She has shorts on. I unbutton and unzip them, pushing them down to the floor. Dina steps out of them.

Now Dina takes the initiative and unbuttons my shirt. The shirt is tucked into my slacks, so she unbuttons and unzips those. My slacks fall to the floor. I step out of them and Dina finishes unbuttoning and removing my shirt.

Both of us are out of our flipflops. She is still in her bra and panties. I am still wearing my boxers. I bring her lips to mine again and kiss her deeply while, at the same time, undoing her bra. She lets it fall to the floor.

Briefly ending the kiss, my lips seek her ear and quietly ask, *Are you ready?*

The answer is clear, if quiet. *Yes. Please.*

I slide my fingers under the waistband of her panties and pull them down until they hit the floor. Dina steps out of them, reaches for my face and pulls me in for another kiss.

I move her to the bed and place her on it, removing my boxers and joining her.

Every part of Dina is smooth, pale, and virginal. My lips move to her breasts. No one has ever touched or sucked on them before. My lips suck her breast and my tongue plays with her nipple. Dina is having feelings she has never felt before.

Si2x and Jing2x had ringside seats watching their mothers earn an income. All this is something she has never seen before. Dina's life has been far more protected.

My mouth on her breast is new, unexpected and exciting. She had no idea that this was part of sex.

But, the foreplay needs to end. I can put off the main event for just so long. I knew I would be with Dina and so, before she entered the room, I had applied a little K-Y to my cock. The tube is on the nightstand by the bed and the cap is off it. I push another bit onto my fingers and apply it to her labia.

My cock is centered over her cunt. I spread her legs and am holding them wide. I push in.

Her sister, Dido, was a tough character. Pain was something she expected and never showed. Not so for Dina. She cries out and I wait before continuing.

Dina is ready now, and she shows me by reaching up to my face and pulling me down for another kiss. The fucking begins.

The thing about fucking is that it is one of the most basic acts our bodies do, and no one needs to teach us. Our body informs us and we just do it.

It is no less true now. Dina and I make real and meaningful love for the very first time. It will never be like this again, but that just

doesn't matter. What matters is that we are now joined, and nothing is going to pull us apart if I have anything to say about it.

And just like every true love you have ever been with, at times such as this, there is only her, the mattress, and you connected to her. There is nothing else in the world. Nothing. Time is meaningless.

We pay attention to our own body and the body of our partner. Nothing else matters. At those moments, no one else matters.

I don't know how long we have been fucking, but I sense I need to bring it to a close. Dina is somewhere else now. I have no idea how many times she has cum, but now it is my turn and, though it will only be once, it is all we need.

She gasps. Her eyes lock onto mine.

Sir?

No, Dina. My name is Craig.

Dina tells me that she thinks she really enjoyed her birthday party a lot better. I am sure she did... am very glad she did. Right now, if she was in classes at Lagao National High School and not doing home study, she would look no different to the other students and her teachers than she did last week. But she is different now. I can see it in her eyes, and in how she is in these surroundings.

It is an ineffable, but real, difference.

This is just another morning here at the lot. Much has been done and much more needs to be done. Two outbuildings, the ones for Shara and Gladies, have been built and the girls have moved into them. Both swear that these homes are the nicest they have ever had.

We still have the huts they had lived in and I have moved the huts to either side of the entry gate. My hut is now unused and I am not sure what I want to do with it. I don't need it any more. I am set up now in the partially unfinished first floor of the house.

I have really enjoyed building this, but there are moments I am frustrated. I am frustrated now as the basic structure is up, the wire runs are all in place, the plumbing all completed to the CR's, the kitchen sinks, the wash room, and the bar. We are done installing interior walls and ceilings. Carpentry work for the kitchens, bathrooms, the bedroom closets, the bar, and the entertainment centers continues. The stone countertops will need to be cut to fit on-site and installed. Painting inside and lighting fixtures come later. Outside we need to apply the (plaster) skim coat prior to painting.

The permanent gate has been up for a while but will need a new paint job. Following that, I have three more outbuildings to start on, plus walking paths construction and landscaping.

So, George's caution last Thanksgiving was warranted, as the months roll on.

We have installed, and finished, the basic work in the utility room and have water here in one bathroom, which I am now calling a CR, as no one here says bathroom. The workmen still use the latrine, but I don't have to do so. It has allowed me to get running water for Shara's and Gladies' homes. There are also a number of outside taps that the workmen use.

It is the finish work in the main house that is in progress. I think it is taking a long time, and have reasoned that it is the size of the structure. A number of folks have told me I am building this very quickly. Many places not nearly so large take longer to construct.

That may well be. Everything here is done by hand. And I do mean everything. We were getting deliveries of two hundred fifty kilo sacks of Portland cement. Every sack was loaded on the truck by hand and unloaded the same way. There are no forklifts. Every hollow block we used, and we have used thousands, has been made by hand right here on the lot.

But, because I am not constrained by cash, we have been able to run as many work crews as it is possible to supervise. And I have

not needed to space things out timewise on my purchases related to budget limitations. That has allowed me to move far faster than others have been able to do.

George tells me I am doing fine. I hope I am. All I can say is that it is gratifying seeing it all come together, now that the finish work has commenced.

Shara has come to sit with me. Gladies will join us after lunch. Right now, Gladies is cooking lunch for me. I no longer bring food from home. These two gals take care of all my needs while I am out here.

But, considering how far each of them is in her pregnancy, their roles in taking care of me will not be possible very soon. Dido and May tell me they are moving out here to stay with their mothers next week. As they come out, so will May's child, Alyssa. That kid is only two years old. But Dido and May also have younger brothers here on the lot.

From an empty piece of dirt, there are now two completed homes with occupants. It feels good.

4

Once we get our house finished, there will be plenty of room for all. And though we are not yet done, I am pretty sure that late this year we will be able to move in, even if the place is not completely finished. And late this year is approaching fast.

But the sense of time and urgency is gone. The exacting detail I pushed for in this house will not be as required in the other structures. The bedrooms in Shara's and Gladies' homes are just that. Rooms with lights, electrical and an aircon⁶³. The guards' structure is actually four stories, though the top two floors have stub walls and there is a large roof to provide shade throughout the day. It will look out over the front gate and enable a clear view of anyone approaching. I will have installed CCTV camera equipment that feeds back to a room in the house.

There will also be a 'commlink' between the guards' building and the house. We need that for announcing visitors and informing the guards if they can allow someone through the gate. At the moment we are using walkie-talkies. It works but I want something better.

Oh! I failed to mention the generator. Mine is not trailer-mounted but, in all other regards, I have exactly what George has and, no, it is not overkill. Brownouts⁶⁴ here are common.

There remain a few bumps on the horizon. One of them seems to require me to return, briefly, to the USA. I need to sell some of the Cisco shares. The value per share is getting better and the bank account here needs replenishment.

To my amazement, the Apple stock is gaining value almost every week. I had not considered selling it before because it wasn't worth

⁶³ I have succumbed to using the local term for Air Conditioner.

⁶⁴ This requires an explanation. In the USA, when there was inadequate power, (less than 110V) we referred to it as a brownout. A blackout meant no power. Here, inadequate power is a common and everyday fact of life for most Filipinos who are connected to over-utilized transformers. Blackouts are unscheduled large area (maybe island-wide in some cases) loss of all power. Brownouts are regional and many times scheduled (though you have no idea that they were scheduled) losses of power.

enough, and now I want to see how high it will go. Today the stock is trading for 10.78! That makes my shares worth over six hundred thousand dollars.

My Cisco investment is worth far more, but it is not close to the high it had been in January of 2004 when it reached 29.13. Today it is trading at 24.64. Since 2004, for the longest time, the stock was not even at 20 per share. The current price is a real surprise. So, while it has been higher, this is the stock I need to sell at least some of.

I email my broker to find out what I have to do to authorize the sale of fifty thousand shares of Cisco. I receive an email back from him asking for my current US address. I email back saying I don't have one, and then he freaks out. He is not authorized to handle my account! It is being transferred to an agent licensed to handle foreign customer accounts. I email back, saying I am not a foreigner. But, he tells me, for the purpose of buying and selling stock, I am a foreigner now!

There are two separate issues related to this. The first appears to be that I don't actually have a broker at the moment and therefore can't sell anything. The second is that I won't have to travel to the US, when and if I do get a broker.

I try contacting the old broker again, but receive a form email back from some other office in the brokerage, informing me that domestic brokers are prohibited by law from contacting overseas clients in any manner. I am directed to contact a different office in a different city. Fuck.

I contact the new office and they leave me hanging for two weeks. I call, I email. Nothing. I contact corporate and ask them for help. I am promised someone will contact me. I get the name of the person to whom I am speaking, while I am on the phone with corporate. These folks are not brokers, and since they can't buy or sell stock, I gather they are allowed to talk to me. They just can't help, other than to pass messages.

Another week passes and I have heard nothing! I call the guy I spoke with at corporate. I tell him, if I don't get a call from a broker in twenty-four hours, I will fly back to the USA for the sole purpose of moving my accounts to a different company. He promises I will receive a call.

I do get a call. It is from a very unhappy guy who is pissed off that he has to waste his time with some clown he can't make any real commissions on.

Look buddy, what is the big damn urgent hurry?

I need to sell a small amount of stock.

OK, that's what I figured ... and what are you wanting to sell?

Fifty thousand of my Cisco.

Say again?

Fifty thousand of Cisco. What's so hard? I have five hundred and forty-thousand shares. I just want to sell a small amount.

Just a sec... what is your account number with us?

I give him the account number.

No that can't be, that's a domestic number.

Yes, and when I opened the account in the 1990s, I lived in Boston.

I can't use that account number.

Well, I am not allowed to contact the agent I had who handled the account because I am no longer domestic.

Shit, OK, let me get this sorted out... You say you have over 500K of Cisco?

Yes, and fifty-six thousand of Apple.

OK, OK, I promise, I will get back to you. Give me all your contact info.

I do, and, before he gets off the line, he sends me an email to make sure I get it. I do, and the call ends.

Two days later, I get an email from him. I have a new account number and some forms that need a US notary. He specifically warns me, I cannot use a Philippine notary.

I know there is a US notary in the US consulate in Cebu, so I will need to go there. He cannot sell the stock for me until he receives my forms back, signed and notarized. The forms are in PDF format. I print them out.

This will be the first time I am not at the lot since we started. Only the finish work is left. Lyn has access to enough money for house paint and supplies that will most certainly be needed. The painters only tell me how much they need for a day or two. No matter how many times I tell them that they need to give me a more complete order, I just can't get them to do it!

These days we have an SUV and a pickup, as well as the van. Lyn drives me to the airport and I get on a PAL flight to Cebu.

The consulate functions on a first come, first serve basis starting at seven-thirty in the morning. I will be there early tomorrow morning.

It is located on the ground floor of the Waterfront Cebu City Hotel and Casino. I have already booked a room there. I splurge and pay what works out to be about one hundred bucks for an upscale suite, just for me, and just for one night. Whatever. The difference between a regular room and a suite is marginal.

At seven in the morning, I am in line and before eleven I am done. Now I just need to send these documents as fast as possible. The hotel concierge informs me that they can facilitate DHL services directly from the hotel's business support office.

It costs me a bit more than if I had tracked down DHL on my own, but, fuck it. It is done. The documents are on their way to their final destinations, and so am I, back to GenSan.

We are not done with building on the lot, but the house is done... well and truly done. It is also only five days before Thanksgiving.

There are five Thursdays this month and the fourth one falls on the twenty-third.

The lease on our current house runs out in two months, but we will be vacating now. I enlist the help of fifteen workmen from the lot and borrow a couple of 'Bongos' in an effort to get us moved, in one day, Monday the twentieth.

With fifteen females and fifteen guys plus the Bongos, the pickup, and the van with the seats folded down, it works. We will return to that place next week and give it a thorough cleaning. But we spend the very first night in our own home!

George and Ara are invited over for Thanksgiving.

I don't want to give the specs on this place. It is far too big and it will sound like bragging. I am pleased, beyond any way to express, how happy I am with my new home. There would have been no way to build this place in the USA. The cost would have been prohibitive and the property taxes alone would have probably been staggering.

But, here, with the able and incalculably important help of Rena, she says that she expects my annual taxes on this place will be only what amounts to six hundred bucks a year. That's all, and Rena tells me, if I pay by December of the preceding year, I can get a twenty percent reduction. Yes, Sir, that means I only really have to pay the equivalent of four hundred and eighty dollars. Of course, Rena is only speculating. It takes a while before all palms are greased and the tax amount is officially established.

But the house has some nice features. There are no ground floor bedrooms in the main part of the house, though there are in the other parts that create the courtyard.

The courtyard, enclosing a square with open space, is made up of three sides that connect to the back of the house proper. Each of those sides has eight bedrooms and CR's. On each side, there are four bedrooms on the first floor and four on the second.

A courtyard-facing balcony both, provides entrance to the second floor rooms and, joins a balcony on the second floor of the main house. In the main part of the house, there are ten bedrooms with CR's on the second floor and my suite is on the smaller third floor.

With deep eaves and a roof that extends far beyond the walls of my third floor rooms, I get direct light only at daybreak and sunset. All other times of the day, I am in shade. Window glass surrounds me up here, only broken by the structural posts which rise up to the roof. My CR and dressing room are interior rooms and so do not affect the glass as it surrounds the floor.

The deep setback from the dimensions of the second floor and the deeply tinted glass provide me with privacy at all times during the day, as well as a walk-around balcony. At night, sheers on the bedroom window glass suffice for purposes of modesty.

The only things I had to give up in the move are my DSL connection and landline phone. There are no communications supporting copper loops out this far from town. There is rumor of fiber cable at some time in the future, but it sure isn't here now. I arrange for a 3G Home Internet connection from Globe Telecom. It sucks, but I have no choice. Once again, 4G wireless is coming, but not here yet.

Still, the 3G connection is important. I need it for email at a minimum! I have word that the broker has processed everything I sent him. I have a couple of emails promising it is in the works. But it is not done.

Thanksgiving is a lot of fun. Ara has not seen the place before and George has not been out for over half a year; he asks for a count of the number of bedrooms.

Currently? Or when we are done?

You mean there will be more?

Maybe four more. Right now there are thirty-five bedrooms here and four more in out buildings.

My God, Craig, that's a hotel! And why three more?

There are two bungalows with two bedrooms apiece. I am probably going to add a bedroom on to each. We currently have two huts for guards there. I will build a small place with one or two bedrooms and remove the huts.

So the guards are permanent?

Yes. Don't want to go into all of it, but the cautions you impressed upon me last year have had an impact on my thinking.

Craig, you can't need even thirty-five bedrooms now and if you will have forty-one with the bungalows... well why?

Ara slaps George and that gets the guy a little peeved. But she gives him an 'are you that dumb' look before shaking her head and explaining, for he who may well be mathematically impaired, Fifteen girls here, see, George? OK, so almost all has a child. Two have extra children, right Lyn? ... So right away there are maybe thirty! You think there not be more? George, can't you count? Do you know about Mica? Her?

Dear Ara, there are times I prefer not to know. And, no I didn't know there were so many children. Men don't gossip like that! I don't want to know about Mica. How do you know?

Mel, Lyn and me, we chat.

Well, dear, please don't feel the need to share. I think I am better off not knowing. But speaking of something I did see, and in light of your claim of concern, Craig, why do I see what must be six motorcycles out here under the carport?

I'm not sure I follow. What's your point?

Kidnapping! Being on a motorcycle is not safe.

I hadn't given that any thought.

Well, you might want to.

Gotcha.

After the meal, George and I stretch our legs and I give him a complete tour. As we enter the master suite, George takes a good look around, gives me an odd smile before...

