

FMA

Informative

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Marina's Fella

Marina Sundang leaves an abusive relationship to truly find the love of her life.

Samuel Lauranilla

A Escrima Romance Novel



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The FMA Informative is bringing you the reader Marina's Fella - "A Escrima Romance Novel" by Sam Luranilla. This is a story of about racism, love, domestic abuse, martial arts and Jesus Christ!

The story is a work of fiction, Mr. Luranilla changed his grandfathers name from Grandmaster Regino Elustrisimo to Juanito Elustrado for the novel. Understand that the novel is written intentionally with grammatical and punctuation errors from perspective of Marina's daughter. Also to make it in fashion that it was intended the story in this issue is presented in a hand written format.

About the Author Samuel Luranilla

"Try to live a simple life." Been my motto for a while now. Always loved a good story, especially the ones my family would tell at the dining room table during supper time. Growing up in a third generation Filipino-American home, my cultural background is flavored with many good anecdotes of history and laughter. As a born again Christian believer, I have found virtually no books that speak to my cultural identity. I know that the bible states that our identity is in Christ Jesus, and not ethnic backgrounds, but I wrote this little novella Marina's Fella as a outreach tool to speak to my Filipino-American brothers/sisters in Christ specifically. I have a B.A. degree in Radio/Television with a concentration in Writing for the Electronic Media, from San Francisco State University, and worked in various aspects of video production for more than 15 years. Wrote, produced, and directed my first feature length movie "Roses for Magdalena" (2007), and learned a great deal about how not to make a Christian movie in the process.

The Author's Own Words:

"Though this book is a fictional story of a martial artist and the object of his romance, the author of this novella had one purpose in mind in writing, namely to use the book as a source of Christian evangelism to his Filipino-American community. Coming from a long family history of Escrimadors (Ilustrisimo Repeticion/Kali Ilustrisimo style), I have seen almost no writing dealing with reaching out to the Filipino-American community with the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have combined my own personal family history, along with my mother's family lineage of martial arts history into this fictional book. They say to write what you know about, so that was my intentions in creating this art, with no disrespect to any family or other individuals."

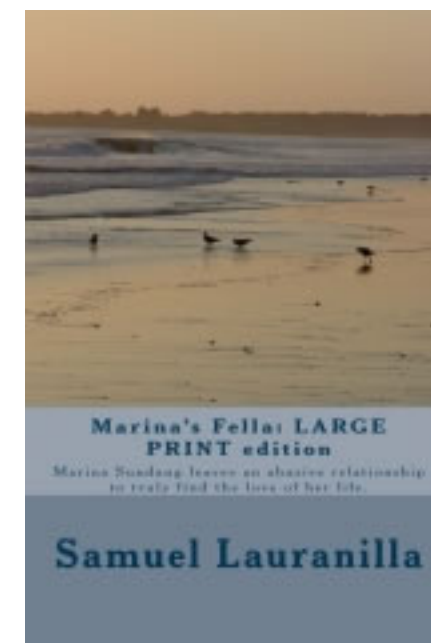
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Each issue features practitioners of martial arts and other internal arts, other features include historical, theoretical and technical articles; reflections, Filipino martial arts, healing arts, the culture of the Philippines and other related subjects.

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Chapter 1

Marina Sundang, her name betrayed her light mestiza skin. She didn't look like what she thought what a Pinay woman ought to be. No dark carmel skin, nor straight black hair, more of a light brown tint to her short bob hairstyle, and definitely no thick accent for this third generation Filipina/Mexicana American. But that didn't matter to Regino Elustrado, he loved her, even if she didn't know it yet.

Regino would notice, as she walked up the stairs at 8 a.m. every day to the office upstairs from the warehouse floor, usually carrying a stack of paperwork.

"Git back to werk! Stop stawking the seketaree! Wes need dis truk oflodged ASAP!" yelled his partner Anthony Dubois.

"Shut up man, you think she heard you Tony?!", Regino asked sternly.

"Uv corse she'd hura me, maan. Why don't yuse jus ask hers out bye now? En my lan, theyse people are marrie bye da time wese twen-ee".

"Wait, where do you come from again Tony? How come I met a guy from Liberia and his accent wasn't as garbled as yours?...heh heh.

"Monkee boi, I'se tole yoo nawt ta make da baad talk bawt my lan, okae monkee boi, I'll run yoo dawn wit dis fawkleeft! Okae monkee boi!", Anthony jokingly replies.

"I told you Tony about calling me monkey boy! I'll report you to HR if ou say that again." Regino looks up through the glass office door to Marina at her desk, wondering what she's thinking.

Six hours and three containers empty later, a dirt smeared Regino wipes the sweat off his dark brown forehead with a piece of brown paper towel.

The work day ends for Regino and as he walks out the front door of the warehouse, he looks up once more towards the office where Marina is checking a document on the computer screen.

Chapter Two: Peat Dirt in the Hot Central Valley

Regino turned on the shower and the cool water refreshed his sore shoulders and back. After the shower, he began to dry off and look at his tattoos that his two twin brothers, Melecio and Isidoro forced him get. The last tattoo, his last name ELUSTRADO, was something his brothers encouraged him to get before they both left to Afghanistan for the Army years earlier.

He hated the ink on his back, "Elustrado" in big black Old English lettering, not so much the other tattoos, because the Latin prayer on his right calf made sense to him, but the name Elustrado on his back made no sense to him. For him, the last name Elustrado represented a mistake made years ago by a U.S. naval officer that couldn't understand his late grandfather Juanito Ilustrado told him to spell his name out. Because his grandfather Juanito was illiterate, he didn't know that the U.S. naval officer misspelled his own name, and for the last 70 years, the Ilustrado name became Elustrado. The alibata and indigenous animal patterns on his chest and arm sleeves represented ancient symbols of Ilustrado family lineage and Cebuano culture pride. Battles, both in ancient times before the Spanish arrival in Cebu, down through his grandfather's time spent in the U.S. Navy fighting the Japanese in World War Two, even up to the times when his father Elpidio was in the Army during the Vietnam era. Though his dad never went to Vietnam, being stationed in Germany and Kansas before young Regino was born or his twin brothers were born.

Regino thought about his two brothers that tied him down and forced the tattoos on him when he was 14 years old, saying that the oracion (prayer) on his leg was an anting-anting (spiritual amulet), and that it would protect him from danger. Though Regino knew of God, his relationship with God was not what he knew it was supposed to be, that Lord's prayer tattoo on his calf was the closest thing to Jesus he would know, until later on.

He thought about his brothers a lot lately, and how asthma kept him from serving in the

military, like his grandfather and father before him. Melecio or Mel, as he liked to be called, would always be loud and talk way too much, while the other quieter Isidoro would just constantly read military books and old Soldier of Fortune magazines. Regino was afraid of Isidoro more, because he would constantly sharpen his knife collection and not speak for days. In fact, when he was forced to get tattooed by his brothers, he actually thought Izzy was going to kill him with the homemade ink set, (nails, ball pin hammer, charcoal, and small bottle of black Indian ink stolen from the local arts & craft store).

Regino got dressed and in his typical desert camo shorts and light grey t-shirt and took out his escrima sticks. He began his after work FMA training drills with the stack of old rubber tires. "Strike one to a quick four, followed by a roof block, then a side step and parry with the live hand", he would follow each motion, repeating each movement twelve times, then reversing the strikes with the other side. Regino knew he must work on his footwork more, when he'd train with his escrima teacher Billy would yell at him, "Yoo moob like uh turtell! Yoo kno whut I do to dah turtell, I make sa-bow! Ha ha!" followed by a stab to the stomach with a Kumagoong stick. "So, timing and movement needed to be enhanced", Regino thought to himself.

Chapter Three: She thought to herself, "It's got to get better than this!"

She cried silently all night into the next morning. The baby was in the next room, also crying. Her deadbeat boyfriend Clyde Perry yelled out at her before leaving to the liquor store for more beer.

He left her with a swollen black eye, bruised from another night of arguing, Perry did most of the yelling and knocking her down to the ground with his bare fist to her face.

Just as she got hit in the eye, she thought to herself, "It has to get better than this!"

A few minutes after Perry ran off and slammed the door, Marina Sundang remembered the good times they used to have, when she first met Clyde Perry, before the baby was born. How he literally swept her off her feet, how his sweet talking words made her forget for a few moments just how miserable she felt on the inside.

But then reality sets back in again, how the pain she felt on her face from the man who supposedly said he loved her and would never treat her abusively as her dad used to beat her up. Clyde Perry was just as bad, more even worse for the cycle of abuse she was dealt whenever he would lose a truck driving gig or be too stinking drunk to realize how much he hurt his girlfriend Marina. Clyde Perry was a jealous man. So jealous that he would literally trap Marina in the bedroom at times, pouring sand on the bedroom floor and telling her that if he woke up in the morning and saw footprints on the floor, it meant she snuck out the house to cheat on him. Then, he would get nice again, wooing her with all types of gimmicks and extravagant gifts. Flowers and music bands playing outside her bedroom window. But of course, this little charade would not last and Clyde would go back to being the jerk he was and hit her in the mouth or face, the moment he felt insecure about something or jealous of someone. As ridiculous as it sounded, it made all the sense in the world to this idiot Clyde Perry, Marina was his girlfriend and he bought her all that stuff, a little smack in the face was no big deal. His very own parents did the same thing.

The baby crying in the next room, way too young to realize that she had parents who were on a violent collision course and were taking this baby on a terrible ride straight to Child Protective Services if there is to be no divine intervention.

Sobbing on the kitchen floor, Marina thought about a lot of thing, "How was she gonna feed the kid?", "Was Clyde gonna return soon and try to hurt her again?". and her main thought that ran through Marina's head was, "How can I get out of this world of pain I got myself trapped inside of?"

Chapter Four: Not all men are jerks!

Marina stares at the living room wall, a beige greyish white color. The walls made her want to vomit, as she just looks at the walls behind her beautiful bruised light brown eyes.

The doorbell rings and she snaps out of her lost, wandering thoughts. Quickly, she goes to the bathroom and grabs her dark sunglasses. This was the usual routine, whenever she heard the doorbell and Clyde had just hit her. As much as she was entangled with this man, she had enough sense to know that she must hide the twisted marks of affection inflicted by the man Clyde Perry, who said he loved her. He would return three days later, with the usual apology tools of flowers, and a thousand phrases of "It will never ever happen again, babe. I'm sorry".

The doorbell continued to ring and Marina looks out the peephole, to see it is her next door neighbor, Esther, an older woman in her sixties.

"How's it going Esther?", she opens the door just enough to let some pain and sorrow out.

"Are you okay, hun. I heard some commotion in there?" Esther looks at Marina with kind, non-judging warmth.

"No, things are okay. I fell down and hit my head on the counter, that's all." Marina states non-chalantly.

"Marina, if you ever need anything, and I mean anything, don't hesitate to come by. You know we're just a few doors down from you.", Esther looks up at her and grabs her hand.

Marina pulls away slowly and says thanks before closing the door.

Esther walks back to her home and closes the door behind her. Her husband Matthew, also late sixties, has a baseball bat in one hand and the cordless phone in the other.

"Matthew, put that baseball bat down! What were you gonna do to Clyde, hit him upside the head with that!" Esther exclaims.

"It's not right Esther. A man isn't supposed to hit his woman. We should at least have called the police on him!" Matthew insists.

"Come here and put that bat down." Esther motions to the kitchen table as she sits down.

She grabs her husband's hand. A man who in the thirty plus years of marriage and courtship, never hit her in their entire life together. "You know, what we have to do."

The couple close their eyes and bow their heads in reverence to God, they hold hands tightly while praying. Matthew opens up in prayer and begins, "Dear God, please help this young woman and her child. Please open her heart to realize that this mess she's in is not right. We've intervened many times, but she still returns to this awful, evil man. Please help her, her baby, and what other needs she is experiencing. Give my wife Esther and myself the opportunity to lead her to your son Jesus Christ, and invite her to your house of worship, in your timing, not ours." Matthew looks at the baseball bat at his side.

"Also, thank you Father, for giving me the wisdom not to bash this man's skull in and end up in prison. Forgive me for thinking those things. In Jesus' name. Amen!" Matthew adds, as she gently takes one hand and touches his wife's head gently, then kisses her softly on the neck. Esther cringes, "Not now Matt!".

Esther moves her head away and adds, "In the name of Jesus, we bind that spirit of violence and drunkenness! Pride and self-loathing, flee from this place! Command it to flee our neighborhood! We plead a hedge of protection upon this neighborhood all the way from Flora Street to Aca-cia and on the South end from Fremont Street and El Dorado to the other side of the port! With the Almighty blood of your son Jesus Christ, Amen!"

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Chapter Five: Cold, grey tombstone in San Joaquin County

Regino Elustrado rode his bicycle to the Stockton cemetery at least twice a month to put white roses on his mother's grave. As he looked at the tombstone, Adeliza Faith Elustrado, he kept thinking about different things. In all his 27 years of life on this planet, he missed his mom terribly these last few months. She had been dead for the past five years and he felt terrible about the last few words he spoke to her.

Adeliza Faith Elustrado had become just like her middle name, before she passed. Someone at the dialysis treatment center had led her to Jesus months before her fatal heart attack. Regino hated that all she spoke about was "Jesus this" and "Jesus that". It bothered him so much, that his final words to her over the phone were, "Mom, I don't have time to talk to you now, I gotta go." He intentionally cut her off and hung up the phone, so that his mother wouldn't have time to tell him about him needing to know Jesus as his Lord and Saviour. Five years later, the only reminder of his mom was the cold, grey tombstone in San Joaquin county. How he longed to have just a few more conversations with her.

Regino was a momma's boy at heart, always near her in the kitchen and trying his best to learn to cook the basic Filipino foods. Being a third generation Filipino American, Regino knew quite a bit compared to his peers, except for the Visayan language. He loved the stories of his ancestry, particularly the stories of his grandparents arrival in Stockton. He remembered the stories his mom would tell about Pinoy (Filipinos), Manongs (older men) and the few Manangs (older women) and how his people lost their native language due to the racism in Stockton in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Both set of parents were told by their parents "You're in America, speak English!"

How his grandparents could only find menial farm labor jobs on the outskirts of town, picking fruit and cutting asparagus. The rampant racist signs posted up "No dogs or Filipinos Allowed in this store". How the unspoken law was that if you had brown or black skin, you were not allowed past Harding Way until the late 1960s.

But the talks with his mom about how she grew up in French Camp as a child, the daughter of a common field worker, were the stories that really struck him. He passed those same landmarks on his way to the grocery store, nostalgic buildings now torn up by the ravages of time. The old fish market Waki's was now someone's home, and the post office where his 8 year old mother was accidentally left in front of by his uncle is another story she would recall. How she got out of school and waited for seven hours waiting for her brother Francisco to pick her up sitting on her lunch box. Adeliza waited so long in front of that French Camp post office, she peed in her dress that day, and her mother got so mad at Francisco, that Grandmother Esperanza took a strong beating to her son Francisco that day, but then again, those were very different times.

Every time Regino drove passed that French Camp post office, he would laugh and think of his mom as an eight year old girl peeing on her lunch box.

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Chapter Six: Sundang means sword in Visayan

Three weeks later. Bruises heal, hearts remain fragile.

Mister Sundang slowly opens the package of dried spicy cuttlefish and bit off a piece before giving the rest to his grandchild. For all the verbal and physical abuse he unleashed on his daughter Marina, he was a gentle grandfather to his young granddaughter. He truly regretted all the pain he inflicted on her, but as all men of his generation, he was silent in his feelings. Those patterns of abuse by the men in Marina's life remained a remnant of how she related to them for years to come. Marina's relationship with her dad was complicated, to say the least. For all the beatings she took as a child/teenager from him, had he known his only daughter was domestically abused by her boyfriend Clyde Perry, he would've taken his gun and remove Clyde Perry from the

face of this earth. Mister Sundang was a quiet but deadly man. For Clyde's sake, Marina knew how to hide her bruises, makeup and sunglasses were a huge key to this deception, followed by many excuses.

As the baby chewed the cuttlefish, making crinkly faces with her face, Mister Sundang thought about different things. A laundry list of ideas floating in his fifty-six year old mind. He needed to get more spicy cuttlefish and bagoong (purple shrimp paste) at the local Filipino market. He thought about the COPD diagnosis he was given, as a result of forty years of smoking cigarettes. He pondered his Visayan heritage and still wondered how he managed to marry his beautiful Mexican bride Lourdes, over thirty-five years earlier, meeting her in front of the local Fox movie theater as he walked out of the cinema and Lourdes got off her job as a cashier in the now defunct Rosenthal's department store. He also thought about his surname Sundang. Sundang means sword or knife in his native Visayan dialect. Most pinoy (Filipinos) he knew had typical Spanish last names like Estacio, Ramires, Ramos, or Hernandez. He pondered various aspects of his last name and thought of the other words for sword in Filipino, like bolo and kris. He thought about his ancestors over 400 years prior who helped to cut off the head of the explorer Ferdinand Magellan, assisting the pagan hero Lapu-Lapu. Years later when Marina had been converted to Christianity from her religious Catholic background and leading her father to the Lord, Mister Sundang would meditate on the book of Revelations and think about Jesus taking his sword and smiting the enemy.

Mister Sundang would lead many sinners to Christ years later and beg his daughter to forgive him for his poor parenting skills. But at this point in the story, he just gives his grand daughter more dried squid.

Chapter Seven: When Reggie met Marina or "Don't call me kuya!"

Twenty years earlier, a lone seven year old Regino Elustrado plays in the sandbox digging a hole in the sand, at Hazelton Elementary school on a hot Stockton September morning at recess. Out of the corner of his eye, he sees a little girl with long, shoulder length brown curly hair about the same age as him.

She slowly walks up to Regino and asks him his name. Regino responds "Reggie". Marina smiles and says her name is Marina. Regino is stunned in all his seven years of life, his heart racing, trying to get out of his chest, he is speechless. The little girl has a small but noticeable cast on her arm, from her father throwing her against the wall, breaking it in two places, a few weeks earlier. Had her father known martial arts, she would have been dead at the age of seven. Mister Sundang was a violent man.

Marina says "Can I help you dig that hole Reggie?"

Regino utters, "Sure."

The two begin to play in the sand together until recess ends. The teacher has to call for them to come in from the playground twice

Twenty years later, Regino is at his job in the warehouse opening up boxes on the loading dock. Marina is upstairs in the office doing the usual office administration tasks she does on a typical Tuesday morning. But things would be different than the past three years.

After the last makeup session, Clyde Perry took off on her again, as usual, with no notice, no nothing

Regino is at his table on the receiving dock when the truck driver get out of his cab and hands Regino a box, from the outside of the loading dock.

Regino, "No, this goes in the main office upstairs, its not merch."

Truck driver "Dude, I came all the way from Mendota on my own mileage, I'm not walking up another flight of stairs, you bring it."

Regino, "Are you kidding me, you've been sitting down in a semi-truck for the last two and a half hours, you can't even walk up some stairs!"

The truck driver curses Regino out, walks away back to his truck. Regino just smiles and makes a call to his supervisor Victor in the front office. After explaining that the truck driver won't carry the package to the upstairs office, his boss tells Regino to bring it up himself.

Regino carries the plain brown package up the cement grey loading dock and begins his journey up the stairs.

Marina is busy inputting sales data into the Excel spreadsheet on her computer, when Regino walks in and says:

"Hey. Where do you want this box?, Regino looks up at Marina.

Marina looks up at Regino. She had known him for over twenty years, but he looked different to her now. She had always seen him as a kuya (brother/just a friend), but in the time that Clyde literally ran off on her, he just looked more different. After the second grade, they drifted a little apart as friends. Always familiar, never anything more, even though she always suspected Regino's feelings for her. Even when she and Clyde Perry got together, she felt Regino was still interested, even though he was always dating some other girl or another for a while, before the usual break up that occurred after the normal three months. She always wondered why Regino never could keep a relationship longer than three months, the women he would date would either cheat on him or just outright dump him. Marina never knew, the reason he had issues with commitment was that Regino would accidentally call out her name instead of their name, getting slapped in the face three times for that.

Regino didn't have a problem with commitment, he had a unfair lifelong commitment to Marina, which she knew nothing about.

"Hi Reggie, just put the box over there, I'll get it after I'm done with these files."

Her heart began to race inside her, just like Regino's heart beat faster and faster as a seven year old twenty years earlier, but she didn't show it to him. She didn't want to show herself.