Craig, I knew you weren't one of the Social Security and Vet benefit guys. That was clear pretty much right from the beginning. But this, my friend, well this is a whole 'nother thing entirely.

Just lucky, George. That's all. I am just lucky.

Yes, well, Craig, get rid of those fucking bikes. You need more guards. You need bodyguards. Your girls need bodyguards. There are too many who will know about this place.

George is not being overly dramatic, but I am not sure I want to go that far. To do what he suggests requires having my own army. There are folks here with their own private armies. It happens. But at some point such things can backfire on you.

Eight days after Thanksgiving for me, seven days after Thanksgiving, the thirtieth, in the USA, the Cisco stock is sold. The good news is that the value is higher than it was when I wanted to sell it. It sold for 27.02!

Before taxes, it comes to over one million and three hundred thousand dollars. US taxes are pulled out right away and the balance is wired directly to my account here in GenSan.

I am told that I should see the cash in about ten days. I ask for proof of tax payment right away. I will bring that to the bank and inform them of the impending deposit.

Maybe you think that is a little over the top. It isn't. I have to prove taxes are paid in the USA. Otherwise there can be questions raised about money laundering and tax evasion. Of the money I make on the sale, my tax bite in the USA is fifteen percent. That leaves about one million and one hundred-forty thousand dollars to transfer.

It will come into my dollar account. I won't convert it to pesos. But, as a way to understand accounts in banks here, deposits are

only insured in pesos and only to five hundred thousand pesos. Maybe 0.02% of the population ever reaches that point. That I will have this coming in as dollars amounts to over fifty-five million pesos. And that will set off alarms through the bank here. It is better if I prepare them before they start shitting bricks.

I get the tax declaration document via a PDF and bring it with me to my bank branch office. BPI is one of the largest and most stable national banks. But GenSan is not where the big hitters tend to reside. I guess if I was in Makati or Cebu, they would have been more sanguine, but not here. No, they were anything but sanguine. I have a feeling that they wished I would move my account somewhere else.

It takes some phone calls on their end with their parent offices, before things calm down and I am told that there will be no problems. They thank me for bringing in the tax declaration and take photocopies of it. I gather that they are keeping one copy and three copies have to be sent to their parent office.

When the money does come, I withdraw what amounts to two million pesos and open up an account at Metrobank. I take another two million pesos worth and put it in a BDO branch bank. And I do the same thing with RCBC bank.

The bottom line is that we have plenty of cash to live on and there are multiple debit cards for a variety of banks. If one bank's ATM is offline, there are no worries. Plus, I start getting offers of credit cards from all these banks. None care about my credit score in the USA. I figure I might as well have some of these cards, too.

I establish a monthly spend of three hundred thousand pesos. The girls think it is way too much. I am not sure, but it should carry us about fifteen years before needing replenishing. That is a budget of a little over six thousand dollars a month.

5

As 2006 comes to a close, we are all OK.

There are still details. There always will be needs to be taken care of.

The carport needs to be extended a bit and we really need to get started on the additional bedrooms to the bungalows. Following that, we will build the guards a new, nicer place to replace the huts.

After that, I need to work on a nicer driveway and the landscaping.

For the very first time, I watch the New Year's fireworks from the open, but roofed-over, fourth floor of the house. It is really just a tiled floor with guardrails at the edges and no real walls. The view of the in-the-round fireworks is spectacular. I am a damned lucky guy.

This vantage point allows me to look out and see the various things under construction as we push forward with the next set of projects. I can look out and see the work on the bungalows, the guards' building, and the driveway construction from up here.

It is June 29th. News has just come today that has Apple has announced this new thing called the iPhone.

I have hopes that the iPhone will lift the stock price a bit. Yesterday it closed at 18.17, which puts my investment in Apple a bit over a million dollars. It is still not anywhere near close to my Cisco investment, which closed at 28.10 for a total value of over thirteen million and seven hundred thousand.

I am fucking wealthy... at least I am on paper! But it is also worth noting that, by Filipino standards, with just what I already have in the bank here, I am a very wealthy man.

The months move along and, in July, I run into a date that cannot be ignored. Gladies is making sure I don't ignore it. Lanie is turning fourteen.

Lanie was only ten when I first started this house in 2004. Dido was fourteen then. In June, this year, Dido turned eighteen, as are Lexi and May. Lexi is twenty, as are her three friends who started their time with me as maids. Lyn, who was nineteen when I met her, is now twenty-three and Jana is now twenty-two.

It's two days before Lanie's birthday. The girl has been giving me furtive glances all week. She knows I took Dina a few days before her friend's birthday and she must be figuring I will do the same thing again.

I have every intention of doing so but, as I know and Lanie has been afraid to tell me, she has had her period and while she has expected to get the call, as it were, she also knows that these past few days have not been the most propitious days to consummate the deal. What she doesn't know is that Gladies and May have been my spies. Her period ended yesterday.

These days, Lanie is home all day under the home schooling regimen. So I don't need to be concerned about 'school nights.' It also doesn't need to be a surprise. Considering Gladies is sitting with me, asking for updates, there is no way that Lanie will not be fully prepped.

Why are you so worried about this? You weren't involved when May came to my bed. Shara had no involvement with Dido or Dina. It's going to be just fine. Just relax.

You not know Lanie enough. She worry she not good enough. She worry you not think she pretty enough. She worry she not know what to do, Craig. I worry, too!

Gladies, nothing is going to go wrong.

How you know?

For the love of Pete! How many of you have I fucked? Don't you think I know how to do this?

Ha! You, yes, you know. She not!

You think May knew? She was scared too. It will be fine.

When you do this?

Tonight.

When?

Hell, Gladies, I don't know. Sometime after dinner. Really? Does this matter?

I need to tell her!

Why? That will only make her more nervous.

Please? When?

And now I decide to lie. It's better if I do.

At ten tonight.

That late!

Yes, well, it will be at ten.

OK. I tell her not to worry all night long. It will happen late, that all.

Gladies gives me a really nice kiss and moves off to do who knows what.

In truth, I will try to be with Lanie by eight. Lanie will know we will be together but hopefully won't be a nervous wreck.

Fifteen minutes later, May is by my side. Keys to the bike please, my love?

Where are you going?

Lanie needs something nice to wear tonight!

Why? Once she gets to the bedroom, she won't be wearing a damned thing.

Craig!

May! Stop this. If Lanie wants pretty things in the future, sure, why not. But, not tonight. You and your mother are just being silly.

OK, but 'Nay say you should walk over to our house.

Why?

She will be with you.

What?

Craig, it best if you give 'Nay some cum now. Lanie not able to get pregnant tonight. Best if you last a long time with her, so give 'Nay your cum now. You last longer tonight with Lanie, see?

You two are evil! No, May, I don't want to make her sore the first time she is with me. If I take a very long time it will not be good for her.

Really?

Yes. Really.

OK, I tell 'Nay you not coming. And the thought makes her giggle.

The thought that I don't think Lanie is pretty, is pretty much nonsense. She has always been cute and she is now developing into a beauty. The issue of not wanting her, has nothing to do with her and everything to do with having sex with every female in two families.

The reality is that I am doing so anyway. That battle was already fought and she is definitely coming to my bed. Not only is she, but Mica will be mine next year unless Mica comes to a different decision.

But for the life of me, that is where it must stop. It stops at fifteen.

At the dinner table tonight there is a bunch of teasing from the other girls, and there is a fair bit of encouragement. Lanie sure

doesn't seem to be all that nervous, as Gladies was making her out to be. But maybe this is just a front.

All I am doing is eating my supper and smiling a bit. That is not to say that I am not being baited. I am just not biting. In the middle of all this, Lyn reaches under the table and gives my hand a squeeze. If anyone here is aware of how conflicted I am, it is she. These last two years, Lyn and I have spent a great deal of time talking about all manner of things, including how I see her and the other girls here.

I hide nothing from her and I suspect she has not withheld anything from me. Regardless of the reasons Lyn climbed aboard, between us, now, there is a firm connection and real love.

So this 'taking' of Lanie... I really can't understand it any other way... may be necessary for the stability of our family, as it functions, but it sure isn't on my bucket list. I would just as soon be with Lyn or Jana, or any of the others, who already have access to my bed. Adding another seems patently nuts.

But, pretty Lanie sits here, eating her rice and gulay⁶⁵, with the certainty that, in the morning, she will call me Craig and no longer Sir.

It is a rite of passage.

Lanie is watching the TV with Si2x and Reina when I come to collect her at eight tonight.

Sir, my mother say it will be ten. Why now?

Because, now, you are not worried. Come!

I get a big smile from Si2x. I gather that means she approves of my decision. Lanie is a little nonplused, but she comes with me.

When she was ten, Lanie's nails were painted pink. Now they are deep red.

⁶⁵ Vegetables.

When she was ten, she was skinny, now she has curves.

When she was ten, her face was angular, now there is a softness to it.

When she was ten, she would watch cartoons on the TV when she came to visit her sister; now she is addicted to the teleseryes⁶⁶.

When she was ten, she was just a kid from a family I wish I had never met; now she is to be mine, body and soul.

This makes no sense.

This makes perfect sense.

This should not be happening.

This must happen.

She deserves a boy her age.

No boy here, anywhere close to her age, can provide for her, in any way.

She should be able to just grow up and spread her wings as she reaches adulthood.

As she reaches adulthood there is nothing waiting for her without me and what I can provide for her. There is no wind for her wings without me. This is not a land of opportunity. This is a class-based culture. There are the very wealthy, many times tied to Chinese money and heritage. There is the poor Filipino, with no way up and nowhere to go.

Come from a family with money? There are positions waiting for you. Just choose. Come from a poor family? Tough shit.

I can scream my lungs out that it should not be this way. Still, why am I here, if but for the very structure of this society and the rational outcomes that spring from it?

⁶⁶ In the US they are soap operas. In Mexico they are telenovelas.

And so, I climb these two flights of stairs with this very pretty, sweet girl, knowing full well that she will welcome me into her body. She will do it with the full understanding of why she is here, and what is happening.

Is anyone forcing her? No. No one. Is something forcing her? That is a tricky question. Is understanding reality tantamount to being forced?

I don't know. Truly, I don't. If Lanie was fully grown, I would have no problem saying she was making a choice, albeit a hard one. She is not an adult. Yes, she is old enough to bear children and here in the Philippines, at her age, adulthood does come early.

Jean Piaget says that full cognition happens at age twelve and up. So, Monsieur Piaget, is it your belief that I should consider Lanie an adult with full cognition? I can't wrap my head around it.

Certainly May, Li2x and Dido have never seemed to regret the decision they made as they reached this age. They are, each one of them, eighteen now. Two of them, mothers to my children. All three nothing less than wives to me.

And yet, as we enter the bedroom, I can't erase the doubt that swirls in my mind as it has every time I have taken a girl this age.

I enter the room first, with Lanie right behind. She closes and locks the door. There is nothing to take special note of in the action. It is common to lock bedroom doors once you enter.

She is not trembling or looking ill in the least. A smile rests on her lips. She is looking at me expectantly. I reach out to her and she comes to me without pause. My hands on her shoulders, and hers on my elbows, I lean in and down for a kiss. She tilts her head back to receive my lips. We taste each other. Briefly. The kiss ends. I look down; she looks up; we both smile; we kiss again.

This kiss lasts longer, far longer. My arms encircle her. Her arms are around my waist.

She is barefoot. I suspect she had plans to dress for me, later. But now there is but a small top and a pair of shorts over her underwear. I am thinking about taking them off, when she breaks the kiss and tells me that May told her that it is her job to undress me.

By all means, please proceed.

Lanie purses her lips and concentrates as she goes about the task. Button by shirt button until the slacks are an impediment to proceeding farther. She now applies her attention to the belt buckle, and the slacks.

With care and methodically, Lanie undresses her man. That is what May told her I am. I am her man. Lanie tells me that Si2x told her that I am to be her only man. It is her job now, right along with the rest of them, to make this world work for me. ...

And so, as my boxers are being removed, I hear, *Si2x say, our world is good, only if your world is good. There is nothing else that matter. Yes, that what she say. And, Sir, you know, then Lyn, she say, Si2x tell me the truth. So, we all need to make you happy. I hope I do that now.*

You are, Lanie. Now, may I do, as you did, and undress you?

In barely louder than a whisper she says, *Yes, Sir.*

There are only four articles of clothing to remove and each one of them is but a small piece of cloth.

Lanie is as pretty out of her clothing as she is pretty in it. And seeing her like this only makes me appreciate her more. She is standing without fear. There is poise, and some self-awareness, some knowledge that there is nothing to worry about.

I bring her back into my arms and we kiss again. This time it is skin against skin and it feels good as we hold each other tight. I briefly note that she is on her toes as we kiss.

Her left hand reaches down and caresses my member and my sack. *It is warm, Sir. Nice.*

It feels nice.

May I look at it before you put it in me?

Yes, of course. The kiss having ended, Lanie simply goes into a squat. Her face is now at the same level as my nuts. I am not rock hard, but I am tumescent. Lanie takes my member fully into her two hands, inspecting and gently stroking it. She kisses my nut sack.

You like?

Yes. I like.

She kisses the side of my cock and then licks it. She has not taken me in her mouth and I am not asking her to do so. Let her explore. Let her do whatever she wishes now.

The stroking becomes a little more vigorous with longer strokes. Her mouth is no longer on the side of my cock. The very top is now between her lips. Her tongue protrudes below and licks up. For a girl with no previous knowledge, it is clear that one of my girls has been providing some instructions.

I urge her to get up and move up to the bed. Now it is my turn. If she can take me orally, I can return her the favor. I spread her legs and ever so gently put my lips on her labia, first just kissing them and then allowing my tongue to divide the lips in search of her clitoris.

The feedback I am getting is welcoming. When my tongue does find that magic place, Lanie pushes her pussy hard into my mouth. My hands encircle the globes of her small ass, no bigger than two firm grapefruits. She is a tasty treat. She is happy and I am no less enjoying her, myself.

But it is time to move on to the main event. She is already wet and there is no need for lubricant. Lanie is on her back. I am far larger than is she, but that is not a problem for her as she spreads her legs are far as she can, preparing herself for my entry.

This is as consensual as it is possible to be. Lanie grabs my cock and attempts to stuff it into her cunt. With my assistance, the task is done. I see no pain in her face. She is supremely happy as I inch in, short stroke after short stroke, until reaching the bottom. The only feedback I get is a huge smile and a giggle.

I start pumping with long and true strokes. Lanie is staring at me, a smile present. And then a, *Oh, this so good. So, good. More, yes.*

Happy, Lanie?

Yes! More? Oh, my love, more. Yes! You my love! More!

My Lanie has decided I am her love. No one made her do that. I never asked for that. I don't suspect ulterior motives. I am her love and she is now mine, one of my loves.

The lovemaking continues on, possibly longer than I had any intention taking her tonight. Lanie shows no sign of discomfort. Her womanly juices flow freely, lubricating us as we go... on and on. She is indefatigable and I expect she will be unhappy with anything less than more than I can even deliver.

The old man with a moral dilemma. Her young love with her quite reasonable and unquenchable desire. It is a farce! And there comes a time where cum must come. And come it does.

And what do I hear?

Oh my God! Yes. Yes. Oh, my love, thank God, I make you happy! Yes!

No man, nowhere, deserves this level of sweet, pure goodness. I sure as fuck don't. Ask anyone at the Eire Pub, they'll tell ya', *'Ab no, fer sure, Craig's no saint. Not him. He not be deservin'!*

And yet, this young, sweet girl has me tight in her arms as I lie next to her.

This makes no sense.

This makes all the sense in the world.

6

Morning.