"Marina, are you alright? Regino asks.

"Yeah, why wassup Reggie?" Marina responds.

"You were gone for two weeks, is something wrong? Regino asks.

As usual, Marina quickly thinks up a lie to cover her sudden and immediate absence from work, after her beating she took from Clyde Perry over three weeks earlier. Just as concealer and makeup covered her marks, another lie would cover her excuse for the domestic abuse by the man Clyde Perry, who said he would never treat her like her father.

"No Reggie, me and Clyde and the baby took a trip to So Cal to visit his relatives, that's all. "

"Oh, just wanted to make sure you're okay."

"Oh kuya, thanks." she smiles while covering up her lies yet again."

Regino hated that she called him kuya. Like many Filipino men, being called kuya by a pinay or mestiza woman is the kiss of death. It means you are forever in that dreaded friend zone and means that you will never become more.

Regino walks back down stairs and remembered a line from a popular Filipino song about the term kuya, "...though you stated plainly that we will never become lovers, don't you dare call me your brother!"

The story of Regino's life. Thus far.

Chapter Eight: If God is Love, How come He let my Mom Die!

Regino walked into his father's house. His dad is sitting at the kitchen table staring at him as he walks into the kitchen, he gives his dad a quick hug and heads straight to the back room. Three cardboard boxes are lined up side by side on his father's bed.

Regino's dad yells out, "You're mom's stuff is on the bed Reggie!". It always made Regino laugh how his dad would yell out things three seconds after he would find the item first. That always happened with him. After five long years of his mother being at rest with the Lord, Regino was able to persuade his father to get rid of a lot of his mother's things. Regino's father loved his mother Adeliza Faith, and any little thing that reminded him of Adeliza, he kept, even old phone books and scraps of drawings she drew on gum wrappers. Regino looked in the boxes for specific momentos, the rest he would toss in the trash, try to give to the local homeless shelter, or sell at his yard sale.

The first box was nothing but old clothes, his father should've gotten rid of years ago and sent off to the Goodwill or local thrift store. Or at the very least, had a yard sale and sell the dresses and other clothes. Knowing how sentimental his father was, Regino was really surprised that he was getting rid of his mom's old stuff now, instead of pack ratting it into a stuffed closet or Regino's old bedroom.

The second cardboard box contained his mom's old bible and a collection of rusted metal figurines and various miniature sculptures. His mother Adeliza was an avid collector of figurines that she would purchase at yard sales and what not. Regino picked up a small clown and examined it closely, seeing if it was worth adding to the yard sale bin. He then picked up a rusted steel windmill and made up in his mind that he would sell it for scrap at the local recycling plant.

The third box contained old board games, some with missing pieces and many without the instructions. He remembered growing up and watching his parents play Monopoly or Scrabble for hours, while he sat in the other room playing his latest video game, back in the day. Regino thought to himself, this is junk.

Regino goes to the second box again, the one that contained his mother's bible and begins to look through the pages. Though his mother was only saved a little while before her death from the heart attack, her bible was well used. It surprised him that many of the pages were dog eared and the margins had a lot of writing. Some were preaching notes, while other notes were more personal, actual prayers to Jesus.

Regino's father yelled at him from the kitchen "You know you can keep that stuff or sell it in the yard sale, it's been here too long! Too many sad memories."

Regino paused for a split second and a tear rolled down his face. As he continued to read some of his mothers prayers, he noticed one asking God to save her sons and the other to save her husband.

Regino's disposition changed and sadness turned to a heated anger. He thought to himself that over and over again, people told him "God is good." but Regino Elustrado thought, if God is so good, how come He let his mother die before she turned sixty. Regino was angry at God. It would take a few months before he allowed that bitterness to go. Months later, when he would get saved and start attending church, a guy from his local church would show him a scripture explaining that it wasn't God who killed his mother, but satan who came to steal, kill, and destroy the lives of the believers.

But for now, Regino was angry at God. He tossed his mother's bible in the box and gave it to the local thrift store, where a homeless man picked it up for 75 cents. That man would eventually receive salvation, get off the streets of South Stockton, and pastor a church ten years later.

But for now, Regino was angry at God.

Chapter Nine part 1:

Sometimes I rhyme slow, Sometimes I rhyme quick

Marina sits uncomfortably in her chair, this is her first bible study she has ever been in. All the faces are unfamiliar to her except for her neighbor Esther and her husband. Why did she even think she belonged here, she wasn't a church person, Marina thought over and over again as the young man leading the bible study was speaking something in the bible. The only reason she came to this bible study was so that Esther would stop bothering her about invited her to these church functions. Marina was suspicious and believed in her heart that everybody has an agenda, a secret motivations for doing things. Maybe Esther's motives were loneliness, since she had no daughters of her own, she wanted Marina to be her surrogate daughter. Maybe this place was a cult, and Marina Sundang must get out of there as quickly as possible and get her baby daughter out of that nursery room before she became brainwashed by this cult Esther and her husband took her too! All these paranoid thoughts ran through Marina's mind back and forth, as the young man was introducing the bible study.

There were a small group of ten people sitting in the circle of chairs all with their bibles out, except for the young man leading the bible study. The young man in his early thirties, had his cell phone out and read something from the book of Jeremiah. The young man began to read:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. Jeremiah 17:9-10 "

The words penetrated Marina's very being. She thought to herself -had she become like that bible verse. Was her heart really wicked and all the things she craved and desired in this life out of selfish motivations? Why did she really stay with Clyde Perry all these years, endangering the life of herself and that of her daughter? Everything was so confusing with her personal life. She was glad that Clyde Perry took off for who knows where, almost month ago, drunk as always. But other thoughts and imaginations ran to and fro with her. Were these new feeling she began to have for Reggie, her life long kuya really something more, or was it also a rebound situation? Clyde Perry was the only man she was ever physically with, she thought she loved him, but just as her neighbor Esther told her over and over again, "Love doesn't do that!" Also, Clyde has been gone for exactly 28 days. She thought about her uncle who was in an alcoholic recovery treatment center, 28 days was the same number that he was given to detox. Marina thought about her rehab from Clyde Perry, was she finally free from the cycle of love/hate that this man brought forth into her heart? Was that thin line between love and hate still inside of her heart? Was her heart really and truly evil for loving this deadbeat worm who would beat her up?

Marina made a decision as she looked at the young man with the smartphone bible app.

Miss Sundang stood and apologized to Esther, her husband, and the rest of the bible study, and said she forgot she had an appointment she forgot about and that she needed to leave the bible study. Another lie.

She ran out of the church so fast with her baby in hand, that the bible study Christians became concerned for her and immediately prayed for her soul.

As she stood hunched over, breathing heavily next to her blue Chevy S10 truck with the baby in the car seat on the hood of the car, Marina Fidelis Sundang in all of her twenty-seven years of life, for the first time realized that she needed help. But she was scared, her heart pounding faster than she felt towards Regino that day last week when he walked into her office. She just embarrassed herself running away from those Christians who said she was evil! In years to pass, after her and Regino gave their lives to Christ and married for three years, she would laugh at this incident. But for now, she was crying and crying and crying.

Chapter Nine part 2:

Sometimes I rhyme slow, Sometimes I rhyme quick

Regino pressed play on his phone and his favorite underground rap group the Bucktown Crazies blasted into his ear buds. He takes his white bicycle and rides down to his second job at the center.

The Bucktown Crazies were his newest favorite crew he would listen to over and over again before he would teach escrima lessons to the women's self defense class down at the parks and recs center in Boggs Tract.

Regino gets off his bike and chains it up to the gray, steel fence. Down at the center doors, he removes his ear buds and goes over to check in, writing his name "Regino Elustrado" in the dying art of cursive handwriting.

He head nods to a few of the folks in the center and goes to the back room. He closes the door behind him and checks his watch. As usual, he is an hour early.

He his not angry at God today. Or at least his limited understanding of God.

He looks down at his leg tattoo and touches it as he recites the lines of the Lord's Prayer in his religious fashion, over and over again until the hour is up.

This was something his grandfather Juanito would do, as well as his great-great grandfather Samuelito Ilustrado would do. The Latin prayer of the Our Father was something they believed protected them. For all their religious traditions, it was just done as rote. Something to do before a training session to protect against getting seriously hurt by the thick rattan sticks to the eye or jaw. In the heat of sparring, Regino knew a few escrimadors who took the art too far and almost injured a fellow sparring partner in a minor practice session. It was a tradition in the way baseball players would have their superstitions of wearing a particular pair of socks for a game or someone putting a horseshoe in front of their house, or carrying a rabbit's foot for a key chain.

After his time of prayer, he greeted his class and began to teach them the cross block and inside block stance and reversal.

For all the training that his grandfather and great-grandfather Ilustrados, his grandfather the late escrima grandmaster Juanito said "No matter how fast you are with a stick, you can not fight a bullet!" Regino knew this and he always stated to his class of students, that to never allow the perp to take you to a secondary location, and to run the moment you have available, don't try to fight the bad guy. He had seen and heard of too many so called martial artists who got killed, seriously injured by playing up the whole hero mystique, or downright ended up in jail for overuse of force in a confrontation. As far as Regino was concerned, just run away, doesn't matter if people think you're a coward, at least you're a live coward than an dead lion.

His own escrima teacher Billy will constantly tell him these lessons, "Strike the fangs (hand) and the snake will flee." or "Overskill is overkill!" The lesson being, that martial warfare is only for necessary force, not to start fights in bars to see how awesome you are at kicking folks in the head.

The question arose, why teach a women's self defense course then? The answer, it was his stupid cousin Mona who got him involved. She thought it was a good way for him to meet women, but Regino was very particular in his dating habits and he had a firm rule about not dating his students, even though his cousin Mona Ilustrado wanted to set him up with one of her girlfriends who took his class for that reason only.

Of course, as stubborn as Regino was, he didn't go out with his cousin's friend nor any of his students. He just finished the class that day and put his music back on and rode his bicycle back to his house.

As he stopped his bike at the stoplight, he really got into the hip hop beat as it flowed in his ears and he realized that he thought of some escrima drills that the music could flow it.

Chapter Ten: Food stamps used to be Red or Purple!

She thought of Clyde Perry while sitting in the Welfare building. Though she worked at the distribution center, they cut her hours down, and she still didn't earn enough to pay for rent, the utility bills, and food. Maybe applying for food stamps, like Reggie's sister-in-law suggested, would help.

Marina thought about Clyde Perry and wondered where he was. After the last makeup session, he took off on her again, as usual, with no notice, no nothing. Had he taken another long haul shipment without telling her or what. She was fed up with a lot of his garbage, but she still wondered where's he been for the last month and a half and counting.

The waiting area was packed to the rafters, or so Marina thought. Were all these people in dire need of assistance. Did her tax dollars really pay for that guy's meals, the one yelling at his girlfriend and playing a game on his phone in the broken plastic chair in the end? Some of these people look like they need the help, but some of them look like they could work, she observed. Then again, she was working too, but was short at least \$1500 for the bills/rent/car payment, especially since Clyde Perry was no longer a contributing member of her household. It was her place, not his home that they stayed in. The last time she saw him, he made a bloody mess of her home and herself.

The man interviewing her for the food stamps asked her a series of financial/housing questions, information she willingly gave. She felt like a big fool. She promised herself that she would not go on food stamps, like her family was, when she was a child growing up. Of course, back then food stamps were bright red, purple, or green and looked like giant postage stamps. She remembers being embarrassed as a teenager having to go to the store for her mom and giving the cashier a handful of red and purple foodstamps, while a classmate stood behind her, catching her off guard. She was so embarrassed.

After the interview, the social worker told her that she would get a phone call and most likely receive her benefits within the month. Marina thought to herself, "at least I'm not cutting asparagus, like grandma Sundang". She thought about her long deceased grandmother, how she was one of the very few pinays to come to America in the 1950s and work as migrant field laborers in the Central Valley. Cutting asparagus/lettuce, picking cherries/peaches and other fruit and vegetables all along the state.

Marina counted her blessings and not her problems that day.

Chapter Eleven: Charles Bay & Bullets' relatives

Regino Elustrado rode his white bicycle around the whole city of Stockton by choice now. There was a point in his life, years earlier, where the mountain bike was a ride of necessity, due to a prior DUI and bad credit history, not being able to afford decent transportation. But now, anytime he could find, he would enjoy his little sight seeing hobby.

Of all the places in town, it wasn't the nice looking Brookside areas of town where he loved to stroll, but the more seedier south and dilapidated downtown parts of Fat City that he enjoyed riding through. Market street through California, up by the nice looking ACE communter train station, down along Wilson Way and all the underbelly of what the media labeled the worst city in the whole country. Going passed block after block of foreclosed homes, it saddened him greatly that many of his townfolk were affected by the recession. Normal people, some through no fault of their own doing, were deeply struggling because of the housing bust.

Regino would look at the faces of folks, everyday folks, many hurting people, some ravaged by alcohol and drug habits that turned into their own private demons. He passed one homeless looking fellow, torn t-shirt and no shoes, head hunched over staring down at the sidewalk, never looking up at all. Regino thought to himself, "Man, that guy's tweaking" and continued to roll

by. Many years later, after Regino gives his life to the Lord, he sees the same homeless man walk into his church and make an altar call. Regino leads the man to Christ and the man Charles Bay starts to make little changes in his life. But just as Jesus says that some will hear the word and the devil will steal that seed of faith, Charles Bay goes back to the world six months after his conversion and ends up dead in the gutter of Wilson Way. Regino attends the funeral and cries over poor, drug bound Charles Bay and hugs his wife Marina at the wake.

But for now, Regino continues on with enjoying the ride.

He rides his bike on the sidewalk at some parts of town. Riding past the local middle school, something shiny catches his eye. A dented up .22 caliber bullet he found on the sidewalk, right in front of a school!

Regino picks it up and adds it to his collection of stray bullets he's found over the years, today's find becomes the third of 24 he would capture in his lifetime of collecting stray bullets. His bullet shelf as he liked to call it, held rounds of various calibers. Some of the bullets' relatives on his shelf were responsible for the murders of innocent bystanders in his city, while other bullets' relatives were used by gang members, and notorious criminal activity.

Regino rides and rides this day, ending up at the mall on Pacific Avenue, buys a Gatorade at the gas station, then rides his bike back to the south side of town, taking El Dorado street back home.

Chapter Twelve: Love is a verb

She looks at the bags of groceries once more and thanks God that she has food to feed the baby and herself. With the help from the programs that Esther told her about, she felt that she was going to be alright. As she drove down 8th street, she noticed someone familiar riding a white bicycle down the side of the road.

Regino stops at the stop sign, ear buds on, oblivious to Marina's truck next to him.

"Hey, Reggie!

Regino still not responding, then she honks the truck horn. Regino turns his head around and smiles.

"You dummy!, you were just messing with me, huh? Marina looks at him.

"No, I swear, I didn't hear you, really." Regino laughs.

"You gonna get in the truck or what? Marina says as she parks the truck to the side of the street.

Regino puts the bike in the truck and looks at the passenger seat filled with groceries.

"Okay buddy, where'm I supposed to sit?" Regino continues to look for space up front, trying to move some bags of food to the side.

"Don't touch dude! I just got those today. Sit in the back." Marina looks up at the rearview mirror.

"Are you kidding me, that's a kid's seat, lemme just move the bags", Regino begins to touch the bags of groceries, but Marina pushes his hands away.

Reluctantly, Regino sits in the back, chest sunken in and feeling uncomfortably squished in the kiddie seat.

A few blocks in, small talk turns to a few personal questions.

Regino looks up at her eyes in the rear view mirror as Marina talks to him. He is hesitant to ask, but he really wants to know.

"Where's Clyde?" Regino finally asks.

"What?" She is shocked at the question. When she thinks he doesn't notice, Marina checks

out how much he's worked out in the last few months. His light brown arms are a little more muscular than before, his chest looks more broader and defined and chiseled than it looked in high school at Edison. As soon as his gaze goes back to her eyes in the mirror, she averts her eyes and looks back at the street view.

"I haven't seen Clyde lately, wassup?" Regino

"Um, he's been on the road, for work. You know how it is Reggie, trucker's life" Marina tries to cover her bases.

Regino looks out past Mattie Harrel Park. He remembers being in the 8th grade and seeing his classmate being jumped into a barkada (gang/group of friends) back in the day, at this park.

"Oh, okay". Regino does not believe her, but he plays along.

They finally reach her stop and Regino begins to take the groceries up to her front door, after the last bag is brought to the kitchen table, Regino goes back outside to get his bike. She follows him outside, and stands next to her truck. He looks up at Marina and asks once more, "Where is Clyde? Your boyfriend!"

The added emphasis of 'Your boyfriend' almost brings tears to her eyes, because she has no idea where he went, abandoning her and their child for the last 37 days.

"I don't" Marina doesn't get a chance to respond when Regino begins to lean in for a kiss.

She leans in too, closing her eyes, she really wants Reggie to kiss her. His hand begins to rest upon the small of her back, she doesn't back away, she gets closer. He feels the warmth of her arms. Marina is the most beautiful woman he's ever seen. For Regino Elustrado, she is the only woman he's ever seen, all others were only shadows and unwanted distractions to lead straight back to Marina.

Heartbeats begin to flutter on both sides of the equation.

Anticipation leads to expectations and then the old lady neighbor Esther yells a big hello to them, interrupting the potential lovers. Walking over to the couple, right before their lips became one.

"Hello Esther, this is Reggie, an old friend of mine." Marina is out of breath, breathing heavy at being startled.

Esther shakes Regino's hand and silently prays for his soul.

Chapter Thirteen: Lowercase love story

she kept turning the pages of the bible. a bible held in the top of some closet from years ago. it had belonged to her father who never read it until years later, he just kept money in it. the only people who saw those words of Christ were ben franklin & the dead presidents. marina read the many promises of God, things that brought peace to her broken spirit. the book of psalms brought truths to her that no one could show her not clyde not her mother not even reggie elustrado. so what was it. was the almost kiss a one shot deal or was it a glimpse of something more. since that lingering embrace they saw each other at work but didn't speak about it. in fact they really haven't had time alone to process the almost kiss. she was having bad dreams since then. she also felt real insecure about her personal life. was reggie gonna abandon her if she gave in to him, just like clyde always would leave, then return for a quick hook up. was she always gonna feel used by folks. all these thoughts melted in with her church time sitting in the back pew of the sanctuary that esther brought her. the same building she ran out from the bible study crying a week and a half earlier. she began to trust church people a little more now. esther showed her scriptures about how GOD loves us so much. how he waits for us. how he is closer to him when we draw closer.

after church, Esther and Matthew treated her and the baby to eat chinese food at cherman's restaurant. marina loved it there, the only place left that automatically gave chopsticks with the meal, you never had to ask. that was what she always wanted in a simple dining experience. getting a decent meal that satisfies, and not always having to ask the waitress for every little ex-

tra. her mother hated this place, calling the food greasy in a no good section of town. asking, "why aren't there sidewalks on the east side of town?"

esther showed marina scripture after scripture of lines from the book of psalms while they ate their pork chow mein. she told her that having a relationship with Jesus was like having a love affair. in fact, the greatest love affair of all, with a man who gave His very life so she could be saved. these words in the bible were not empty shallow promises, like clyde perry would whisper to her on moonlit nights. they were truths that eased that 27 year old troubled soul. the bible were the love letters aimed straight into her heart, piercing to heal pains she suffered since her dad first broke her arm over twenty years ago. she never completely got that, how her own father could hurt her so much, yet she still loved him. was God the father going to hurt her too? what kind of love is this!

esther showed her in the little orange bible, that God's parenting skills are not like man's. that His thoughts are not are thoughts, His ways are not our ways at times. He cares for us. evil exists in the world, but it is God who restores, not hurts His little children. that ultimately, there are only two stories in all of time, repeated in movies and novels over and over again, with minor changes to switch things up, changing the truths of the bible for non-offensive morality themes. the story of good versus evil and the story of love between GOD to His people.

that night, after putting the baby to bed, marina read what esther and matthew were talking about in the garden of eden story from the book of genesis. while she read it, she began to realize, all things in her life were petty and lowercase, in the view of eternal matters.

Chapter Thirteen: The Ilustrado Women

Like all the Ilustrado clan, for the last 375 years or so, every Ilustrado family member, whether by blood or marriage, were demanded to wear the mark of their family lineage - the latin prayer of the "Our Father" tattooed on their right calf, including the women. This was done at the age of 14 years of age or in Jennifer Rodriguez case, a week after she married Melecio Elustrado and became Jennifer Elustrado.