Gladies is here in the main house and here by my side. She gives me a real heartfelt kiss before sitting down and smiling like she won the lottery. I find this just as nuts as everything else in my life.

I don't even want to ask her why she is so damned happy. I already know, and the fact that her daughter of fourteen years and I fucked our brains out last night, ought not to be a reason why the girl is tickled pink, even though she clearly is.

I am ignoring her glee as best I can, without being rude. But finally she can't hold it in any more. *You make my little one so happy!*

I gather she called you?

Ha! Yes! She called as soon as you in the shower! She can't wait to tell her Nanay! She's my good girl! She know I want to know. Craig, you tricked me!

What?

You say you wait until ten! But you not do that! She not ready.

I know. That was on purpose. It was better that way.

I guess, but no more tricks!

Gladies, I have no reason or need to trick you. I have fucked you and both your daughters. There is no one else to take.

Ha! I have nieces!

No! You even try and I will run you off this fucking land! Gladies! I am serious!

OK, I know. Lyn say that. No one else.

Good.

You OK for another?

What? I just told you, no more girls!

No, not that. I mean, another time with me, maybe? You do my daughter, I get horny, Craig. Truly.

Not here. My bedroom is being cleaned now.

No, in my house. I send Sherwin and our daughter to Shara's house. Come!

I am not particularly horny, but I guess I could get that way. And dammit, she looks so cute when she is begging to be fucked. OK.

So, why isn't my mind working today? Yes, sure she said her son and our daughter, Zoe, are over at Shara's but she didn't say a word about May. As soon as I walk in to Gladies bungalow, I see her, and she is naked.

May is dragging me into the bedroom and Gladies follows, peeling off her own clothes. They then start almost ripping my clothing off, as I start getting my wits about me... *Gladies, you safe?*

No.

May?

No.

But I am! I hear from behind me.

Gladies, what is happening?

We all yours now. Start with me, then May and end in Lanie. We want you. You ours now. Now we happy!

There are weirder ways to start a day.

But this time with Gladies and her daughters may be close to the very top. It wasn't on my bucket list, but in a way it was on Gladies'... at least to the extent that she and her girls were safe for life. Sons can, in her eyes and in the eyes of many Filipinas, make their way in the world. The boys will go. Maybe they will become

seafarers. Maybe they will learn a trade. There are no five month contracts and then, at age 30, nothing more.

It is the girls for whom mothers have concern. It is their safety and prospects that cause the worry. For Gladies, that worry is at an end and, as such, she is as happy as a wealthy Filipina who lives in a mansion, with a black SUV, her own maids, and her own drivers.

She tells me that Shara and she have more landscaping plans for our property. I am happy to hear that. While I will want a say in what actually happens, Shara and she are invested in this place as theirs. They will take care of it, rather than take from it.

In my need to establish a place to live out my days, I have created something new for fifteen girls and two sons of theirs. The ripples my presence have created have changed the lives of these others.

I am doing my best for them, but it is still possible to be sad about this, and I am. I keep on telling myself that, no matter what happens now, it is not their 'always.' Nothing stays the same. That has to be my mantra.

In a way, though, I do believe that Lyn, Jana, Mel and Lexi will be with me until I die. I do not really know what the future is for the rest, though I have come to suspect that Si2x will always be here too.

Jana and Lexi are only a semester away from graduating with degrees. Lyn's engineering degree is a five year college requirement. So, she has three more semesters to go. But Jana will later take the licensure test for public accounting and Lexi will take the test for teaching high school English. It is my true hope that they will have rewarding careers. And then I will pat myself on the back for making that option available to each of them.

Mel? Well, Mel, my lovely Mel, isn't the sharpest knife in the drawer, but her life here is, for her, the very best she could hope for. Mel is not complaining and I'm not either.

May, Li2x and Dido are also now in college. I bet you didn't expect that, did ya'? All three completed their high school studies. They started in June of 2006 and are completing their second year now. May wants to be a Veterinarian. Li2x is enrolled in an IT degree program, and Dido is pursuing a degree in teaching Biology. (And yes, I do see the humor in that.)

So, right now, I have six girls in college. Dina, Lanie and Mica may well follow them in other academic paths. Dina has one more year of home study high school. Lanie has two and Mica three.

I feel good about that. While I am far from a noble guy, I do get a modicum of pride in what I am funding.

Si2x made me laugh a few days ago when she mentioned that, if all nine pass their licensure exams and get employment, they might bring in, at some point, as much as I have budgeted for our monthly spend.

Based on current salary numbers, I don't see that happening right away, but over time, yes. What they are pursuing are the types of jobs the poor can never attain to as, they can't make it through school that far.

Here's real life in the Philippines for the poor Filipino. Even if you can scrape up the money for the tuition, these days, you need a computer. You can't afford a computer. Even if you can afford to buy a laptop via time payments, which will in the end double the cost, you live in a bedspacer, or dormitory, or you rent a room where there are no locks on the door. It's a one hundred percent certainty that your laptop will be stolen. Stolen long before you have even paid for it and while you still need it for school.

So, no, you aren't going to college. And if you start, you won't be completing. Yes, you might start. Some do, not knowing the pitfalls. You might get a year into it. But you won't complete and you are now in the 5 month contract 'endo' employment trap and unemployable by the time you reach 30, plus you are still paying for that damned laptop you no longer have. If you don't have an endo

contract, maybe you are a massage therapist at a spa. Maybe you are lucky and become a married guy's mistress to supplement the meager wages, or you start hooking. Hey, a girl's gotta eat.

That is the difference for these girls. It's as real as it gets. Am I just a stepping stone for a few of them? If so, I am not complaining. It's OK. I'm not going to be lonely.

The economy here has not improved. There are parts of town you can't walk through without being just about mobbed by beggars. Wages remain very low. There are no help wanted signs anywhere.

Internet cafes are popping up all over and girls are learning English in school for one reason only, to get a foreign boyfriend. It is the new exit strategy. I have no idea if it will work. I still don't see that many new expats here. But then, maybe I wouldn't. I am here, on our land, most of the time.

And that gets me thinking about Mica, sweet, adorable, Mica. She is the next one who wants in my bed.

I am going to put her on a path to success and, if she keeps at it like she has in school so far, she might well make it all the way, like the others are doing. If she does, I will be endlessly happy. She doesn't need to be mine once she has made it through. She doesn't need to be mine at all. I will still put her through school. None of the younger ones should need to be in my bed, regardless of what their mothers are telling them.

My problem in this regard is not what I tell them, not what their sisters or the other girls tell them. It is what Gladies and Shara say. I have ordered the mothers not to scheme, but I really can't order the mothers to be silent. They are sending messages I wish they would not send and there is no stopping it.

Both mothers tell their kids that this bond they make with me is before God and that it must never be broken. None of the others say such a thing.

It is true that, if you ask Lyn, she will sneer at the statement relating to God, but concur that the girls would be fools to leave. Lexi may hate the church, but she does believe in God. She is not sure the mothers are wrong. She just isn't sure enough to make the claim. Mel thinks the mothers are right but knows I don't want her to say that! Si2x, Jing2x, and Reina are pretty much with Lyn on this.

No one is pushing the idea, other than the mothers ... but no one is pushing back, either. What happens to a girl's psyche when her mother tells her I am her personal savior and she must stay with me until the end? I sure as hell don't know. Once again, I am not happy.

Still, things remain calm for many months. We have our second Thanksgiving and Christmas here. The Christmas decorations are incredible. The artificial tree is the biggest one we can get at the KCC department store.

New Year's from the vantage point of the fourth floor is a spectacular thing, and we are all up here to watch it with lots of trays of food and drink brought up the stairs for the event. And 2008 is welcomed in. I remain a very lucky man.

It is May, and June, just a few days away, is an important month this year!

Mica was nine when I first met her almost five years ago. Next week she will be fourteen. Everyone here is ready to celebrate. Everyone but me. Oh, I know I will bed her. I care for her and want only the best for her and all the females here with me.

Tonight Dina has asked to be with me. Dina has asked for more time with me than has anyone else this past twelve months. It's not that anyone asking is all that common. Each girl lets me know when her safe days are and I try to be with each during that time. Dido is the only one of the first twelve who hasn't borne one of my children. Dina hasn't either, as she came in under the 'new rules.'

So tonight will be Dina's night. Tomorrow, Si2x has asked to have a night. That is also pretty unusual, but there is no reason to say no.

I am in the bedroom with Dina by nine.

Do you love me?

You know I do.

No, Craig, I really do not. I know you take care of me. I know you protect me. I know you want me to graduate, get a degree, have a profession and live a good happy life. I know all that. ... Craig, I know I am safe, and will always be safe, if I allow you to protect me. But, do you really love me?

Ah. Good for you. You are using your brain.

That's not an answer.

If you believe I love you, how will that make things different?

Why won't you answer!

OK, Dina. The answer is easy. I do love you. I am in love with you. I just don't see how that changes anything, for you or for me. I was trying to understand how knowing made any difference to you.

You don't know?

No, Dina, I do not.

You know, 'Nay say we are bound, yes?

Yes, I know what she says.

How you think it feels to be bound and not loved?

Ah, OK, sure. I expect it would feel bad.

Yes!

But, why do you think you are bound? I never set out to make you mine for your entire life. I never set out to have you in my bed.

Why are you so difficult?

Dina, once you have a profession, and I hope you do, you will no longer need me. You understand that, right?

How I leave a man who loves me and does all these things for me. Why I will not love this man?

So, I should deny that I love you?

No! I still will love you, but it will hurt!

So, my truly honest love, you are going to love me no matter what. You just want to know if I love you. I do, Dina, I do. And if you choose to love me when you no longer need me, I will be a lucky man, though you may be a bit foolish to do so. Because, my little beauty, I truly love all fifteen of you. And that makes no sense, or maybe, I am just simply insane and that means you love a crazy person!

At least I have her laughing now.

Tama, buang ka! Pero, Mahal⁶⁷, only a crazy man help fifteen good Filipinas. It really true. I am happy you love us all. I not know how this can be, but I believe it, Mahal. ... Mahal, I ask you to change a rule, please. If I have a baby now, when I not in college yet, it is better. If later then problem with college, di ba?

Hub, I will think about it.

Lanie and Mica too, Mahal, no problem now, but a problem later in college days. Truly, best for all if our children are now.

Dina, is this a fertile day?

Mahal? Will you allow, please?

Dina, is this one of your fertile days?

Craig, please?

Are you, is this?

Please?

Dammit, Dina, is this a fertile day for you?

⁶⁷ Meaning: True, you are crazy! But, my love,... [Literally: mahal translates to 'dear' but in here really conveying 'my love']

Yes! Yes... Craig, please, before I start college. Please.

Oh, Dina, why? Aren't there enough children here?

But not mine, Craig. Please. Please allow this.

There have been plenty of moments that have made no sense to me. Let this one just be one of them. What the fuck am I supposed to do? How do I tell her, no? How? She has been in my bed for close to two years. She is still fifteen. She turns sixteen in August. She has finished her home study. If she takes a year off before starting college, OK, I get it. She doesn't want to start and then have to stop in the middle. On that level it makes perfect sense.

I have also gotten three girls pregnant, who were fourteen at the time. So I have no valid argument there. In fact any argument I can come up with just sort of falls apart other than I don't want any new kids and I don't want any more kids from children... and yes, I know, I know that Dina is only two months away from sixteen and I don't really consider sixteen as childlike here.

So, I am fucked... and so will she be.

OK, Dina, OK, yes.

And with that said, Dina is now in my arms, lips attached to my lips and a hand, I kid you not, unzipping my slacks and reaching in to grab her prize.

Dina is not a shy girl. And we have been together often enough in these nineteen months that she knows all she needs to know tonight.

For no reason whatsoever, other than Dina is excited, the girl is wasting no time and skipping all preliminaries as she works to get my cock into her cunt. But once I am in her, she has to follow my rhythm, and I am in no rush.

I am enjoying Dina's breasts. I roll and then pinch her nipples. As I pinch them, her cunt muscles clamp around my cock. I start a slow, methodical fucking motion. It feels damn good as I feel her so

completely, my cock sliding almost out and then slowly back down and in. Dina is enjoying it, while still wanting me to pick up the pace. I won't.

I move my hand from her tit and lifting her legs and ass, high and elevated off the mattress, my fingers are also playing with her clit as the slow motion fucking continues.

Dina's cunt is spasming. She may not want what is happening, in her head, but the physiological response is undeniable. Dina is going into orbit and I haven't even gotten warmed up yet.⁶⁸

I don't speed up. I don't slow down. Dina's cunt is awash in her own fluids. She moans, at time gasps, at times her cunt spasms again. What isn't happening is Dina trying to control anything.

I pull out, having not cum, and she whimpers but says nothing and does not move until I move her. I have her get on her knees before I enter again. Once again, I have fingers on her clit, but I also have a thumb pushing into her ass. Dina whimpers a bit more. I am back to my slow but steady fucking motion. My thumb is fully inserted and as I pinch her clit, Dina's cunt goes nuts and she starts to howl.

And now, finally, I pick up the pace, slamming into her over and over, until the cum leaves me and joins her.

I roll off to the side of the girl, completely spent.

Dina says nothing for a good ten minutes. We just lie there, near each other but not touching or talking, just breathing and taking in the events of the night.

Don't do that to Mica.

I have no intention of doing what we did with Mica.

Be kind to her.

⁶⁸ And that brings up the related concept of consent. It is said the physiological responses are not indicators of consent, or even implied consent. I get it and, then again, I don't. People lie to themselves all the time. How is this any different? Which is more truthful? Your words or your body? I have never found words to be a font of truth.

Wasn't I kind with you the first time we were together?

Oh, OK, yes. Good. Craig, that was mean.

Did I hurt you?

No. But you make me cum so many times.

OK, so how many orgasms are too many?

Bastos ka!⁶⁹

Why is that rude?

*Just is. I need you to be with me many times in my fertile days to make sure.
But, and here she laughs, you do that every time, you kill me!*

Killing you defeats the intent. Dead girls can't have babies.

Tama⁷⁰, so don't kill me.

OK, I will avoid killing you.

You will be with Mica tomorrow?

No. Si2x tomorrow.

Oh, OK, then she will give you one of those massages. Good.

What?

You know, the one makes you horny.

I have to smile. I had not thought of that.

*I guess. I really don't know. She didn't say why she wanted to be with me
tomorrow. Maybe she wants a second child.*

No, she will give you a massage. I am sure.

Does she give you massages?

⁶⁹ You are rude.

⁷⁰ Correct

You not know?

No.

Yes, she give me one tonight. My mother tell me it easier to get pregnant super horny, so I ask Si2x for that massage.

If I had not experienced the effects of the massage I would assume the effects were psychogenic. I know better. Si2x is a marvel.

At some point the words stop. It is not a decision to end a discussion. Rather, we both just drift off to sleep, on wrecked sheets, and too wiped out to move.

Dina is still sacked out when I get up, shower and go downstairs. Si2x sees me and pours a cup of coffee, placing it down in front of me as she asks, *Where's Dina?*

Probably still sleeping. ... It's your fault you know?

Me? What I do?

Oh, don't play clueless with me. You gave her one of those massages to make her horny.

She tell you?

What do you think?

Si2x giggles. It work, right?

I guess so. You knew she wants to get pregnant?

She tell me that. I say, ask you. That OK?

Yes, that was exactly right. But why make her super horny with the possibility that I will say no?

Why? Oh! Last night, not a safe night?

Last night was definitely not a safe night.

She not tell me that. Good thing you say yes. ... But I sure you will say yes.

Oh? Why were you so sure?

She have a good reason. You like good reasons, I think.