Mona Ilustrado (she went to court to legally change her name back to the original spelling) proudly displayed her family tattoo, even though she didn't believe one word of that prayer to God the Father. Years later, when Mona Ilustrado prepared for her vacation to Cebu, Philippines to visit the family members there, she became very disappointed to find out that the Ilustrado family tattoo tradition did not continue with the Ilustrado family in the Philippines. Everyone in their little town in the province wanted to become so Americanized, that her great uncle Joselito Ilustrado was the last to wear the mark of the Latin prayer in the islands, which was over 50 years ago. So the heritage of the warriors' family crest, was forced to dwell in Stockton in the remaining time since Juanito Elustrado's arrival in Fat City.

In years to come, Regino would acknowledge the foolishness of that ink infused tradition and renounce it for the pagan idolatry it really was, his niece would grow up to be fourteen years old and partake in the family tradition at the hands of her uncle Isidoro who would tattoo her right calf. But for now, Cassandra was just a 4 year old little girl.

Mona and her tattoo sat in Jennifer's livingroom while Jennifer was on her laptop Skyping her husband Melecio. On the screen, she saw how handsome her husband looked, wishing and hoping that she would see him in person. Melecio looked up at his screen, looking at his wife's gorgeous light brown eyes and curly shoulder length hair. His sadness for missing his family was met with loyalty to defend his country. He still remembered that warm day in September, and how it haunted him badly. This country, his country - AMERICA, had not had an attack on US soil since that terrible day in September when he was still a teenager, and if he could help it, he would defend that liberty. Mona looked up at the screen and yelled to her cousin, when he'd come back on leave. She had no clue, the stuff he witnessed in Afghanistan, things he would never reveal to

anybody, not his wife Jennifer, not his own father, only his brothers-in-battle would know. Mona Ilustrado lived in her own little world of iPads, Coach purses, and Facebook.

Melecio said his farewells to his cousin, daughter, and his beloved wife Jennifer, whom he'd been with since, like forever. He really digged the fact that she carried his family's tattoo on her leg, after all, she was his Ilustrado woman.

Two seconds after the Skype call was finished, Regino knocks on his sister-in-law's door and enters the home. It saddened him that he missed seeing his brother Mel by less than 5 seconds, even though his older brothers loved to torment and abuse him mentally and physically. Mel and Izzy were still his family, and like the old saying goes, "blood is thicker than water." After Regino gives his life to Jesus, his conversion to Christianity becomes a harsh division amongst his returning brothers Melecio and Isidoro. They can't understand how Reggie allowed himself to get whipped by Marina into going to church all the time. What his two brothers fail to realize, is the fact that the love Marina feels for Jesus Christ is the same intensity that Regino feels for Jesus too!

When Marina's daughter grows up to be a teenager, she asks her stepfather Regino what type of man should she marry, the only advice he has to offer is this "Marry a man who loves Jesus Christ more than he could ever love you. Because if he loves Jesus more, he will know how to love and respect you". Regino was very bad at giving people advice, especially to his stepdaughter, who ends up taking his last name at the age of fifteen, not out of spite for her father Clyde Perry, but because she realized at that point that Regino Elustrado was the greatest father she would know this side of Heaven.

Chapter 14: Our lineage, our History, our Pride!

Mona got on the computer and typed in the wiki page for her distant uncle Tatang Ilustrado. This is what Wikipedia stated about her late uncle Tatang.

Antonio "Tatang" Ilustrado (b. Bagong, Bantayan, Cebu, 1904; d. 1997) was the Grand Master of Kali Ilustrado (KI), a Filipino martial art bearing his family name.

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As a boy, Ilustrado studied eskrima from his father. At the age of nine he decided to travel to the United States, and stowed away on a boat he thought was headed for America. In fact, he arrived in Mindanao in the southern Philippine islands.

[edit] The martial arts

Ilustrado was one of the most well-respected eskrimadors of the Philippines. He is famed for winning countless duels and street encounters, as well as being a guerrilla against the invading Japanese forces during World War II. Ilustrado was never defeated in combat, and earnt great respect as a result of his brave exploits against the Japanese.

Mona smiled when she read that last part.

Chapter 15 Clyde Perry loves Oxy and getting lap dances!!!

Clyde Perry was missing for 38 days and counting. No word from his boss, nothing spoken to Marina Sundang, his own parents didn't know where he was staying. The baby didn't show signs of missing her father, he usually didn't care for her anyways. He'd just picked her up to hold up arms length to the sky, a quick kiss on the cheek, and then would usually quickly hand her off to Marina. Clyde Perry had some very unusual patterns of socialization, it was not unusual for him to go missing in action from work or family for months at a time, then show up at random with no rhyme nor reason.

A few years earlier before the baby was born.

Marina thought of a time she remembered him bashing her teeth against the ceramic kitchen counter years ago and she had to miss work for nearly three and a half months, this was two and a half years earlier. He said it was her fault for not making his lunch right. She had to have major dental work done on her mouth and eat liquid foods made in a blender for a long time. He took off on her that time too, returning with an assortment of excuses and a nearly six dozen red roses. Her first thought of seeing him surrounded by flowers was that she wanted to vomit.

A silent thought enters her mind and she smiles wickedly as Clyde goes and kisses her on the lower part of her neck, then up on her lips.

“Poison him.”

The same words her mind kept telling her. “Poison him”. Very calmly and collectively, those two words ran through her mind for the entire span of two weeks.

“Poison him.”

She wanted to kill him, with the little strength she possessed, she actually thought of killing him for what he did to her. Weeks after weeks of eating broth and blender mush.

How many years of this nonsense has she put up with this man. She continued to think of the trauma and drama he brought into her life. She tried to put those notions behind her, but every bit of her energy began to think of ways of killing him by feeding him poisoned spaghetti or even choking him with a pillow while he slept.

Slept in her bed, her house of all places.

The last few weeks of her healing and recovery, those evil demonic imaginations ran into her heart. She really felt sick to her stomach and every thing felt queasy.

She went so far as asking her best friend Reggie how to slit someone's throat while using Filipino Martial Arts techniques. Regino looked at her and walked away from that question. He knew that anything he taught her as a escrimador and martial arts instructor would come back to haunt him later on in life. He really thought that Clyde Perry was a deadbeat, but he didn't want to beat him dead.

Then, Marina went to the grocery store Centramarket and looked up various rodent/rat poisons, and she looked at the one box with a rat with the red circle and line through it. Could she really go through with killing Clyde Perry. All those times when she carried black and blue bruises under her rib cage and stomach, always afraid, always having to make excuses to why she was “clumsy” and had bandages, casts on legs and arms, all the emotional scar tissues that built up in her simple beautiful soul. A damaged soul that could only be healed, not by a man but by a loving, tender God. A God she knew little about at this moment nearly two years earlier.

Just as Marina reads the ingredients of the rat poison, things begin to spin. She thought about her dad at that second and all the verbal and physical abuse that he would torment her with. Calling her stupid and hearing her father's voice calling out to her “stupid girl! You are going to get caught trying to kill your boyfriend! You'll end up in jail for the rest of your life! You deserve to get beat up! You're so stupid! Go ahead you dummy! Do it then! Do it!”

Marina could swear that the voice was really that of her father calling her a dummy! Marina's head began to spin, in fact the entire store looked to be spinning around her.

Was it gubatang (taboo for not to speak negative things) that made her feel sick to her stomach. At that very second, Marina Sundang threw up her entire cup of ramen soup lunch all over the third aisle of the Centramarket grocery store marble floor.

A few hours later, Marina looks up at her bathroom mirror. She looks like a hot mess.

The end of the home pregnancy test were true, Marina and Clyde had a beautiful baby girl eight and a half months later. Thoughts went back to normal, at least the normalcy that Ma-

rina was used to, not real normal. The hitting and the punching and paralyzing mental/verbal anguish temporary ended for the full term of the pregnancy. Clyde Perry's other hobby of sleeping with random women any chance he could get, didn't stop though.

The baby was a beautiful healthy 7 lbs 4 ounces, normal for the Sundang family line, a bit small for the Perry side of the family.

The day that the baby girl was born, Mrs. and Mister Sundang, Clyde Perry, and Regino all hung out in the waiting area of San Joaquin General Hospital. Mister Sundang stared right at oblivious Clyde and wondered what his daughter saw in him. He kept looking right at Clyde in his plain white t-shirt and blue jeans. In his eyes, Clyde was an idiot, and he wanted to punch the young man in the throat for knocking up his daughter. Clyde just played a game on his smart phone, and kept scratching his head at how low his game score was. Regino stared out the window and saw the I-5 freeway. A freeway that could take him as far as Los Angeles all the way to Washington state, leaving all this craziness behind. Leave Marina and violent Clyde Perry behind. But he didn't, Regino wouldn't. Things would temporary shift, but he would never abandon Marina.

Not in the way that Clyde always did.

Clyde Perry remained clueless as to how much Regino Elustrado was in love with Marina Fidelis Sundang.

Clyde Perry secretly thought Regino Elustrado was a homo, even though he wasn't.

The day Clyde Perry's daughter was born, he took his semi-truck out to San Francisco and spent the remaining few hours in a strip club celebrating becoming a father by getting lap dances from three exotic dancers named Safire, Cinnamon, and Holly. Then he popped a few Oxycontin pills and drove back to Stockton a happy man.

Chapter 16: It's not racist if you are cool with each other!!!

Regino and Tony the Liberian are at Rough & Ready Island for a special project of dismantling some shelving and tossing the metal fixtures into the dumpster. A small crew of 5 are at this warehouse instead of the main distribution center closer to town.

Regino thinks about how much money he could've gotten for the metal at the recycling center, but he quickly puts that thought away. “It's not worth going to jail for stealing company metal.” he thought. The company would send the dumpster back and receive their \$500 for the scrap metal fixtures.

Tony from Liberia Africa, spoke fast and excited all the time.

“I se tell you before mon-kee boi, jes stip bek ans I throes de mital en da tresh!” Tony exclaims.

“Huh, Tony, I don't know what you just said man, you need to go to Edison high school and take an ESL class!” Regino laughs mildly.

“Okee Chuckles, we se den to mek dis ta fas wey and get outta dis warehouse, es boring okae monkee boi!”, Tony throws more metal fixtures into the dumpster.