And there you have it. Si2x is right up there with Lyn and Lexi in so many ways. She is so damned young and yet there is a comfort level we have. There is a sense of understanding each other. Oh, I love Jing2x and Reina, her compatriots, I really do, but the sense of connectedness I have with Si2x, I don't have with most of the others here.

There is a difference between women you love and ones you might marry. I will never marry anyone. But here, there are really only three who are in that more rarified category: Si2x, Lyn and Lexi.

Drink your coffee. I will get you some breakfast, then in an hour you get a massage.

Si2x! What are you up to?

One while the girls study. Then after another massage, you with Mica tonight. We get this done and no more problems. ... Dina ask you about Mica pregnancy?

Yes.

What you decide?

You know me so well, what do you think I decided?

You agree, I think. Yes, you decide, Dina is right and you just being makulit⁷¹. I think you decide, OK, do it and tapos na⁷².

You, Si2x, are the very definition of a keeper.

What that?

Doesn't matter, my love. Doesn't matter.

⁷¹ Difficult

⁷² Done now.

7

I think we will have to wake her up, kick her out of the bedroom and change the sheets first.

Find another bedroom, Mahal!

Agreed. Si2x is right. There are a number of bedrooms that are not in use currently... if only because there are six girls in college and on campus during the day.

There are, of course, also a number of other bedrooms not in use, though those do not have any furniture in them presently. But that is not what she meant.

Plus, Si2x has a bedroom and, I guess, that is the most likely alternative. One flight up and a couple of doors away, we enter a room I have not been in since all the furniture I owned, and the new furniture I purchased, was moved to our new home. The second floor is a floor I pass by but never linger on. It is the domain of the girls here. Completely.

It is a large floor. Just as large as the one below it, spanning seven hundred square meters or over seven thousand and five hundred square feet. Yes, it is large, but there are ten bedrooms and the hallway. Each bedroom and CR consumes a bit over sixty square meters or six hundred and fifty square feet. Out of that, each bathroom takes up seven square meters or seventy-five square feet.

So each bedroom is nice, but though not a palace; in each, along with the bed, there are night stands, dressers, chests of drawers, a writing table and chairs, a TV, and a vanity.

The exterior walls are all glass with load bearing posts on the corners of the rooms. Sheer curtains hang from ceiling to floor. The floors are all 60cm tiles. In each room there is a ceiling fan/light as well as a ceiling mounted cassette aircon.

The aircons are connected via tubing and electrical above the ceiling and below the poured floor for the floor above and run out to the compressors outside. The compressors hang by brackets, attached to the outside of the concrete handrails on the third floor balcony.

Yeh, all this runs through my head as I see the unit in the ceiling. All the girls see is that their room has a ceiling mounted aircon. The rest of it is a fucking mystery to them. It works... that is all that matters.

Each of these rooms is painted the color the girl wanted and no two rooms are the same. Si2x's room has two walls painted an orange-red color. The wall by the door is white. All the girls asked for king size beds. I have no idea why, but they all have them, though the style for each one is different, too.

Some of the girls have fabric covered headboards, but Si2x told me that, while she thinks those are pretty, the oils she uses in massage work would ruin them in short order. And so, Si2x's is a smooth narra wood sleigh-styled headboard. The reddish-brown color of the wood offsets nicely against the orange-red wall.

I stand, looking around the world Si2x has created for herself, as she collects towels from the CR.

Get that clothing off, Mahal. How I give a massage with all that on you?

Clearly, I have been delinquent. Si2x tosses the towels on the bed, grabs the remote for the aircon to start it running, turns on the fan, comes to me and starts assisting me in the process of the removal of my clothing.

I can do this myself, sweetheart. Why don't you undress yourself and attend to the towels. By the time you are done, I will be ready!

She giggles but, as it makes sense to her, she follows along. Si2x is not a head-in-the-clouds romantic. She is goal-directed, clear-headed, and damned hard to distract. With her, indecision is only a

consequence of having had no reason to give the subject any thought.

On your belly, Mahal. I have some new oil I want to try. If you feel any irritation, let me know.

So, you don't want to know if it feels like you are ripping my arm out of its socket... You only want me to tell you if it rubs a little, while you are doing it?

Yes. Good that you understand. Now be quiet!

Hub.

She can be very tough on me. That much I have experienced many times before, but there always seems to be a reason for it. I can't say I understand the reasons, but the aftereffects are always for the good.

I would not trust another massage therapist like I trust her. But I do trust her. Even now, as that proverbial arm, its socket and some pain become all too real.

The room is cooler now. I am naked, the oil has been rubbed into me. It is no longer shielding my skin from the effects of the moving air. Where her hands are, I am warm, where they have been a little bit ago, I feel the warmth fading. Where she has not been, or has not been for a while, I am feeling the cold.

I am not uncomfortable, but the different temperatures in different places is what my mind is centering on, not the contortions my body is being put through.

It is tiring. I feel like I have been in a marathon. I don't have a clock or a watch to reference, but it feels like we have been at this a long time. I have been on my belly, on my back, and returned to my belly, only to be turned over again.

I notice the shadows from the windows. We must have been at this close to an hour already. I am wondering when this will end, when I realize we are in the cooldown stretching she does before a session ends. I am feeling good, relaxed, and oddly energetic. And just as I

realize that the feeling of energy is odd and out of place, I realize that Si2x has a hand on my package.

It doesn't take long to convince my member to stand at attention. Once Si2x has achieved that task, she mounts me, looking down on me and flexes her cunt muscles. She is doing kegels, while I am in her. There is no way I can do for her what she is doing for me. She must know that and, so, I accept the gift without comment. But Si2x is not trying to get me off. She is doing the opposite.

She is doing all she can to keep me on the edge without going over it. She builds me up, keeps me there until just before it is too late and then backs down, over and over again.

For some odd reason, I allow her to have this control. I don't really allow it with the other girls. And now, I think she has played on the string just too damned long. I pin Si2x on her back and just fuck her as hard as I can until I take myself over the edge... and Si2x with me ... cumming so hard, my balls ache.

I roll off her and onto my back, grabbing Si2x as I go and pulling her close to my side. *You are an evil girl.*

You like evil, I think.

Actually, no, I don't, not with anyone else. You may be the exception.

She snuggles in even closer, if that is possible. *Why you think that?*

Trust. I think it is trust that your evil is good for me. That you will protect me, just like I protect you.

It true.

Yeh.

And that is all I remember before I awaken from a nice nap, still next to Si2x. She is still asleep. But, I move just a little bit and she awakens, kisses me, snuggles for no more than thirty seconds before jumping up and announcing that we need to grab some

lunch. A shower is first, though, and we complete that together, playfully, if quickly.

When Si2x came here in June of 2003, she was sixteen. But this is 2008 and she is twenty-one. In no way am I with a kid making demands. She is a young woman. A secure one, safe within her world.

As we redress in her room, filled with more and better clothing than she ever had before she came to me, she is not concerned with how long she can be here. She is not thinking that her life will follow the course that her mother's life has followed. She isn't even thinking about how lucky she is.

No, what she is thinking about is Mica. *Craig, you should take Mica after lunch. I will massage you first, then you take her.*

Why the rush? What's wrong with waiting until this evening or tomorrow?

No, please just do this. Then, we all the same. OK? No one waiting. No one outside. Better this way. We know no one else. But not all us, yet! Do it, please.

OK. Sure.

Good. Tomorrow we will have a party with lechon!

I suspect you need to check with Lyn on any parties.

Oh, she already agree. We talk. This our plan.

Who, exactly, do you mean when you say 'our?'

Everyone. Well everyone except Lanie, Shara and Gladies. If we tell them, they will tell Mica. They tsismosa.⁷³

But not May, Dido or Dina?

Si2x gives me a knowing look. *No. They smarter since the problem with Dina. Maybe the others, they not as smart.*

⁷³ Someone who gossips.

It's not that she has anything against the three who might spill the beans. She doesn't. I know that from countless things that happen here day in and day out. This is only the issue of their potentially wanting to tell Mica what others do not want told, especially as I had not agreed to it, as they laid their plans.

Si2x takes nothing on faith. It is one of her most endearing traits. Time and again she was rock solid as my assistant in meetings when we were building this house. Now that all that is behind us, she is rock solid, in league with Lyn and Lexi, to keep this house running as I want it. Si2x has decided I need to take Mica now; it is something that cannot be ignored and, to which I have acceded. That Lyn and Lexi concur, makes it no more necessary.

Two hours later, Mica is standing before me, naked and in my bedroom. She doesn't look a bit like the nine year old I first met in 2003. Mica is an attractive girl. She is small and short, standing only four foot eight, her shoes are a size four. That is something I found out about, as we can't buy her shoes in the adult area and probably never will.

Her hair and eyes are black. Her teeth are bright white, beaming out from lips that are a little darker than some of the other girls here. I am told that she used to be teased that she wasn't light enough. I find her color perfect.

Mica is giggling.

Why the giggles?

Do me and I tell!

I guess that is clear enough, even for me. Mica is not needing to be eased into this. Should I be playful in return?

Yes, Miss Mica. Today you have a choice of a slow, comfortable screw, or a screw on the rocks. What is your preference?

Can I have both? Maybe start with the first and then we do the second?

I'll be damned. She is having no problems playing along.

Very good, Miss Mica. And what do you want for dessert?

Nay say I should get the cum sundae, I think. Can I have that?

Yes, of course! Now, up on the bed and I will serve up the first course.

She is giggling again. What's with this kid? And how did she come up with a cum sundae? Sure, I make ice cream sundaes here at home, but where did she get that from?

I gather her up close to me, as we lie side by side, and skin to skin, in the bed. Her lips are eager to be kissed. A tongue ventures out hesitantly from between her lips, touching mine before withdrawing, not giving me even a chance to signal acceptance.

My tongue follows hers, telling her, yes, this is right. Her response is joyful, exuberant. Kissing; groping; rolling around; nipping gently with teeth on nose, lips and earlobes, all fill the long minutes with genuine happiness.

Mica is now humping my thigh and depositing her wet message on me in a clear call to get with the program. I roll her back on the mattress, spread her legs and place my cock where it needs to be. Just touching the entrance to the Promised Land is enough to coat the instrument of her 'doing' with all it needs.

I commence the 'doing' of Mica with a soft, but firm, push into her cunt. There is some resistance, but it gives way, without a whimper from the girl.

Now fully inserted after a few short strokes, Mica relishes in slow, lazy motions, the feelings that she tells me she has been waiting for the past five years, ever since she was nine. I never knew a girl of nine could even wish for such a thing.

I am taking the information in, as we gently feel each other in the most intimate manner possible. My cock is encased in her hot and tight cunt, the sounds of liquid making the movements even more clear, as well. That liquid removing any possibility of irritation from friction.

Her breath is measured, and in time with our strokes. A smile is fixed on her face. Her eyes are at times closed and at other times looking right at me.

Her hands hold my arms. Her little breasts, rounded small fruit on her small frame, jiggle only slightly.

The only hair on her body is the long black hair on her head. It is nowhere else. Her cunt is cleanly shaved. There is no hair on arms, legs, under arms... nowhere. She wears no jewelry other than small studs in her earlobes. There are no rings, no bracelets, nothing around her neck, and nothing around her ankles.

We move slowly and gently, every once in a while kissing, or nibbling. Until, what was to be a nibble becomes a bite followed by a request, *Hard now, please.*

I put Mica on her knees, before reentering her. I have a finger on her clit and a hand on a breast with two fingers pinching a nipple as I start slamming into her cunt. I maul both clit and nipple as I pound her cunt. I hear gasps, groans, and yips. I feel streams of liquid pouring over my loins as her cunt spasms time after time on my member.

Now, I hear a mantra, *Yes, yes, yes, yes, cum, cum, cum...*

How long have we been at it? I really don't know. I have no idea of time. All I know is the feeling of my cock in Mica's cunt, the smoothness and the heat of her body, the lake drenching my thighs, and our breathing. And, now, added to that is the aching of my nuts for release. I am not trying to block it, but I am savoring the exquisite pleasure/pain of the prerelease, the moment before the moment. That which announces the unstoppable which is yet to occur.

And then the release, ultimate joy and sorrow all at the same time. Joy in the pleasure of the release, sorrow that the release signals an end.

I roll off of Mica's back and she flops down too, exhausted and then giggling!

Why the giggles?

I fool you! And now I call you Craig!

How did you fool me?

You think my period end yesterday, correct?

Yes.

Ha! No, it end four days ago! I am fertile now!

But your mother and Lanie... Oh, damn, they were helping you with the lie?

Yes! See. But it OK. I really want to have a child. We decide better now.

So, how do you spank a girl you just fucked?

Mica, don't ever trick me again. You didn't need to trick me this time. I would not have said no. But, do it again and you will have a problem with me! Are we clear?

OK. Sorry. ... Craig, Lanie needs her baby.

There are times when I am just stuck. Each is damned well going to have her own child. There is no stopping it. The only outlier is Dido, who has shown no inclination to have a child.

The size of my family is so large that my initial reason for settling here has been blown out of the water. A family this size outstrips my original financial projections. In some ways, if it wasn't for the good fortune of my Cisco stock, I would really be needing the college girls to graduate and get good jobs just to keep everything running.

But, I am lucky. My mistakes are cancelled out by my good fortune in the market. Even the Apple shares are adding value.

I would have successfully held to my economic model if I had settled down with one girl. Then the model would have worked

perfectly. Even four was no big deal. And then we added three more... but I was convinced initially that this would really not hold. That it would just be short term.

Yes, excuse layered on blind stupidity and all the while ignoring the underlying economic rational drivers which made my assumptions meaningless.

And so I have blown up the financial rationale. It was blown up years ago and I am only buoyed up by my stock portfolio. There is black humor in that, I am in more ways, helping the Philippine economy, rather than furthering my own goals.

Oh? You think having fifteen girls is a goal worth pursuing? If so, you are fucking nuts. There is no way in the world I should have all of them here. Yes, sure, I love them, but I would have to be a heartless asshole to keep them, bed them, father children with them and not love them. I may be an asshole, but I am not heartless.

Tick tock...

1

July 4th, this same year, 2008. We are celebrating here. And there are three reasons to celebrate. Mica is pregnant. I swear, it must have been the very first time we lay together. Mica is over the moon and Shara is ecstatic. But that is far from all. Lanie is also now pregnant, a fact I only became sure of a couple of days ago. The last is simply that it is the Fourth!

It's been more than a year since the iPhone was released. The Apple stock has gained some in the year. It's now over 24. Cisco is at 23. I mention it to George, and wonder if I should sell. He listens for bit, but he is also telling me I am a damned fool.

George is pointing my stupidity out to me as we enjoy a beer and a burger, while watching the girls play volleyball. The girls are fun to watch and I am looking at them, but I am not ignoring what George is saying.

George, I know you are right. But that's only paper wealth right now. As to real wealth, we are not the wealthiest around here. There are massively wealthy Filipinos. Whether it is because of large fleets of ships that harvest tuna, or because they are corrupt politicians or government workers on the take, or they are essentially landed gentry who own huge tracts of farm land and have plantations, I am truly small potatoes.

Craig, you clueless fuck. OK, so granted all that, we stick out because we are foreigners. And all those folks you mention... they all travel with a retinue of bodyguards. Some actually do have private armies. And you? What do you have? One fucking guard at your front gate! ... Your girls are still riding into town on motorcycles! ... Use your brain, sometime in the future, you are going to become interesting to some folk who see dollar signs, not pesos, when they look at you.

Have you any idea how large an army I would need to protect us? Six of them are in college every day, for Pete's sake. And they are not in the same class. Then, others, during the day, are out running errands and shopping. This just isn't doable. I hear what you are saying, but I can't see how I do it.

OK, I've said my piece. ... I hear congratulations are in order again.

Excuse me?

Ara tells me you are going to be a daddy again twice over. Are you rejoicing or crying?

A little of both. It's crazy, of course.

At least this place is big enough that space shouldn't be a problem. ... Did you ever provide Socoteco with the real plans for this house?

Now that makes me smile. No, I never set foot back in their offices once. When we had to pay for the replacement, permanent meter, and later when we returned the temporary one, Si2x took care of it. They have no idea what I built.

Do you have your occupancy permit?

Not yet. We have been inspected and I guess the city assessor is trying to figure out how much our tax will be. Rena has offered an incentive to the right person to keep the tax down in a reasonable range. We are waiting on that. Once the tax amount is established, I will pay that. I am told that other city folks come out and they will set the 'fee' I need to pay to get the occupancy permit. ... You need another beer?

It takes close to the end of the year to get the tax issue resolved. I will pay what amounts to six hundred and fifty dollars a year in tax on this place. It just cost me a little less than one hundred dollars of sweetener to get that resolution. I am sure not crying about it.

The occupancy permit was a whopping two hundred dollars. Once again, I am not weeping.

Shara and Gladies are every day working on landscaping, but it requires helpers, as the property is too much for the two of them. I

have been paying one hundred and sixty pesos a day for unskilled laborers when the girls need help.

Shara teased me yesterday that I need more girls to help out. That was not a welcome comment and I let her know what I think of adding anyone more. It just isn't going to happen.

Today, my neighbor with the power pole on his land has come over. He has a problem. His wife has cancer and needs expensive treatments. He has PhilHealth coverage, but it won't be enough. He wants to know if I would like to purchase three more hectares of land that abuts my property. It includes the land where my pole sits.

He needs money now, and so his asking price is thirty-five pesos a square meter, or a bit over a million pesos for the land. I like the guy, feel sorry for him and, sure, shit, why not. I call Trujillo and get the ball rolling. The land is currently listed as agricultural. Taxes on it are next to nothing. The land trust will get larger.

By the time Christmas 2008 arrives, Mica and Lanie are waddling around, deep into their pregnancies, and the land trust owns five hectares. I have leased out the three hectares to a farmer who is growing vegetables.

My apple stock has taken a big hit as it has lost six bucks a share from where it was eighteen months ago. Cisco stock is also down. The world economy is in the toilet. I have no idea if I will lose everything, but this is not the time to sell. I am waiting it out.

The money I have here seems OK and, while the economy here is not good, it is also not impacted by the worldwide freak-out that is enveloping the developed world. I watch what is happening and wonder, is this the end of the economic framework of worldwide banking? It is a scary time.

Here, the beggars are just as plentiful as ever. No more, no less.

Lyn, at age twenty-five, is now a licensed civil engineer. She has established her own company. So far, the projects are not huge, but she has picked up some work designing homes for three other

expats. As she has an idea what they might like, it seems to be a good way for her to build her practice.

Lexi, at age twenty-one, is teaching high school English at the Lagao National High School. She is endlessly teasing me about the girls she is teaching and how I would just love to fuck them. All I can do is roll my eyes. That is all I need!

Jana is twenty-three, and has a job working for the city as a certified public accountant. She is involved with audits. She tells me that she is offered bribes at least once a week. She has been declining all offers, but her boss called her into his office and told her that if she didn't start playing the game, she will be out of a job. I have advised her to quit, but she doesn't want to quit. I expect she will be fired before the end of the year. It's a good thing she doesn't deal with Renal!

Dina is sixteen and little Mica is, of course, fourteen.

Socially, we rarely see Brian and Stefan. I see George at least once a month. A few other guys have come by the house but, for whatever reason, after maybe two visits they never come back. George tells me it is the difference in our economic situations. This place announces a level of wealth that makes the other guys feel uncomfortable.

It's OK for me. I am not the most social of creatures, and the girls here have enough of a community among themselves that they are not clamoring for company.

My oldest boy, Oscar, is five years old. Jana's Mia is four, as are Lyn's Nita, Li2x's Chamiya (Mi2x), May's Alyssa (Sisa) and Si2x's Analou (Lou). All the others are three years old or younger. But even now, Gladies and Shara are telling me that Mi2x and Sisa will have my children as per tradition. Every time I hear it, I tell them to knock it off, we have no such tradition.

It doesn't help.

The house is everything I had hoped it would be. And, as we close out the year on New Year's, I am firing off the type of rockets I have wondered about in the past. The girls are both proud that we can do so and scared of the rockets as they launch.

We have had one piece of sad news. Reina's mother died two months ago. Reina was told it had something to do with the sale of drugs. But we know nothing more than that. As her mother died a pauper, Reina, with my support and encouragement, paid for the mortuary services and the interment. The woman might not have lived a dignified life, but at least her treatment after death was.

Please, let this just be a peaceful year. I can only hope 2009 brings a better answer to the economic crisis the world is in right now. It is scary.

There is, these days, less of a crush to get sack time with me. I am not complaining. Between school and the care for the young ones and their heightened interest in social media now that each of them has their own smartphone, the social fabric of the house has changed.

Most nights I am with Lyn, Lexi or Si2x and, while some nights it is two of them, there are no issues of which I am aware.

There have been some curious emails from old acquaintances from the States, wondering when I am returning. In each case my reply is simply that I have no reason to return and leave it at that. So far no one has pressed harder.

My world is stable, quiet, and I am at peace with the world around me. The year slips by.

As 2009 comes to a close, I am relieved that the economy, while still not good, does not seem like it will completely implode. There are, here, among the contingent of expats from the US, an almost universal and ugly racist hatred of the current US President.

As a good Irish Catholic Democrat from Boston, I don't share those feelings. All I can say is that I am glad I don't run into the US

expats here very much, and if they don't feel comfortable coming to the house here, all the better for me.

I note the stock market is showing signs of life. Cisco shares are back to where they were two years ago. So by my just being patient, I have survived the crisis. The big surprise this year is Apple. Today it has climbed to 29.83. My total Cisco shares are still worth twice the Apple shares, but that they are even that close is a surprise to me.

I think this iPhone thing has really made Apple rocket up. I bought the stock because I really believed the Macintosh would eventually make headway against that damned Microsoft Windows. It didn't. I bet wrong on that. But I never would have guessed that Apple would come out with a music player and a cellphone. By essentially reinventing what they are as a company, Apple has taken what was a moribund company and brought it back to life.

GenSan is still an economic backwater. The conditions that I saw before are still largely as they were, but I note land prices are moving up. I don't know why, as there doesn't seem to be a reason I can put my finger on.

It's another Christmas and New Year, as 2009 does come to a close. Financially, we are OK. Jana did get fired a week after she refused to resign and refused to take bribes. About six months ago, she got a job with one of the hospitals here, in their auditing department. So far, there are no offers of bribes, but she has run into some irregularities that she reported to the department head. I gather nothing has come of those reports.

Lyn has more projects under her supervision now. Some of them are far out of town, and she is only home about two to three nights a week. I am happy for her, but she doesn't like being gone from Nita that much.

Lexi just will not stop teasing me about her students. I tell her that I think Dido would be far more interested in them than I am. Dido

agrees, but Lexi isn't biting on that. And so, almost once a week, you can hear me say, *Christ, Lexi, isn't fifteen enough?*

And then her answer, *Maybe not.*

She has asked me a number of times to come visit her classes.

Lexi! Stop. You know damned well what happened the last time I visited Lagao National High School. Never again!

You may well ask, where do these conversations take place? Is it at the supper table? No, it is when Lexi is in bed with me, and my cock is nuts deep in her cunt, or when she has been giving me head and stops just before I am ready for the last run at the finish line. She will be stroking me, telling me how sweet and pretty some young girls are, and how I just have to meet them.

Lexi never does it when Si2x is in the room. But there are plenty of times when Si2x isn't.

This is Christmas/New Year's school break. Lexi is in contact with some of her students, the ones who are the most in need and the ones, as well, whose cunts she would like to see with me balls deep in. I am just not going to engage. But it does have the effect of blowing my nuts inside Lexi long before I ought to.

I don't know how to explain it, but my life with the fifteen girls has become, in its own way, normal.

What I have been doing this past year is something that I haven't mentioned yet. Lyn gets to hear things in her activities as an engineer, which she brings to me. These, at times, produce opportunities to profit.

We have been using the land trust to buy land where we believe the values will soon go up. Some of the purchases we are sitting on and can only hope. Others we purchase, and then sell for ten times the purchase price, only weeks after we made the purchase.

On the whole, as to liquidity, we are better than where we were before we made the first purchase, and we are also sitting on many hectares of land we have yet to move.

If nothing else, it gives me something to do and, in the process, we have been keeping Rena busy. In an odd way, maybe it's a good thing that Jana isn't working for the city, seeing as what Rena is doing every week for us over there.

Based on what Lyn is hearing, there will be a lot of development starting up here in the next few years. It makes no sense to me, but it is what it is. We will try to take advantage of what comes our way. In two cases, it has allowed Lyn to purchase properties that she has spec built commercial buildings on. We are in the infancy of those projects, but they show real promise.

Time slides by as we just continue to keep busy. Another year has passed. All fifteen of my girls are here as 2010 comes to a close.

I have been here almost eight years now. The youngest of my girls is sixteen. May is twenty-one and has completed her degree program to be a Vet. Li2x finished with her degree in IT last year.

We have nine of my children in a private school. They wear the little uniforms, and it's a hoot to see them all dressed up. Mel is their driver, as she takes them to school and picks them up each day.

Lyn isn't happy with the religious lessons the kids get at school, but Lexi keeps Lyn's irritation somewhat mollified by suggesting they simply discuss their beliefs in front of the kids, and therefore undercut those lessons.

The fact that Lyn is gone a great deal is adding to her discomfort. She feels like she is losing touch with everything here, including me. I think she is overreacting. I make sure I am with her whenever she is home. And we talk almost every day via cellphone, discussing business issues.

Those issues are opportunities, and they have been coming fast and frequently of late. Lyn thinks it is all because of Manny Pacquiao. I have a hard time seeing how he can be the entire reason, but maybe I am missing something.

In any case, we are heavily invested in properties and our sales success at turning a good profit has been solid. On top of everything else, Lyn is becoming a successful engineer.

I note that we are seeing maybe a bit fewer beggars. Maybe I am imagining it. I hope not.

Jana is still at the hospital but, once again, she is seeing the corruption and seeing that no one is lifting a finger to end it. Lyn has been trying to convince Jana to come work for her. She needs someone to actually run the business end so Lyn can concentrate on the engineering. Lyn has also mentioned that she needs Li2x's IT skills.

Lexi just won't quit trying to tease me into fucking her students! What is with that girl?

And once again, as the year end closes out, I take a final look at the investments. Apple has jumped up to 46.5, making my investment worth over two and a half million dollars. I really think the Apple stock is driven by the iPhone. The Cisco stock is off quite a bit at 20.32; I have lost three million dollars in value. My best bet is that the Cisco stock is stuck in the malaise of the economy. All I can do is hope it comes back. I am not touching either.

2

Once you have things in place, time just slides by. How many funerals of expats have I attended recently? I hardly knew most of these guys, but I go, as it is the thing to do.

So much has changed in the past two years. If you looked on any given day, not much has changed. It's because the change comes creeping in on you. And yet, for me, much has not changed. Where to begin?

OK, well, everyone is still here. In that regard, nothing has changed.

We have one pregnancy to report! Dido is carrying. I am delighted. One day she just let me know that, as she had graduated, it was time and, by God, it was time. She stopped avoiding me during her fertile days. It took a while, but she is clearly with child. Shara is tickled.

With the exception of Lanie and Mica, all my other college kids have graduated. There are seven who now have their degrees.

Jana and Li2x are working with Lyn. Lyn restructured the company so Jana owns part of it, and Li2x will get a piece in a couple of years. Jana manages a large payroll, as Lyn is working as a general contractor as well as a civil engineer. She has two other engineers working for her. At the ripe old age of twenty-nine, Lyn is pulling down a damned fine income. It isn't huge by standards in the USA but, for here, it is truly impressive. Jana and Li2x are also doing nicely in the mix.

As of now, should I just go broke, we would not be in any real trouble between what those three are pulling down and the income that Lexi has.

Oh, we might have to cut back on a few things, but probably not, as the real estate activity Lyn and I pursue makes up for anything

else that might be missing. The economy here is really beginning to take off.

There are far fewer beggars on the streets. While 'endo' contracts still exist and the poorer folks really don't have a way up, just about everyone has rice to eat. There are help wanted signs. That is something I never saw here before.

This year, I will not do the huge fireworks we have done in the past. Let others do it.

It's hard to explain how these past two years have slid by but, with thirty-one here besides me, (and one in the oven) almost every week there are either birthday parties or parties for holidays. There is the school schedule for the little ones with all the things that entails. It's a never-ending set of events that run one into the next. It's a blur.

I have chosen to look at the share price of the stocks I own only once a year. This is a few days after Christmas, 2012, and my Cisco stock is a miserable 19.28. I guess I should have sold all of it years ago. I will just let it be. Maybe it will eventually shrink to zero if I wait long enough!

The Apple stock that I have cursed for so long is now at an amazing 76.02 today! That gives me a book value of over four million dollars.

Between the two stocks, I am still worth over fourteen million dollars, so I am not crying. Considering I started with twenty thousand, I am a very lucky man.

We have been in the house now for over five years. The landscaping was completed long ago and the trees are growing to maturity. The place is amazing. Most of that is thanks to two women who barely had pots to piss in when I met them and were willing to give me their oldest daughters to save some pesos. I truly doubt they will admit the truth of it now. Each has crafted her own origin story to explain why she is here. I just keep my mouth shut and never contradict them.

The gals are landed gentry now. Each has access to a car and her own motorcycle. Each has a full wardrobe of clothing, nice shoes, and a collection of handbags. Each goes to the beauty parlor. Each has money in her purse and no worries. None of them resembles the girls they were once upon a time.

Lyn tells me she meets people who she served drinks to ten years ago at the Sydney Hotel. They were the big hitters and she a lowly barmaid. Now they are supplicants coming to her, and they have no idea they have ever met her before. They ask her where she came from. When she tells them she is from GenSan, they say how can that be? They thought they knew all the good families in GenSan.

And they probably do. Lyn does not explain. She just smiles and takes their money.

Jana is finally happy with work. There is no one above her, and she is absolutely iron-fisted about how the money is handled. Lyn doesn't get the government jobs because their firm does not offer kickbacks. But they get a fair amount of private business because they don't inflate bills.

We also have been, more and more, buying properties, developing them and then leasing out space until the surrounding property values make the sale of the property and building advantageous. As Lyn and I have done this, she needs to be out of town less. And, as another plus, our ventures now involve projects which are larger and more profitable.

Things have grown so well that the value of our land holdings now outstrips the money I brought over from the sale of the Cisco stock.

George got wind of some of our holdings from a friend of his who owns a building supply company. The upshot is that, as he and I got together a couple of days ago, he lit into me pretty fiercely about my failure to provide proper security for my family.

These days, Lyn does travel with two bodyguards. One doubles as a driver for her. There are also a couple of guards at their company's

offices. George was not aware of this and was a little relieved when told. My little Vet, May, has a guard at her office and there are guards at the two schools where Lexi and Dido teach. There are guards at the private school which the little ones attend.

So OK, I admit that I probably need a guard and driver for Mel when she takes and picks the kids up, and I can use the same guards at other times in the day when I go out of the lot. When I am here and they are not driving Mel, they can hang out at the guardhouse.

I surrender to George and he is a happy man. It has taken years, but he has won.

As 2013 rolls around, there are two new guards here and Mel is complaining. They don't let her drive.