“Man, how many times I got to tell you, stop calling me that!” sweat beads up on his forehead as he tosses more fixtures into the bin.

“Ise nawt the gud wey monkee-boi, es faster times quien, less finnish ewp da dumpsta!” Anthony the proud African national barks orders at Regino.

“Dude Tony, I was watching tv last night and saw your brother on the Feed the Starving People informercial. It's said I could feed your entire village for only \$14 a month.” Regino pulls out his wallet and waves a \$20 bill in front of him. “Here, buy them some dessert too”. Anthony gives him the middle finger and Regino puts the money back in his wallet.

“Wat monkee boi! Huh?” Anthony smiles.

"I tell you Tony, I don't know what part of Africa you came from, but I bet you the rest of your people speak better english than you're messing up." Regino begins to smile.

"Wat ya cal meh, yeo luk lik uh orangutang wid all yer hair shaved uf!" Tony begins to laugh, Regino begins to laugh.

"You look like a dried up old pecan pie, with the crust removed." Regino looks at the top of Tony's dark bald head and says, "Oh, never mind, there's the krust. No, I take that back, it's just dandruff, you old krusty African booty scratcher!" Regino says.

They both laugh, until they realize that the Human Resource manager Ms. Barnabus was standing behind them off to the side the entire breath of the conversation, with her arms folded and very upset.

Two hours later in the Human Resource office.

The HR manager looks across the desk to the two warehouse workers and then looks down at a set of papers. She takes her job very seriously and doesn't play games with anyone.

"We here at the company do not tolerate workplace harrassment of any kind, do you gentleman understand that." HR manager.

"Look we were just joking with each other, we do it all the time, no bad intentions." Regino says.

"I understand you like to joke around but we're a modern distribution center, those old warehouse worker jokes and harrasment can seriously get out of hand. Don't you remember the videos you guys were shown about harrasment and work place environments". HR manager.

"Wats da harrassment? Ise dint try ta mek hert hes feelins, wese jus be pleyin da jokes, es for da fun times. Monkee boi an me jus hav de fun wile we werk, yuse undahsten da jokes? Tony tries unsuccessfully to help the situation.

"Yeah, it's not racist if we're cool with each other, Mrs. Barnabus" Regino looks up at her sincerely.

"That's Ms. Barnabus, okay Mr. Ilustrado." She pauses and looks both of the in the eyes.

"Wese jus be havin da fun ma'am. But wese always werk wile tawk. Never steop ta tawk, always kep movin, noh with da stawppin!"

She looks at Tony Dubois from Liberia very baffled, she has no idea what he's just told her in the last minute and a half. This middle-age man from Africa who talks way too fast and mumbles, is a mystery to her. Still, Ms. Barnabus puts up a front and remains stone faced and ready to pronounce her judgment. Years from this point, Lana Barnabus attempts suicide and it is Regino's future wife Marina Fidelis Ilustrado who goes to the hospital to counsel her and bring her flowers, prayers, and talks to her about the Lord Jesus Christ, in much the same way that Esther did for Marina in the time of her emotional trauma.

But for now, Ms. Lana Barnabus has a job to do.

Ms. Barnabus looks up and then looks at her paperwork. She folds the papers in half and says, "Since there was no ill intent, I'm letting it go this time and won't file a report with the company. We live in different times, the days of callous insensitive humor can be downright degrading to others. It may sound all politically correct, but there are reasons we don't run things like we did three years ago. The incident back then was really bad, we almost had a lawsuit remember, that's why we've been very careful with things. The meetings, the videos, the coaching sessions. Okay. Just stop before you guys joke around next time, if not for yourselves, for your fellow workers, okay guys."

"Yes ma'am." Regino shyly states.

"Ise gawts et tu Ms. Barnebus, okae monkee boi, les go back ta werk!" Tony gets up and shakes the HR manager's hand. Anthony from Liberia is a practical joker and loves to mess around with people who are way too serious, like Lana Barnabus.

Ms. Barnabus rolls her eyes and motions her hand in a pushing/goodbye action away.

The two hard working warehouse workers get up and go back to work at Rough and Ready Island warehouse building 77, in the Port of Stockton.

The adventures of Monkey Boy and African Booty Scratcher Continue!!!!

Chapter 17: Rest for the Sword (Sundang)

Marina Fidelis Sundang opens up her bible. This book that she has gotten from her father is now her bible. She not only possess it, she's been reading a lot lately. She's been reading about the prophet Jeremiah. And reading commentaries about the prophet Jeremiah and how God told him not to marry or have children. Marina felt sadness because Jeremiah did not have a wife or family of his own, she thought of her kuya Reggie, was that going to be his fate as well, even though he was far from being a prophet, even though he recited the same "Our Father" prayer many times a day.

She thought of her friends Jennifer Ilustrado and Mona Ilustrado and how their religious tattoo wouldn't get them to heaven. She thought of her baby daughter and all the things that she faced in this city. She loved this city, even though it had a bad reputation. Just like her name, Sundang, was a name of a Filipino sword, yet she was probably one of the most passive non-aggressive people she knew, she was a dull sword. She wasn't like Mona Ilustrado, all loud and could knock someone out with a single punch. She wasn't like Jennifer Ilustrado either, someone who could handle anything this life threw at her growing up on the South Side of Stockton, her husband away in Afghanistan. Or even like her new friend Esther, always encouraging her to live out the passages of the bible, letting those

Basic
Instructions
Before
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Earth

- be her life motto. She wasn't like any of these Stockton Spartan females. She was just shy little passive Marina in her eyes. Too much worry and anxiety, always worrying about things and afraid that Clyde Perry would never ever come back. Why was she concerned for Clyde Perry, after all this time gone, almost a month and a half. Still, she knew she must continue on this path of her life for the sake of her child, if nothing else.

She reads chapter 47:6 of the book of Jeremiah and it goes like this:

"O thou sword of the LORD, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest and be still."

Marina thought long and quietly for that particular passage. She put herself literally in that scripture verse. She knew that her last name Sundang was one of the words for sword, and that scripture made her heart feel peace. Marina Fidelis wanted that rest and to be still, just like that sword of the Lord. She remembered that Esther told her about the prayer of repentance/salvation and how "if you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart, that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, you will be saved from going to Hell".

Nobody was around her, but she said aloud and believed in her heart all the things in that bible of hers and she got saved that day on the 15 of November. Nobody saw her that day, except the true Love of her heart, Jesus Christ.

She got rest for her soul that day. Her lover J.C. hugged her heart and stayed there in her heart forever.

Chapter 18: False Battles

Regino hated *escrima* tournaments with a passion, he felt that they were not true tests of your skills as an *escrimador*, too much of a point system, too much padding and rules, and sparring lasted no more than 45 second intervals. But local competitions were the only way to test your skills.

A real knife fight or street brawl were things his crazy twin brothers were always into, not Regino. There were several times that they could've gone to jail or worse had they been caught and not wear ski masks while imposing their brand of *Ilustrado* vigilante justice to a few people in this town. Nobody knew of the crazy exploits they did, almost like two insane Filipino superheroes, hitting muggers and drug dealers, and others with lead pipes, then running off, before ever being caught. They loved the strike pattern of their family name, "Repeticion *Ilustrado*" style when attacking the criminals. Continuous stabs to the throat with a hammer fist, a serious strike to the kneecap and then a hit to the weapon hand - these shenanigans put a few thugs down in the local *Dameron* Hospital for a few weeks! Of course, they did this only 5 times or so as teenagers, but they swore they would beat the living daylights out of Regino if he ever revealed their secret galavantings.

The high school gymnasium smelled foul and sweaty. It was a combined *Karate* and *Escrima* competition. Whenever combined tourneys were exhibited, the *Karate* demos and matches got most of the viewers while the *Escrima* matches got little respect from untrained audiences. One spectator got mad and said it wasn't fair that the people used sticks, while *Karate* looked better because they didn't use weapons. "What is this, a gladiator match?" he mocked, before one *escrimador* gave him a dirty look and the spectator got really scared and quiet.

Even though Regino hated the tournament style of point system, he decided to enter the competition anyways. For him, it was the most embarrassing performance in a long time, his loss to a near novice who only trained for only a few months was very laughable, but he learned his lesson, never underestimate your opponent. After the match was over, he congratulates the guy with a hug and a pat on the back. He goes back home on his bike and listens to his favorite underground rap duo "Bucktown Crazyies" on his mp3 player.

As the years go by, after Regino gives his heart to the LORD, he recalls his *escrima* loss and thinks about not underestimating your opponent, the devil. When Regino gives his life to the Lord, a few months later, his *escrima* teacher Billy starts to go to church and along with his family. Billy accepts Jesus Christ as his Lord and savior and from that point on, begins to mature in the things of God. He still trains Regino in the art of *escrima* (fencing/skirmish), but each lesson and training session becomes a lesson on how to fight the devil and his demonic presence in believers' lives. The bible becomes the real weapon of warfare for Regino's life. This sword (*sundang*) of the spirit becomes this *escrimador*'s greatest weapon to yield. The writings of King David, his love poems to the Lord in the book of Psalms, ease this Fat City warrior's soul on lonely nights and angry days. Regino becomes to relate to King David in the coming years, understanding that good sword fighters ultimately know that life can easily be taken out, that life is a gift from the Lord.

But for now, Regino isn't a true follower, only partial in his faith. His faith right now is on his leg tattoo.

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Chapter 19: Stockton Marina at the Dirty Stockton Marina

Regino loved to go fishing, his favorite spots to fish off the Delta banks were passed Highway 4, towards Whiskey Slough, Bacon Island, and Bullfrog landing. One of the major problems this day was gasoline, namely, Regino didn't have enough money to go on the outskirts of Stockton, just to fullfill his smelly bass fishing hobby.

So, when all else fails, he goes to downtown and throws his line in the waters of the dirty Stockton Marina. He mainly fished for sport there, taking the catfish or striped bass and giving it to his father's cat named Thunder.

Thunder was a good companion to Mr. *Elustrado* after his wife *Adeliza Faith* went to be with the Lord. Thunder would sleep on top of Mr. *Elustrado*'s chest at night while he slept on the couch in the livingroom. He had a room of his own, but after his wife died, he had a very tough time sleeping alone in their bed, so he mainly would crash on the couch and leave the television on all night, because of his insomnia and COPD breathing problems.