For two months, Mel's complaining continues nonstop. I call George and warn him that I am going to backtrack on my promise as I am just tired of hearing the bitching. He asks if Ara can talk to Mel. I don't see why not, and send Mel over to his place, driven by her driver and with her other bodyguard.

I don't see her for the rest of the day, and am wondering where the hell she got to, when she finally gets here late in the afternoon, walks in the front door, sits down and starts crying.

I wait. I figure, whatever she is crying about will be explained in due time. And, in that, I am right.

OK, I am wrong. The bodyguards stay. We need them.

What happened?

Ara bring me to meet a man. His wife kidnapped. He not have enough money. He go to his family, his friends to borrow the money. He pay, but it too late, his wife, they kill her. This real. He say his wife like me. She say she not need guards. He say he plead with her, every day he pleads. 'Please, my love, please allow this,' but she not allow it. And now she dead, he broke and alone. He

look at me and say, 'Don't be difficult. Listen to your man. He want to protect you. Why you so stupid? You lucky to have protection.'

I see. So no more arguments?

No more, my love. No more. I don't want to be stupid and difficult.

And that was the message she got... not that her life was really of any importance. Only that she was being stupid and difficult. Something that I bet Lexi used to say to her for years before she came to me.

The guy hit the right buttons, but only by accident.

I have been updating this every two years, because there is little to tell. I have my life. It is a stable one and I am surrounded by more love than any man has a right to have. All fifteen girls are still here and, as far as I can see, they will be here until I die, which with any luck won't be for a while yet. It is June 2014 right now and shorter than my normal two year update. I am writing now about something that just happened that I am having a hard time wrapping my head around.

Apple has just done a 7:1 stock split a few days ago. I now have over thirty-five million dollars of Apple stock, while my Cisco has finally crept back up closer to where it was seven years ago and is now valued at a little over twelve million. On paper I am worth over forty-seven million fucking dollars. Plus what we have here. I am wondering if I should cash out.

I mean, who needs more than that? Of course, if I let it ride, maybe it will lose value... and then I just have to laugh. What do I care? I don't need it. We are fine. What I don't need is the stress of dealing with the brokerage. I have no idea who has my account these days.

I swear, I am not lazy.

There just isn't any reason to update this much these days. I mean, nothing has really changed. I have let all this slide for two and a half years.

It's four days after Christmas 2017.

Outside this house and in my world a huge amount has been changing. It's been a little like being the frog in a pot of water that started cool and slowly heated up. We really didn't notice it all that much.

The beggars are all but gone.

Oh, there are a few, but it's not like the old days. There are help wanted signs all over the place. You can't go anywhere without seeing signs saying that they are hiring. Wages for labor have doubled, and trebled in some cases related to skilled labor.

I have heard from others that they can't find maids. Getting a maid used to be as easy as waving a dirty wash cloth out in the street. Girls would run to you begging for the job. The wages for maids were no more than one thousand five hundred pesos a month (or about \$35/mo.) plus room and board in 2004, from what I remember. Now?

If you can find a maid, she may well cost you five thousand pesos a month plus room and board, if you can even keep her. But she may well quit if she thinks the job is too hard. That never happened before.

Construction projects are chock-a-block. Every able-bodied construction worker has his pick of places to work.

Property values have gone through the roof. I am now concerned that we might be experiencing a real estate and construction bubble.

It has gotten me concerned enough that I have been leaning on Lyn pretty hard to reduce the amount of property we are sitting on and get more liquidity on the balance sheet. Lyn has been arguing that I am tying her hands.

Maybe I am, but I am not saying, don't buy properties, just don't hang on to them. In this conflict, I have a supporter in that Jana is

feeling concerned too. We know that the current president here, Duterte, is pumping money into Mindanao. And that has inflated prices. We don't touch the government projects because they are so laden with corruption. But that activity is affecting everything else.

Jana and I just don't see where the money will be to sustain the ever-rising price of property, and labor costs. People are going to take losses. We are too. I just want to have Lyn limit our exposure. I want her to stay focused on fewer projects, push them through, sell them, get the cash, and move on to the next. At all times, rather than leverage what we have, I want a large liquid reserve.

Lyn tells me Jana and I are too conservative. That makes me smile as I look out the window at more than a dozen of my own children kicking balls around on the grass.

In my life there have been no more children since Dido's boy, Jason. Everyone is still here. Every blessed one of them. Li2x, who was thirteen when I met her is twenty-eight now! Lyn is a stunning thirty-three.

Yes, here nothing has changed... but I am looking out at those kids outside, and you know what I see?

Oscar is thirteen, as are Mia, Sisa, Nita, Mi2x and Mel's boy, Hector. Before school is out for summer break, in March, those kids will be fourteen. The fact that four of them are girls should be of no more importance to me than any previous birthday. Except... Yes, except for my girls' growing insistence of a 'family tradition.' A tradition that has nothing to do with my family and which I do not want to have now ... to have me father children from my own daughters.

Now, you and I know that no teenage girl in the USA would ever consider having kids with her own father. Right? And, as these kids have grown up as wealthy scions of mine, even here, you would expect the same thing.

Plus, as I walk through the city these days, there are foreigners all over. Girls, who all seem to have mastered some English, go

looking via the websites, if they start soon enough, and I am told even if they don't, are snaring men as husbands with surprising regularity. These girls are, for the most part, not into sharing their men with other women. I hear that, if a guy suggests it, these girls are walking away and looking for a better prospect.

The world here in GenSan has changed a great deal!

So why does any girl of mine think her daughter wants to be in my bed?

I had no clue until the day after Christmas, when Nita sits down with me.

Father? You have time, now, maybe?

Sure, sweetheart, what's up?

Well, you know my birthday is in three months, the week before school ends. Father, I will not show if I pregnant this school year. Mother say I can home study next year.

I really am not thinking about me, when I ask, *Don't you think I should meet the boy first? And sweetheart, I think fourteen is a little too soon? How old is this guy?*

Daaaad! There no boy!

Well, it's hard to get pregnant without one, last I checked!

Dub! You know what I mean.

No... Oh noooo. Nita who told you this is required?

I had not given this any thought for a decade or more. I honestly thought it was just an idle curiosity that would, over the years, become a quaint artifact of the lives they lived before they came to me.

Clearly, there was a time when even having enough pesos for rice on any given night was an issue. That was even true for Lyn once

she left what amounted to her family. Both her mother and father were already dead.

For Jana, though her family was truly poor, they had enough for rice; but she, too, left home in search of work, and the issue of money for rice became a real concern. Still, both of these girls had rice as children; they were not as desperate in that way as the others.

I guess I can understand Lyn's position about this 'family tradition'. To say it is always wrong is to call her own existence into question.

Maybe Jana is looking at her best friend, her business partner, and is thinking, OK, this is how the world needs to turn.

I can see why May feels the way she does. It's pretty much the same as Lyn.

But why would my own children, who clearly have not grown up in desperate circumstances, think this is the right thing to do? This is the world of YouTube. This is the world of Fiber Optic connections. We got our 100Mbps connection last year and yes, the buried conduit I put in years ago is now in use!

These days, girls are exposed to so much 'female empowerment' stuff over the net that I can't conceive of why fathering kids with their own father makes any damned sense to a single one of them.

Who told you this?

Hub?

Nita, where did you get this idea?

Nita is looking out of the window wall in my study.

Dad, come, look at this.

I walk over to my daughter, put a fatherly arm over a shoulder and say, *OK, what am I supposed to see?*

Out there in the fence. What do you call that?

She's pointing to the gate from the look of it. I play along.

The gate?

Next to it?

The guards' building?

Between!

Oh, OK, the manhole.

Yes, right. Who owns the manhole?

Us?

No! You! You make all this happen! We are here because of you!

OK, so I own the manhole. What's your point?

Between my legs, you know what we call that?

No... your urethra, your vagina?

No! It's your manhole. We all have your manhole. You made this. You made us. No one allowed in our manhole, except you!

Who told you this?

All.

All? Who?

Mother, Jana, May, Li2x... all!

Sweetheart, if I tell you that I give my permission for you to not have my child, will that matter to you?

Why would I want that?

Jesus... OK. So... are all my daughters told this?

Of course! It's a family tradition!

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Family tradition, indeed!

I see, so is it very important that we carry this tradition on?

Yes!

How many of you want to carry this on?

All of us girls.

And you are sure of this?

Well, I am really only sure of Sisa, Mi2x, Mia and Lou.

Four of these kids turn fourteen, all before June this coming year, 2018. Lou turns fourteen in November. She just turned thirteen last month. Jing2x and Reina both had boys. Gladies has a girl, Zoe, but her child is younger. Lanie's and Mica's girls are even younger than that.

I really don't want to be bedding these kids. And, who the fuck told them that their cunts were my manholes? Of all the crazy crap I have heard over the years, that may well be on the very top... well, there is some amazing crap being said these days back in the USA, but I am not there and I guess I don't care.

Nita, don't you have many friends in school?

Yes. Of course.

Well, if I get you with child, you can't go back to school and you won't be seeing your friends any more.

I know. Dad. ... We all know.

I see. Nita, your birthday is not until March. So until then, there will be no pregnancy.

We do it then?

We will see. But not before. Are we clear?

Yes, Sir. Dad, are you angry?

No, sweetheart. I am not.

OK.

And she leaves the room.

You make two goofy, ego driven requirements fifteen years ago, and things just seem to get increasingly crazier from that point until years down the road, and you no longer even recognize yourself anymore.

I had to be a hotshot asshole and insist that Lyn could not be with me unless she brought another girl with her. That was the first, and that was bad enough. The second was when Mel wanted to climb aboard and I not only allowed it, but subsequently ended up with Lexi.

Now, if you are to ask me if I don't really love them... OK, I do love each of them. I don't want to be without them... but that doesn't say anything about whether I should have been with them from the beginning.

I ended up with my fifteen and they have, each of them, been loyal and good loves. Not one of them is a disappointment. You can't say that about many monogamous marriages in the USA. And yet, here I am with fifteen good and true loves.

In saying that, I know full well that the man I was when I first came here was both single and without anyone to even call a girlfriend. I was not looking for one.

So, if that was who I was, who am I now?

I am falling down a rabbit hole thinking of all that has transpired in these last fifteen years, and then realize, I have not even looked at my stocks for a long time.

With the fast internet I have now, it doesn't take but a few seconds to get the shock of my life. My Apple stock is trading for 171.08. I plug that into my calculator and come up with a tiny bit over sixty-seven million and sixty-three thousand dollars. My Cisco has also, miracle of miracles actually gained. It is trading today at 38.59, which puts the value over eighteen million and nine hundred thousand dollars.

I am having a hard time believing my eyes as I add the two numbers and realize that, at least on paper, I am worth damn close to eighty-nine million dollars. And just because my mind is already blown I decide to look at what that means in Philippine pesos at the current exchange rate. I am worth over four billion pesos.

At this moment, all thoughts of my daughters are shelved. I decide that, as crazy as the US has become politically, it is time to cash out one hundred percent of my stock. What I will do with the cash I have no idea, but I have to end this craziness. Who can possibly be worth eighty-five million dollars with an initial investment of twenty grand?

At ten in the evening on December 28th, I pick up my landline phone, courtesy of the fiber optic connection, and call my US brokerage. I have my account number, passphrase and other identifying information all in front of me. It takes some time. I am being passed from person to person. One guy explains that end of the year sales has them swamped. My old broker is no longer there.

This is getting to be an expensive long distance phone call, but should I give a fuck? I mean, really?

I finally get a gal on the phone. She sounds bored.

With everyone I talked to before sounding slammed, why do you seem so laid back?

Because your account, like all the rest I have, is dormant. No trade, no activity and therefore no income for me.

Ah, I see. So maybe I am about to make your day.

Ha! I can't wait. What is it? You want to sell enough to afford a vacation this year at Disneyworld?

No. I want to liquidate everything.

So what ... let me guess... there's not even enough for Epcot Center?

Oh, I wouldn't say that. Do you need my account number again?

Sure, what is it?

I give it to her and wait. I know she is going to make two percent on the trade. If she is to do it now, she will make one million seven hundred thousand.

I hear tapping of keys, then more tapping and then a gasp. It is quiet now. There is background noise of her office, so I know she hasn't hung up, but I hear nothing else for a good two minutes. And then... *Sir, I need to put you on hold. Before I do, in case we get disconnected, what is your phone number?*

I give her my number and then I get to wait more than ten minutes. I am serenaded by innocuous music which is interrupted by voice messages, every thirty seconds, about how great this brokerage is. Though I am not tempted to hang up, I am getting a bit irritated by the time I hear a voice.

This is a guy. Have I been passed to someone else?

Mr. Byrne, did you instruct Ms. Hernandez to sell all your Apple and Cisco shares?

And you are, Sir?

Sorry. I am Jules Benedict, Ms. Hernandez' account services supervisor. Ms. Hernandez brought this to me as it exceeds the limits she can place a sell order on without authorization and additional documentation.

I see. How do we move forward? I don't want to see the stocks fall greatly in value while you do your due diligence.

I can certainly understand your position; however, our position is that we need more proof that you really are Craig Byrne. I'm sure you can see why we have this concern.

Mr. Benedict, I have already provided my account number, my birthdate, my social security number, my passphrase, my place of birth, my mother's maiden name, and my mailing address. What more do you need?

We need you to sign a new affidavit and have it notarized by a US notary.

Well, if you send it as a PDF I can go to Cebu tomorrow.

That will not be possible. We will need to send it to you via courier, Fed Ex, with the requirement that it is you who signs for it. No other signature will be acceptable. We will get this out to you tomorrow.

So that is your Friday and we have New Years. The earliest it will get here is probably the following Friday, and the earliest I can get to the consulate in Cebu is the following Monday, the 8th. And only then can I send the document back to you, so you will not get it until maybe the 11th. How long then until you actually act?

If we get it on the 11th, we will be able to make the trades on the 12th.

A whole hell of a lot can change for a stock in two weeks.

Yes, Mr. Byrne, that is true, but you really do not want to sell right after the New Year. People sell off on the last day, taking profits and the stocks will be off for a few days. So, waiting until the 12th is probably a smart move anyway.

OK, get it out to me right away.

Just to be clear, your mailing address is your physical address?

Yes.

OK I will rush this out to you.

We exchange pleasantries, though I really don't want to, and the call ends.

Lyn, I do not want to fuck our daughter.

Why, she not ugly? And, I kid you not, Lyn giggles.

Dammit, Lyn, this is not funny. I never said she was anything but pretty. That's not the issue and you know it.

I want you to do it. My mother had me that way. You have Nita.

Your father was an ass and a creep.

Yes! You are not. So it is better. Craig, we are yours. In all ways, this true. Do this.

Lyn, it isn't just Nita. It's Sisa, Mi2x, Mia and Lou. Five of them this coming year alone. And then later, more. It's crazy.

So? We have enough money now. And she laughs. You and me ... we made us very rich. The business can support all we add.

My sweet love. Of all the things I am worried about, money is not one of them.

Why you say that? You always saying, 'We must be more liquid!' I think I hear it in my sleep.

I am right. The business must stay liquid to prepare for bad times. Bad times always come and you never know when it will happen. But I have other money.

Yes, it is in the banks here, but most is spent, di ba?

Yes, what we put in has been spent.

See! I know, you looking at the business to take over that. We can do it, Craig. Jana and me talk. It OK, we ready.

I think you need to see some things. Come up to the study.

As we climb the stairs, Lyn is silent. I gather she is confused, and well she might well be. I have not shared with anyone that I have investments. I suspect she thinks I cashed everything in when I sold the fifty thousand Cisco shares a decade ago. I have not added anything to my bank accounts here since then other than the twice a year deposits I set up with my bank to make before returning here in May 2003. That was just the interest from a couple of IRAs I

have and small pension I have from a company I left a couple of decades ago.

I sit down in front of my laptop, asking Lyn to grab a chair and sit next to me as I log into my account at the brokerage.

It takes a few minutes for Lyn to see everything and have it sink in.

This true?

Yes. It is what I would have, if I sold today.

So it can change?

Yes, and I will have to pay taxes on it in the US.

But this real, this amount... my love... how much this in pesos please?

Four billion, two hundred and ninety-eight million, six hundred and twenty-three thousand pesos.

No!

Yes, but that's before taxes, and we are talking about a twenty percent tax rate.

So how much after?

Three billion, four hundred and thirty-eight million, eight hundred and ninety-eight thousand and four hundred pesos.

That's still so much!

Yes. So, Lyn, I am not worried about if I can afford more children. It is because Nita should find her own guy.

No! Now more 'no' than before! No!

Why?

Why you want someone to find their way into this fortune? No! It for you and your children! We make sure of this. No one else. No one from outside.

And there you have it. Just like I commented on consanguinity issues earlier. This is no different. If you don't have money, then you are looking for the right bed into which to crawl. Have a lot of money? ... then, don't allow anyone new to crawl in.

I spend a good thirty minutes going over what has transpired with the brokerage and what happens now.

My love, what you do with this money?

I don't know. Things are crazy in the US right now. The market is good, but I can see a crash coming, just like I see a property bubble here. I need time to think about it. As I can't even sell these stocks for two weeks, I have some time before I need to have any answer, even a temporary one.

My love, maybe you think this is silly, but this January it is fifteen years since I meet you at the Sydney.

Yes, I know, and...?

I was thinking, maybe, you, me and Jana go back there that day, just to have a meal and look around. But I remember now. It is closed. They fixing it.

Yes, it would have been nice, but that resto-bar we went to, is that still there?

Not sure. I will check. She giggles. That the night you meet Stefan, I think.

Yes, that was it.

We not see him anymore.

True. It has been a while.

He came to the house once. We didn't see him after that. No more text messages, and no invites. I didn't mind and I don't care, but many guys just stopped reaching out. George, and to a large extent Brian, have had the same experience.

If the resto-bar still open, you want to ask him to meet us?

No. I think just Jana, you and me.

Lyn smiles, leans over to hug me, kisses me on the cheek and leaves.

I have nothing fixed as to where I am about my daughters, but none of them reaches her birthday for months yet. In the shorter term, I have the issue of the stocks. As I don't even have a tracking number, there is nothing I can do with that for the present, as well.

All that is left, is to think about what I want to do with all that cash.

In the coming days, as New Year's comes and goes, I cannot even imagine what I should do with the money. If not enough money is a curse, it is beginning to dawn on me that too much money is equally so.

But one thing keeps on coming back to me. I know that I cannot just ask the US embassy to give each of my girls a visitor's visa. But if they have enough property and money in the bank, maybe they will qualify for a tourist visa. I begin to wonder how much money and business ownership that would be. I wouldn't want to burn off too much to do it... but how much would be enough?

I start looking at flight info. It is a diversion. I am well aware it allows me to think of something where I can actually get an answer, rather than staring into the unknown.

The girls with a profession will not need to own a business. That's nine of the girls. But I have six who don't own businesses. Mel, Reina, Jing2x, Si2x, Gladies and Shara. For two of them, I have at least an embryo of an idea. For four of them, I will wait until the stocks are sold and there is real cash, before I talk to the girls about it.

The days pass and, on January 2nd, I finally am given the tracking number. The document is currently in China. By the next day it is in Parañaque, Philippines, which is the FedEx sorting center in Greater Manila. That's a Wednesday. On Thursday morning I walk down to the guardhouse with a huge sign that reads,

HUWAG mag-sign para sa anumang FedEx
o Air21 item. Alert Craig at ipadala
agad ang courier sa kanya!⁷⁴

I make every guard read it out loud and then sign the bottom of the notice.

Two days later, close to lunchtime, the document arrives, and it is I who carefully signs for it in a legible manner. I want no screw-ups. It is Saturday the 6th, and the soonest I can be at the consulate will be Monday the 8th.

I am about to book my flight for Sunday evening, when Lyn asks if she might join me. Two seats are booked for the next evening. I get a room booked for the two of us at the same hotel where the consulate has its presence.

The rest flows through, just as I thought. Even though the dateline works against us, they get it faster going to the USA than it came coming from there. The document arrives on Thursday afternoon, which is my Friday morning, at the brokerage.

The next day turns out to be a holiday! The trades cannot be made. I am less than happy. When trading resumes on the 16th, I get a pleasant surprise. Apple is trading higher. My shares are at 178.5, and my Cisco is also trading a bit higher.

When Ms. Hernandez calls me at close to midnight on the 16th, she is tickled to give me the good news. The fact that she just made one point eight million isn't mentioned... by her. I do tease her a bit.

We talk about the tax, which they will take care of for me, and then we talk about the remaining amount. I tell her I am sending a PDF with the names of four of my banks here, and with my account name, number and the swift codes for each. I want her to send equal amounts to each bank and send me via email the transaction numbers for each bank and the exact amount to be sent. I also want the tax payment document.

⁷⁴ DO NOT sign for any FedEx or Air21 item. Alert Craig and send the courier to him immediately!

Each of these Philippine bank accounts is a dollar account. Once she sends me the list, which she tells me will be in my inbox when I awaken, I will spend tomorrow going from bank to bank, warning them of what is about to hit them. Hernandez and I agree on what it will be and I have it down to the penny, but the document is what I need.

I wish her the best of luck in her life going forward before hanging up.

And now, for what it is worth, I am done with any and all connections with the USA. There is nothing left there.

4

Sir Craig, this is a lot of money!

I want to say, 'No shit, Sherlock.' I don't. I just smile and say, *If it is too much for your bank, I will withdraw it as soon as it arrives, or if that doesn't work for you, I guess you can close my account right now and bounce the transfer back to the sender.*

Oh! No, Sir Craig, it is alright. No need for that.

I didn't think any of the banks would refuse it. None do, (though, later, Metrobank did have a freak-out that took over a month before they released the funds into my account.)

Back home, I decide that, for the moment, I have parked the funds and I really don't need to decide what to do with all of them, at least for now.

This is Wednesday the 17th, and most of the girls are super busy during the week. I let each know that I want them here on Sunday at one in the afternoon for a family meeting. I let each know this is not about a problem. It is about a potential trip and an opportunity.

In the four days prior to the meeting, I decide to sit down with my six who don't have businesses. The first two are Si2x and Jing2x.

I love both girls and there is not a damned thing wrong with Jing2x. But Si2x has a roadmap to my brain. It's that simple. I barely begin saying that I have come into some cash and if they own businesses we can get visas to visit the US...

I am not going to buy a spa for my mother, Craig, so don't even ask.

I have yet to open my mouth about doing so and Jing2x is totally lost, as she says, *What?*

Friend, he wants us to have our own business. Most of us here have a profession and so they not need. Di ba? But we not have this. So, Craig wants us to have

a business. If it wasn't a spa for our mothers, he would have talked to us separate.

Jing2x looks at me. *She right?*

She was. But now I will have to find another answer.

Si2x has a look on her face of 'Of course I am right! I know this man!' She isn't done. *Why is it needed that we have a business?*

So you can get a visitor visa to come to the USA on a trip with me.

You aren't talking about just us... That doesn't make sense... Oh! All of us? Really?

Yes.

We can afford this?

Yes.

We can sell the business when we return?

I guess so.

What if we want to give the business to our mothers? You be angry?

You can sell the business on friendly terms to make it possible for them to buy it.

OK, so we joint partners?

Yes, but it would need to be a chain of spas, not just one.

Oh! OK. We can do it. Who cares for the house?

I don't know. We can deal with the house, if we have a real problem. The kids will stay and the guards are here. As to the business, I think your mothers can be managers, if you think they are up to it.

Ha! They will be so confused, it will be funny.

Well, I think we need to hear from you, Jing2x? Are you OK with this?

She is. I will get Jana involved with getting them space to open up four sites. We will get Li2x to do the promotional materials. Two down and four to go.

Reina has talked and talked about wanting to run a pawn shop. She saw them from one side of the counter many times as a young kid. She very much would like to see the other side of them. However, she needs training before she can do this. I have no idea how one gets this training.

Evidently, Reina has done her homework. There are classes she can take in Manila. It's eight days of classes. I doubt that it is possible to learn enough in eight days, but what the heck. I give her the go-ahead to get signed up.

Three down and three to go, or so I think, but when Mel hears about what Reina wants to do, she wants to do it too... and then my better sense kicks in. There is no way we want Mel behind the counter of any pawn shop!

And there I just about have Mel melting down before I ask Lyn to knock some sense into Mel. Lyn is the only one who can, other than Lexi, and I really don't want Lexi ripping into Mel.

In the end, I decide to buy a couple of apartment buildings and give them to Gladies, Shara and Mel as co-owners. Once again I will involve Jana in the property issues.

But none of that will happen before Sunday.

On Sunday, with all of my fifteen girls sitting around the room, I begin.

As Lyn knows, we have a lot more money now. A great deal more than any of you know about. I am not sure what we will do with most of it, but for now, I have decided that I want to take a vacation with all of you. And I want that vacation to be in the USA, so that we can not only have fun, but I can show you where I came from. ... To get each of you a visa you need money in a bank account under your name. And you need a profession or business that will assure the US Embassy that you need to return here.

I take a drink of water before continuing.

And so we are opening up bank accounts for each of you with one-year time deposits of three million pesos each. For those of you who do not have a profession, I have already spoken to you about businesses you will own and run. ... I don't expect that we will be ready to go for close to a year, or maybe longer. But that is the plan. Any questions?

Jana simply asks, *How much more exactly do you have? You have already committed over forty-five million pesos plus the businesses.*

Lyn decides to answer her business partner. *Craig has better than three and a half billion pesos more.*

No one is saying a damned thing. There are stares at Lyn, and stares at me. But not a sound. But finally Jana, who has been at least thinking about what she has heard, says, *If you are given a business, you need to make it successful. It needs to make a profit. If he gives you, you are not to throw the gift away! Just like the gift he gives me of my college education.*

Lexi is thinking now... *Craig, we will need real maids! Not us and not like us. Maids.*

There is general agreement. I give the three who have those duties now the job of finding maids. Shara and Gladies are given the job of finding groundskeepers. I give Lyn the job of designing and erecting living quarters on the edge of the connected hectares of land we own.

In the ensuing months, Lyn, Jana and, to some extent Li2x, are busy helping get these businesses located and properties purchased. Reina takes her classes.

Si2x and Jing2x have what I gather is a fascinating discussion with their mothers, who are still doing massage and turning tricks on the side.

When my girls first explain what can happen, the two mothers think it is pure nonsense. It takes some convincing but, when the moms figure out this is on the level, there is a different kind of

reaction. They are terrified. They want no part of it. Too much responsibility! Then, my girls tell them that the moms can ‘understudy’ behind their daughters. Well, now, that pisses the mothers off but good. Where do their daughters come off thinking they know more than their mothers know about this business!

It takes a lot of walking around the same lamppost before there is agreement that the moms will manage the girls’ business venture, but it is done.

As all this is going on, March is creeping closer and closer. Nita’s birthday is March 27th. I am frustrated about this. Everyone in the house is expecting me to bed the kid. The kid is expecting me to bed her. And she is but the first, there are two more with birthdays in April and one in May.

As the calendar displays March 15th, it seems to me that this has to be it. I just need to swallow hard and go take the girl. She clearly won’t be the first girl I have taken at this age. It’s just that this one is my daughter. This is the Ides of March and it is Thursday. That won’t work. Nita’s last day of school isn’t for another week. So I choose a day that has black humor well within it for me. I will take her on March 17th. Yes, you know... that day.

Lyn, busy enough?

Ha! My God, Craig, getting these businesses going, plus the normal work... I am going crazy.

Well, you have another task I am assigning you now.

No! I can’t. Nothing more, please.

Sorry, but this one is yours. You are to prepare Nita to be with me on Saturday, and you are to be with her the entire time. If her father is to take her virginity, her mother is going to be there too.

Oh!

I know your lola was dead when your father took your mother, but you aren’t dead, so you will be there.

But...

No excuses, Lyn. You want me to have a child by our daughter, you are to be there.

OK. Yes, you are right. I will.

I am hanging out in my study Saturday afternoon when Lyn appears with Nita. *Nita, are you ready to enter a lifelong commitment to be one of my bedmates and bear my children?*

Yes, father, I will be a wife to you, just like mother is.

Very well, let's go to the bedroom.

Once in the bedroom, I give the two of them instructions. This is very different from anything I have ever done before. It feels radically different.

Lyn, Nita, both of you will undress. Lyn, I want you with your back hard against the backboard and your legs spread wide. Nita, you are also on your back, with your back propped up, as well as you can, against your mother and your legs also spread wide.

It takes about three minutes, but they are in position.

I climb up on the bed. There is K-Y on the nightstand and I apply some to Nita and to me. It's not clear that Nita needs it. She is already leaking.

You, Nita, lie now where you came out of your mother after I made her pregnant. I will enter you as I entered her. Some months from now a new life will exit you and you will place that child in the same way you are placed now... And behind you then will also be your mother... Your mother's spread legs sheltering you and your legs sheltering your child. Three generations. This is what you have asked of me and this is what will happen.

I push into Nita. I am pushing neither very hard nor softly. It is a steady and firm push, in, and in some more. Until I am fully inside the girl.

At that moment, something inside me goes very wrong. I grab the kid's legs in my arms and start pounding her hard, very hard. As I do so, my thumb invades her ass. It pushes deeper and deeper as I continue to pound the girl's cunt.

If, for whatever reason, I thought this would be punishment for her, making me do this to her, I am very wrong. Nita is cumming and cumming hard, and screaming to me to go even harder.

I look up at Lyn but she is somewhere else. Here and not here. I continue the attack on Nita's cunt and ass until my nuts just need release. Nita gets her load of cum and we are done.

Nita curls up against me, a smile on her face. She just wants to sleep. Lyn is still here but not here. Two hours later, I get up. Nita continues to sleep. I pull Lyn off the bed, throw on some clothes and, pulling naked Lyn behind me, we walk into the study.

Where are you Lyn? Where did you go in your head?

You do... do... You do what my half-sisters tell me happen to them when father take them. My lola has other daughters, I tell you this. You know, right? ... They not kill themselves like my Nanay do. They there when father take their daughters. What you do, he do. Oh, Craig, I see him when you take Nita!

Now, do you see why this is wrong?

No! It right. It what is true right. I not see that. It what men are and I not see that. Men are made to be this way. It more than tradition. It the truth for men.

God help us all. In her eyes, I didn't become the creep her father was, I turned him from a creep to a 'real man.'

Nita doesn't leave my bed for the rest of the day. When I enter the bedroom for the night she is still there.

Are you lost?

What?

Can't find your bedroom, Nita?

This is it tonight, Dad.

I see. And I guess I do see. Nita is letting me know that this afternoon can't be just a one off and now done. Eventually, I turn off the light and get under the sheets.

That is the signal to Nita. She reaches for my package. It doesn't take long for her to get me hard. Am I opposed to it? No, I seem to have crossed that Rubicon. We kiss, for the first time. It is a nice kiss and we both come back for more of it as my cock penetrates her cunt.

Her teeth have my lower lip securely held as I start a slow pumping of her manhole. This is not the frenetic sex we had this afternoon. This is slow, and in a weird way meaningful, as our bodies commit to each other. A dance of lovers and not a taking of a young cow by the bull of the herd.