Regino kept the anchovie on the line generally until he would get a bite. He just wanted to chill and sit on the bench while waiting for the fish to get reeled in.

Then he sees Stockton Marina walk towards him at the Stockton Marina with her child in a stroller.

Marina smiles and looks up at him. She wants to tell her best friend that she accepted Jesus Christ into her heart and that he needs Jesus too, but she knows his mixed up religiousness and his disdain for Christians, even though he constantly repeats the Lord's prayer in Latin several times a day. So weird, but that's how he feels at this stage in his life.

It felt like an eternity since they almost kissed and Regino could still feel a tugging on his heart. He wanted to kiss her, hug her tightly in his arms, but he knew she would push him away, not because of her relationship ties to Clyde Perry, but because he smelled like stinky fish bait.

"Dude, Reggie, you're bahot (smelly)! It's like you rolled around in a jar of my father's bagoong (shrimp paste) jar." Marina jokes.

"Wassup up with you? You never are around this side of town?" Regino looks up at her, his cut off tan khaki shorts, the threads are loose, normal fishing attire for this fisherman who is feeding his dad's cat some mercury filled fish for supper.

"Just wanted to take the girl for a stroll around Weber Point? Remember Reggie, this place before they fixed up this area, only folks who'd be here were crack heads hanging out downtown." Marina says.

"Yeah, now we got regular people watching concerts, baseball/hockey games, movies....and the occasional meth addicts running around this side of town." Reggie says as he looks at his line.

"I need to tell you something Reggie. It's very, very important." Marina says earnestly.

"Okay" Regino takes a pause, thinking he was going to bring up something about their almost kiss.

"Will you come to church with me tonight? Please, I know how you feel about things, but you have to let things go. You're mom was right, right about all the things she said about God. He's real, and he's waiting for you to turn your life 100% over to Him. He doesn't hate you..."

Reggie's look of happiness turns to sheer anger. He feel betrayed by Marina for bringing up his late mother, Marina totally caught him off guard with that last statement and he begins to reel his line in.

"You're one of them now! A crazy Jesus Freak like my mother! C'mon Marina. You know how I feel about that stuff. I had to deal with a mom who constantly talked about the Lord, yet the Lord let her die of a heart attack! What kind of a God is that!!!" Regino packs up his fishing gear and begins to walk away from the love of his life.

Marina looks on, gripping the stroller, the baby begins to cry.

Regino walks up the concrete incline towards his bicycle and rides off.

Marina is in tears. The baby girl is crying.

God sees her hurt and gives her peace later that night as she reads the bible passage:

“You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle; Are they not in Your book?”

-Psalm 56:8

Chapter 20: Cassava cake, biko, peach/mango lumpias and Mrs. Peggy's Great-Grandson!!!

Whenever Regino Ilustrado was having relationship issues, especially with a woman like Marina, he would bake Filipino foods, especially the desserts. His most well liked recipes included cassava cake, biko (sweet rice cake), cascaron (deep fried coconut macaroons) and his famous peach/mango/apple lumpias (egg rolls). Being a third generation Flip (Filipino-American), he really didn't speak Filipino, so he didn't know the proper name for peach/mango lumpia. All he knew, was that was a recipe his mother would always wanted to experiment with, telling him she loved growing up eating peach fritters while being baby sat by her Black baby sitter Mrs. Peggy, while her own mother went to work in the migrant fields cutting asparagus and picking fruit.

Mrs. Peggy had a huge family lineage in Stockton. Some of her children and grandchildren became pastors in the local African-American churches. Her great-grandson became a local legend, going straight from Franklin High School right into the NFL and became a professional football player for his favorite football team, the Arizona Cardinals. His name was John Peggy and he became very wealthy in the sports world and ends up coming back home to Stockton years later to open up a chain of restaurants called “Mema Peggy's”. Many years later, when John Peggy dies of pancreatic cancer and sits at the great throne judgment of God, the Lord asks him “What did you do with my son Jesus?”, John Peggy sits quiet and does not answer. He knows about the Lord from his Mema (grandma) and cousins who are pastors, but he refused to follow. His god was mammon and his mistress was Jezebel. The Lord allows him to eat the fruit of his disobedience and just as Jesus states, “He is cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

The main thing to remember about making lumpia, whether hamburger, chicken, or fruit filled lumpia, always use an egg wash of one egg per half cup of water - without it, the Mehlow brand lumpia wrappers have a tendency to not stick properly. Regino would slowly cook the fruit mixture on the stove, adding cinnamon, vanilla extract, nutmeg and brown sugar to the mix.

Regino allowed the mixture to cool on the counter before rolling the dessert into the proper form. His work partner Tony said the lumpias looked like French crepes when she brought them into work for lunch. Regino wondered how Tony knew what French crepes were. Unknown to Regino, Tony spent some time in the French Foreign Legion as a soldier, before moving his family from Africa to Stockton, California.

Anthony Dubois had a very exciting and dangerous life before, but he mostly kept those war stories to himself and mumbled fast jokes to Regino all day at the warehouse.

Frying lumpia was always an interesting process, especially peach/mango lumpias. Because of the high liquid content of the fruit mixture, putting rolls of lumpia into an extremely hot wok of vegetable oil typically popped beads of oil all over the kitchen, splashing hot oil over sensitive arms.

The very best part of peach/mango lumpia is the eating. Normally, Regino would make a batch for his sister-in-law Jennifer and little niece Cassandra, eating them a la mode with french vanilla ice cream, but today, his family were out of town and he just kept on baking and baking, giving most of his food away to the potluck at work that next day.

Marina continued to have bad dreams.

Chapter 21: Random trivia about Stockton and Filipinos

*The Philippines had been colonized by Spain for over 300 years using Manila Bay as their great seaport, trading rich spices and silver with other countries surrounding Southeast Asia and the rest of the world. For exchanges of gold, the Spaniards gave Filipinos Catholicism. The very diverse ethnic groups of islands (Ilocanos, Tagalogs, Cebuanos, Aetas, Igorots, etc.) were blanket labeled Filipinos after King Philip II of Spain. This is why many Filipino-Americans have Spanish surnames like Bautista, Calderon, Marquez, and Santos. The Spanish connection somewhat ended after the Spanish-American War in 1898 when America wanted to control the Philippines. Unknown to Filipinos, through the Treaty of Paris (April 11, 1899), Spain sold the Philippines to the United States for \$20 million, thus ending over 300 years of Spanish colonization.

*Stockton, California is one of 9 cities named Stockton in the entire United States. Not as popular as Springfield, Franklin, Clinton, or Madison, though.

*There was a special gun designed to kill Filipinos, the Colt .45 1902 “Philippine Model”, where only 4,600 were made. This was done during the Filipino American war of 1898 to 1902, where the term leather neck was first coined, because the Filipinos would use bolo knives to attack US marines and chop off their necks. Leather collars were added to American soldiers' uniforms to prevent onslaughts of attacks - as many as 70,000 Americans died and close to 2 million Filipinos were killed. American soldiers were ordered to shoot and kill every one over age 10. Filipinos over ten were considered “criminals because they were born ten years before America took the Philippines.

*Stockton, CA is the furthest inland port in the entire United States. Theoretically, one could take a boat from the Stockton Port and eventually reach the islands of Hawaii, where Regino's lola (grandmother) Magdalena was born.

*Filipino-Americans are the third largest Asian group to contribute to the United States culture and economy.

*In the 1920's and '30's, the ratio of men to women was 20 to 1. In some places it was 40 to 1. Filipinos were not allowed to marry white women. In California, the local authorities imposed anti-miscegenation laws on Filipinos. Filipinos had to drive out of state in order to marry white women. And during this time, particularly during the Great Depression, white Americans claimed that Filipinos “brought down the standard of living because they worked for low wages”, which was totally untrue, Filipinos just worked hard.

*In 2010, Stockton, California was labeled the “worst city in the whole United States” by Forbes magazine and in 2012, Stockton was the first major city to declare city wide bankruptcy.

*Because of the nature of the early migration to Stockton where there were not many Pinays (Filipino women), it is not that unusual to meet Filipino-Americans of mixed heritage. This is really cool!

Chapter 22 Bagoong (shrimp paste) smells really bad!!!!

Some people didn't get it. Why did Marina Sundang tend to favor her Filipina side, culturally, when she did not look at all like a Pinay (Filipina woman). She looked like a light skinned Mexican-American woman in her late 20s. She made her co-workers cringe when she would bring a bottle of bagoong (purple shrimp paste) to eat in the break room at the warehouse. People would literally walk away from the lunch table and move to the other side of the break area.

Her fondness for all things Filipino stemmed from her Tito (uncle) Marquez. Growing up, her uncle Marquez would call her Inday (princess/young woman) and tell her that she could be any-

thing she wanted to be when she grew up, but that she would have to work hard and make a few sacrifices along the way. All she wanted right now was to be a good mother to her baby daughter, be a somewhat decent Christian, and pray for Regino's soul.

The internal struggles of her past with Clyde Perry versus a future with God. Not even close. Not any more.

Marina loved getting into her bible and reading about the strong righteous women who didn't back down from a problem or even an outright fight. Someone like Hannah who pleaded with God to give her a child, Moses' wife who stepped up to the plate and did the job that her husband procrastinated in, and then there was the prophetess Deborah.

In the short time since her conversion, Marina read the story of the prophetess Deborah over and over again, how she put a tent peg through the heathens!

Marina got energized when she would read those passages and imagine herself in the role of that heroine Deborah! She was shy, passive, little Marina Fidelis Sundang and did not for one moment of her life, think she could ever do such things. But as her walk with God increased through the years, she faced many challenges with the full force of the Holy Spirit!

Chapter 23: Reggie visits the Cisco kid!

Francisco "Cisco" LaEspada had robbed the Bank of Italia back in 1964, which was latter changed to the Bank of Charter Way. Cisco's girlfriend at the time told him he needed to make more money, than the small funds he got for his demolitions side jobs he took with his brother Gregorio every so often. No money, no honey.

The demolition jobs in Lathrop and French Camp were basically taking sledge hammers and knocking out the walls of abandoned houses in the 1960s. These jobs were in addition to the summertime field work they'd accomplish picking fruit.

The bank robbery Cisco LaEspada committed took nothing more than walking up to the teller at the Charter Way bank and handing her a note that said "Give me all your money and put it in this bag."