Little Nita is murmuring encouragements. She is stroking the ego of her man as her man strokes her cunt. This should not be, and yet it most certainly is. Nita is not shying away from calling me Dad. She is doing it joyfully as we push on, now more intensely.

Now she is asking her Dad to fill her. Make her whole. Make her all she will be. As we fuck on into the night, her tight, hot cunt cannot be ignored and, in the end, she gets what she desires. I do fill her with cum.

And she... she is happy as she falls asleep once more.

It is Sunday morning and I am having coffee when Jana and Mia join me.

Do I need more than one guess as to why you two are here, Mia?

My daughter laughs. She has a great laugh. *No, Dad, I think you know why.*

OK, so why bother. Your birthday isn't for another month.

Why do I need to wait?

Why doesn't Christmas come in November, Mia?

Good one, Dad.

Uh-huh. Every once in a while I do OK.

But really Dad, why do I need to wait?

Because I am an old man and your sister just wore me out?

Good try. Mom says you are very much able.

Did you do that, Jana?

Well, you are!

If I say yes to you, Mia, what is to stop Sisa from coming to me the very next day and saying she is ready? And then Mi2x?

So, get us done. Why wait?

Jana, you know one of the reasons I never wanted more kids from any of you?

Now Jana is stumped, clueless. ... And I am just a little over the edge. Because, Jana, if I gave each of you three daughters, you were going to expect me to impregnate forty-five daughters.

And I'll be damned, but Jana starts to cry. Does she finally get it?

But we can afford it!

Oh, damn, she doesn't, and she feels cheated now. Damnation. I give up. OK Mia, this afternoon.

She jumps up, kisses me on the cheek and says, Thanks, Dad, before running off.

Craig, can we have more, please?

Yes, if you really want more, yes.

She jumps up, kisses me on the lips and says, Thanks, my love, before running off.

At three in the afternoon, I get a text from Mia,

Pssst, we are waiting in the bedroom.

When I get to the bedroom, I see Jana and Mia in the same position I had Lyn and Nita assume yesterday. Both are wearing only smiles. My K-Y is out on the nightstand. I don't remember putting it out earlier. Maybe Jana did it.

I shed my clothing and mount the bed. A quick check of Mia's pussy is all I need to know that Jana has prepped our daughter.

If there is one thing that all my daughters share it is that not a one of them fears me. Right now, no matter what is about to happen, Mia is confident that, since it is me, all will be OK. I wonder if that has been a mistake of mine.

Just like Nita, Mia is a little girl. Little in height, little in weight. There just isn't much to her, though she clearly has breasts. So, there is sexual development.

Just like Nita, I use my arms to pick up her legs and elevate her ass off the bed as I begin to penetrate her cunt. She is tight and small but her 'manhole' gives way to the occupant. I get all the way in after a few short strokes.

Mia is just looking up at me with a look, of what? Of expectation? I can't tell. I am not looking at Jana. I don't know what is happening in her heart or head.

I take one more short-stroke, placing my thumb close to her rosebud, and then I start pounding the girl good and hard. My thumb works its way up her ass as my cock saws back and forth through her cunt. I am not being kind. I am taking the girl, much as I took Nita yesterday. And just like Nita yesterday, Mia starts cumming over and over, gasping moaning, begging for more, for harder, for deeper.

I look up at Jana. She is staring at me. I smile back at her and pound Mia even harder. Over and over until the cum spills out of me and into our daughter.

Epilogue

Fifteen applications for visas submitted to the Embassy.

Four pregnant daughters. Si2x's waiting to be bedded this month and Shara's waiting in the wings

Five new maids who I absolutely do not touch.

Three groundskeepers who I absolutely do not touch.

One ten bedroom apartment complex with a large communal CR attached to a side wall of the property.

Five spas under management and ownership of two of my girls.

Four existing apartment complexes, newly purchased and under the management and ownership of three of my girls.

Two pawn shops under the management and ownership of one of my girls.

It is October 2nd 2018.

The interviews at the embassy are set for the seventeenth and eighteenth. All the paperwork is submitted that can be submitted and everything else is in hand.

We are hopefully going to go over Christmas break, because that is best for the teachers in the group.

There will always be something else, some other issue. There is no stopping point in real life.

But this wasn't about my entire life. It was about how things are different now. What I have, I wouldn't have if starting fresh today. Just like I said in the very first sentence here.

If you look around this place, this city is filled with economic energy, with jobs going wanting for not enough workers, with salaries that have gone up threefold or more now, with

construction activities so common that, as you drive down any given street there is a mix of just completed, almost completed, under construction, being torn down to make ready for construction, and those properties you know will be next to be torn down.

The streets are choking on traffic, filled with cars, SUVs and pickups. Many of the vehicles have temporary tags. Roads that were potholed macadam or just dirt are in many cases paved. New malls have been built, traffic lights installed in some places. Bridges have been built and new bypass roads have been constructed to ease the ever growing congestion.

There are so many foreigners here that no one even gives them any notice and, as I go to town, I will often see a dozen men who are clearly from somewhere else, whom I don't know and have never met.

The high school girls, when you see them, are no longer drooling after you when you go by. They are busy with their friends or are on their cellphones, and those cellphones are not simple Nokia handhelds; they are the latest Android or iPhones.

Sure, it is possible to get a girlfriend here, but they want to be the only one.

The world around me here has changed.

My girls? Well, we have built a life together, and my life with my fifteen is stable to the extent that they are not leaving, ever. Sure, it makes sense that Gladies and Shara will stay, just based on their ages now. For Pete's sake, Gladies is forty-seven now and Shara is forty-four. But the rest of them? They all have professions, or businesses, and money in the bank. If they were going to leave, it would have happened.

My daughters? Fuck if I know... you know this 'manhole stuff,' you just can't make shit up like that. But for them, and for the life here, as they see the world around them, my daughters know this life is unlike the life outside the fence. So I really don't know.

But, what happened to me was based on an economy that no longer exists here. Sure, if you travel to areas where the economy is not as good, maybe... but if it is only a Yellow Bus Line ride to the big city... well, all I can say is things are different, now.

My life will continue and the city will probably continue to grow, though I don't understand why it is happening.

All I do know is life sure as fuck can be weird, and even the Red Sox can win the World Series these days, but I had to leave Boston for that to happen.

The End...

Names, Nicknames & Birthdates

The Girls

| | Nickname | Birthdate |
|-----------------|----------------|------------|
| | <u>Gladies</u> | 6/2/1971 |
| | <u>Shara</u> | 11/15/1973 |
| Evelyn | Lyn | 10/30/1983 |
| <u>Nelmelvn</u> | Mel | |
| | Jana | 7/30/1985 |
| | Lexi | 3/11/1987 |
| | Si2x | 5/21/1987 |
| | Jing2x | |
| | Reina | |
| May | May | 2/27/1989 |
| Jocelyn | Li2x | 4/6/1989 |
| Katrina | Dido | 6/29/1989 |
| | Dina | 8/7/1992 |
| | <u>Lanie</u> | 7/12/1993 |
| | Mica | 6/4/1994 |

My Children

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| Oscar (Lexi) | 10/10/2003 |
| Nita (Lyn) | 3/27/2004 |
| Jon (Mel) | 4/14/2004 |
| Alyssa/ <u>Sisa</u> (May) | 4/22/2004 |
| Mia (Jana) | 4/29/2004 |
| <u>Chamiva</u> /Mi2x (Li2x) | 5/16/2004 |
| <u>Ana</u> lou/Lou (Si2x) | 11/14/2004 |
| Boy (Reina) | 12/03/2004 |
| Boy (Jing2x) | 1/07/2005 |
| Boy (<u>Shara</u>) | 9/8/2006 |
| Zoe (<u>Gladies</u>) | 9/27/2006 |
| Boy (Dina) | 3/11/2009 |
| Girl (Mica) | 3/13/2009 |
| Girl (<u>Lanie</u>) | 4/22/2009 |
| Boy (Dido) | 6/2/2013 |

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ORDINANCE 21 series of 2003

Excerpt from the minutes of the 115th regular session of the Sangguniang Panlungsod, City of General Santos, held at the Session Hall on Thursday, September 11, 2003.

Hon. Florentina L. Congson
Hon. Jose Orlando R. Acharon
Hon. Lourdes F. Casabuena
Hon. Minda L. Atendido
Hon. Cesar B. Bañas
Hon. Minardo A. Avila, Jr.
Hon. Jose Mari C. Natividad
Hon. Eduardo D. Leyson III
Hon. Franklin M. Gacal, Jr.
Hon. Ramon R. Melliza
Hon. Zoilo C. Abing, Sr.
Hon. Orlando A. Oco
Hon. Jose Mariano Constantino G. Gonzalez
Hon. Delia G. Rabanes
Hon. Brian G. Estrellan
ABSENT:

City Vice-Mayor and Presiding Officer
City Councilor (President Pro Tempore)
City Councilor (Floor Leader)
City Councilor (2nd Assistant Floor Leader)
City Councilor
City Councilor
City Councilor (1st Assistant Floor Leader)
City Councilor
City Councilor
City Councilor
City Councilor
City Councilor
City Councilor
City Councilor
City Councilor (President, *Liga ng mga Barangay*)
City Councilor (SK Federation President)
None

WHEREAS, playing computer games, internet-based games, billiards and watching movies during school hours are detrimental to the moral and educational development of young people;

WHEREAS, there is a need to curb these activities to promote the interest and well-being of young people, and in the hope that their time, especially at their critical formative stage, shall be devoted to more productive endeavors in school and at home;

NOW, THEREFORE, on motion of City Councilor Jose Mari C. Natividad, co-sponsored by City Councilors Minardo A. Avila, Jr., Lourdes F. Casabuena, Brian G. Estrellan, Eduardo D. Leyson III and Jose Mariano Constantino G. Gonzalez, duly seconded by City Councilor Cesar B. Bañas, be it –

RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved, to enact the following Ordinance:

ORDINANCE NO. 21

Series of 2003

AN ORDINANCE PROHIBITING MINORS BELOW SIXTEEN (16) YEARS OLD TO PLAY COMPUTER GAMES, INTERNET-BASED GAMES, BILLIARDS AND SEE MOVIES DURING SCHOOL HOURS

Hon. Jose Mari C. Natividad – Sponsor

Be it enacted by the Sangguniang Panlungsod of General Santos that:

Section 1. Regulated Acts. – No minor, below sixteen (16) years old, shall play computer games, internet-based games, billiards, and see movies during school hours.

As used in this Ordinance, computer games, internet-based games or billiards are those games played on establishments situated outside the residence of minors during the usual school hours of weekdays, except during holidays, summer and Christmas vacations, from 8:00 o'clock in the morning up to 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon. Watching movies during the aforesaid specific period shall also be prohibited to minors.

Section 2. Obligations of Owners, Management or Operators of Computer Shops, Internet Cafés, and Movie Houses. – the owners, management or administrators of computer shops, internet cafés, billiard halls, and movie houses are hereby required to post or cause the posting of a billboard or signage at the entrance of their respective establishment concisely indicating the subject and the act sought to be regulated by this Ordinance. They are also required to ensure that no minor below sixteen (16) years of age is playing computer game, internet-based game, billiards or watching movie within their establishment during the aforesaid periods.

Section 3. Penalty Clause. – (a.) Any minor found guilty violating this Ordinance shall be apprehended and confined immediately at the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) for not less than two (2) hours but not more than four (4) hours. Thereupon, the personnel of the CSWDO shall conduct an orientation to the minor so apprehended on proper values.

(b.) Any owner, management or administrator of computer shop, internet café, billiard hall, or movie house who failed to comply with the provision of this Ordinance shall be penalized with a fine of One Thousand Pesos (P1,000.00) for the first offense, Two Thousand Pesos (P2,000.00) for the second offense, and Three Thousand Pesos (P3,000.00) and cancellation of business permit for the third offense.

Section 4. Formulation of Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within thirty (30) after the effectivity of this Ordinance, the Office of the City Mayor, the City Social Welfare and Development Office and the General Santos City Police Office shall formulate rules and regulations for the smooth implementation of this Ordinance.

Section 5. Repealing Clause. – Any ordinance, resolution or order, or part or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provision of this Ordinance are hereby amended, repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 6. Saving Clause. – The declaration of unconstitutionality or invalidity of any provision of this Ordinance shall not affect the other provisions hereof.

Section 7. Effectivity. – This Ordinance shall take effect after ten (10) days following its publication in a newspaper of general circulation within the City.

Enacted by the Sangguniang Panlungsod, City of General Santos, on its 115th Regular Session held on September 11, 2003.

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

(SGD)ATTY. ROSENDO A. ROQUE

Secretary to the Sanggunian ATTESTED BY:
(SGD)FLORENTINA L. CONGSON
City Vice Mayor and Presiding Officer

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Boston housing market surges

By **Kimberly Blanton, The Boston Globe**
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

FEBRUARY 18, 2003 | BOSTON

House prices in the Boston metropolitan area are now rising faster than they did during the 1980s real estate bubble.

Data from the National Association of Realtors (NAR) show that median house prices in the area rose nearly 101 percent from 1997 through September 2002. Those price spikes -- which are a boon to homeowners building up piles of equity but a bane to those moving to the region -- exceed the 85 percent appreciation between 1984 and 1989, the peak year in a flurry of speculative buying before the city's housing market went into a tailspin and values sank.

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Just two styles of the hundreds of ways it is done.

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Recipes

Pinakbet Recipe



Estimated cooking time: 35 minutes

Ingredients:

- 1/4 kilo pork with fat, cut into small pieces
- 2 Amapalya (bitter melons) sliced to bite size pieces
- 2 **asian** eggplants, sliced to bite size pieces
- 5 pieces of okra, cut in two
- 1 head garlic, minced
- 2 onions, diced
- 5 tomatoes, sliced
- 1 tablespoon of ginger, crushed and sliced
- 4 tablespoons bagoong isda or bagoong alamang (or add some extra salt if you can't get this)
- 3 tablespoons of oil
- 1 1/2 cup water
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation:

In a cooking pan, heat oil and fry the pork until brown, remove the pork from the pan and set aside.

On the same pan, saute garlic, onion, ginger and tomatoes.

In a casserole, boil water and add bagoong.

Add the pork in the casserole and mix in the sautéed garlic, onion, ginger and tomatoes.

Bring to a boil and simmer for 10 minutes.

Add in all the vegetables and cook until the vegetables are done, careful not to overcook.

Salt and pepper to taste.

Serve hot with plain rice.

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Pancit Bihon Guisado



Ingredients:

2 tbsp cooking oil
5 cloves garlic, minced
1 medium onion, sliced
1 tbsp fish sauce
1 cup boiled meat, cut into strips
2 pcs chinese sausage, strips
1/2 head cabbage, cut into squares
1 large carrots, strips
1 cup green beans, sliced diagonally
1 cup snow peas
3 tbsp soy sauce
3 cups broth
2 tbsp kintsay / cilantro
1 bundle or 8oz rice sticks salt
pepper to taste
calamansi

Preparation:

1. Boil the meat in water until tender.
2. Reserve the soup.
3. Soak the rice sticks in water.
4. In a pan, saute garlic in cooking oil.
5. Add onions, meat and chinese sausage.
6. Add fish sauce and cook for 3 minutes.
7. Add green beans, carrots, cabbage, snow peas and kintsay/cilantro.
8. Cook until vegetables are half-cooked.
9. Remove from heat.
10. Set aside.
11. In a wok, boil soy sauce and broth.
12. Add the rice sticks and cook until the rice sticks are tender.
13. Add the cooked vegetables.
14. Season with salt and pepper.
15. Serve with calamansi.

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