That simple. No gun, no hostages, just a note.

But it wasn't that simple. Cisco walked out the front door of the bank on Charter Way and immediately felt shame. So what does he do, this 2nd generation Filipino-American raised to work hard in the fields cutting asparagus, he goes across the street to Jay's Cheeseburger Stand and picks up the payphone. He calls the police and confesses to the bank robbery that had just occurred. The police pick him up fifteen minutes later while Cisco is eating Jay's Famous Cheeseburgers. This would be the last cheeseburger Cisco would eat for 2 and a half years, while he spends that time locked behind bars in Lompoc prison.

Francisco LaEspada would spend the next 4 decades retelling that story to his children and nephews Regino, Melecio, and Isidoro. The Cisco kid would add that "life was like a roller coaster, there would be many up and downs to face, but it would always be fun!"

That was the Cisco kid's motto for what life was all about. Even though his uncle is a Christian, there is a lot of his old nature he needs to work on, namely his choice of words when he gets agitated and upset. Some carnality needs to work out and maturity to gain. But Reggie pays no mind to all the Christian pictures set up in his uncle Cisco's home, he just like to hear old stories about the family.

"You see Reggie, growing up Filipino here in the States, we were told, 'You're in America now, you speak English, so you can get a better job', that's what my parents told me." his uncle Cisco explains to Reggie.

"Okay" Regino says yet again.

"Now-a-days, you gotta be bi-lingual, tri-lingual, all kinds of Lingual, to get that sub-par job even. It's all backwards now, and those jobs (Fresh Off the Boat) look down on us for not knowing the language, thinking they're better than us because they can talk about us in Tagalog right in front of us, like we're garbage. Forget that! Our family were pioneers in this town cutting asparagus while their family stole the benefits of my parents and my own laboring in those hot itchy fields " his uncle Cisco had a habit of going off on long tangents about feeling insecure about not speaking Filipino and paving the way for future Filipinos who didn't have the racist struggles. Francisco saw most young Pinoy (Filipinos) as ignorant and ungrateful to the previous generation that had to fight so hard for equality in Stockton.

Regino shifts the conversation to another vexing topic.

Regino asks his uncle Cisco advice about what he should do with the girl named Marina. Cisco gets real quiet and just looks at his kitchen floor for a moment.

"You're an idiot! You know that Reggie." his uncle looks him straight in the eye.

"Okay". Regino doesn't know how to respond, but remains respectful.

"My sister, your mother, asked me to guide you and your brothers, right before she went to be with the Lord." Francisco continues to look into his nephew's soul.

"um." Regino sighs.

"All my sister Lisa wanted for you boys was to meet decent God fearing women who could give her grandchildren, and too see all of you, even my brother-in-law get saved. You know, the difference between religion and a relationship with Jesus Christ means? Do you, huh Reggie!"

"Yeah, I guess" Regino is a little bit intimidated now.

"You're telling me you've been so infatuated with this girl Marina since you were seven years old, and now you ran away from her just because of her beliefs. A relationship with God is what she has now. Religion is that stupid tattoo on your leg you keep reciting!," Cisco points to the tattoo under the table.

"But.." Regino tries to speak, but his uncle keeps talking.

"A relationship with God is something deeper than that, more so God tattooing your heart with His love. Something so permanent, the blood of His only begotten son Jesus Christ is poured into your heart! That's the only thing that got me to stop drinking! The power of God manifested to us! That's what my sister Lisa, your very own mother told me, months before she passed away! ", his uncle Cisco announces.

"um, okay!" Regino stumbles for the right words to not offend his cool uncle Cisco.

"Now get out of my house and don't come back until you put a wedding ring on Marina's finger! Get out now!" Francisco LaEspada commands.

Regino runs out of his uncle's home and rides his bike back to Marina's house.

Just as Regino pulls up to her home, he sees Clyde Perry's semi truck parked in front of her house and then sees Clyde yelling at Marina.

"What do you mean, I have to leave!" Clyde yells.

"You need to leave my house right now! I'm in love with someone else...I fell in love with Him while you left me again....Like you always leave.....!" Marina screams with tears rolling down her eyes.

Regino runs over to them and tries to intervene, but Marina pushes him aside.

Clyde looks over to Regino and says "What you looking at, you little punk! You think you can run up on me and steal my girl, huh, do ya!"

Clyde and Regino are in each other's face and Marina is trying to separate the two. Just as

the yelling intensifies, Esther and her husband come out of their home and her husband Matthew is on his phone, ready to call the police.

Esther loudly begins to speak in tongues and cast away all evil spirits in the neighborhood.

Clyde begins to shove and push Regino, but he doesn't react. Then just as Esther prays louder for the arguing to stop, her husband joins in, along with Marina praying in the spirit.

Clyde Perry pulls out an old gun out from his waistband behind his jeans. It is an antique that belonged to his great-greatgrandfather who fought in the Filipino American war as a marine. His great-greatgrandfather said he used it "To kill little brown monkeys in the Philippines!" It was a Colt .45 revolver!

"If I can't have her, nobody will!" Clyde Perry looks demonic as he utters those words.

Clyde Perry pulls the gun out on Reggie and is about to blow Marina's face off with it.

Regino remembers what his grandfather Juanito used to say. "No matter how fast you are at martial arts, you cannot fight a bullet!"

Just as Clyde Perry pulls the trigger, Regino puts himself in front of the gun and places his hands in a sweeping motion, the old antique gun flips in the air, firing off, but out of the hands of the psychopath Clyde Perry. The old revolver lands on the lawn, still smoking.

Clyde Perry runs off and says "We ain't finished here, you lil punk!" he gets in his semi truck and hauls it out of Marina's front yard.

Nearly 68 minutes go by before the police show up. When they do, everyone in the neighborhood is interviewed, especially Regino.

Marina is still shaking and afraid. She was in the line of sight of the antique gun, but she knew first hand that it was still functional. There were times in years earlier, Clyde would take the pistol out and fire randomly in the house, thinking it was cool that such an old gun could still fire.

Right before the police officer was about to end her questioning of Regino, she asks him if he was related to other Elustrados in Stockton. Regino says yes but is baffled.

"When I was still in the police academy, we trained in baton use and one of your family members was brought in to help with baton work." says the cop.

"Oh yeah, my dad Mister Elustrado would go out to the Academy and train" Regino answers.

"No, this was a light skinned Filipino woman, Lisa Elustrado I think was her name". The police officer announced.

Regino smiles, "Yeah, that was my late mother."

"I'm so sorry to hear that", she was such a nice woman. "In fact, that move you told me you did with that Colt .45, that's the same move she showed me over and over that day. See, this family art you guys have, it really truly is effective." the police officer says as she gets another call on her radio and leaves after shaking Regino's hand.

Regino looks up at the police squad car as the cops leave the scene.

There were many secrets Adeliza Faith Elustrado never told her children. Being an escrimadora who would train police cadets was a major secret she never shared. Telling people about the Love of Jesus Christ, God's one and only Son, was something she would rather share with everyone.

Chapter 24: Mister Elustrado was brought up in Boggs Tract

Mister Sundang is at Mister Elustrado's house watching the game on his new flat screen television. Mister Sundang is steaming mad at the news that his daughter was almost killed a week earlier.

Mister Elustrado is in the kitchen making a pot of pigs feet, red beans and rice. People would tell him that it isn't authentic Filipino food, more of an African-American cuisine, but Mister Elustrado was brought up in Boggs Tract by black people who taught him to make pigs feet/ham hocks/sweet potato pie/collard greens and all sorts of foods familiar to the Black community of

Stockton, California. As a 2nd generation Filipino American growing up in the 1960s and 1970s, he was always told he wasn't Filipino enough, but that never mattered to him. Mister Elustrado ate whatever food he wanted. And today, he wanted pigs feet and rice.

"He's a dead man if I find him before the police do. I'm taking my Mossberg and make a spaghetti strainer out of his chest!" Mister Sundang says in vengeance.

"Calm down dude. Who talks like you anyways, you nutjob. The police are going to get him. You do something stupid and you'll never see your granddaughter Siobhan again" Mister Elustrado looks up at his friend who he always knew had anger management problems.

"I just don't see what she ever saw in that fool. He tried to kill her in front of everyone." Mister Sundang is perplexed.

"Really man, you really don't get it? Seriously". Mister Elustrado leaves the answer at that.

He realizes, but Mister Sundang at this moment in time does not recognize the Sins of the Father being passed down to the next generation. All those times he beat up his own daughter, affected how she viewed men in her life, and she translated getting abused with someone like Clyde Perry loving her. In her own twisted way of thinking, getting beat up and having to wear a cast on your arm, somewhere deep down inside, made her feel like she was cared for. In Marina's twisted sense of affection, this is how she witnessed her father treated her mother at times. Followed by make up session like no other.

It would take time, healing, prayer, and a lot of counseling for both Father and Daughter to be free from the bondages of abuse and co-dependency.

Chapter 25: Birthday Cake and Ice Cream

Marina kept whispering "Jesus....Jesus....Jesus...." over and over again, until she could compose herself and get ready for work. Today was her co-worker Alice's birthday and it was her responsibility to get the German Chocolate Cake at the bakery. Alice Sanguenetti loved German Chocolate Cake and she specifically asked Marina to pick one up at the Paloma bakery.

The Paloma bakery had been in Stockton, California for over 110 years in the same location, right in the center of town. The neighbors within blocks of the bakery were treated to smells of baked breads, pastries, and other goodies six days a week. On the seventh day of the week, Mister Joseph Paloma, a devout Christian, would close his bakery and go to Sunday morning church service and give 10% of that week's income into the offering basket at the local light grey church he attended for the last 30 years. As the fourth generation owner of the bakery, he inherited a lot of his family's debts. In the late 1970s when Joseph Paloma took the business over from his father who died, the bakery was in near ruins. But when someone told him that he needed to tithe his earnings to his local house of worship, the business began to prosper again.

And so, since Mister Paloma started doing that, he became very successful as a baker.

Marina put the cake in the refrigerator of the lunch break room at work and goes to her office upstairs. She is tired from the morning grind of meetings and the various sales reports that are filed. Between work, her little girl crying all night from bad nightmares and the crazy "baby daddy" drama she'd experience two weeks earlier, Marina deserved to find rest. Resting her head for just a few moments at her office desk, she whispers his name over and over and over again, until her eyes begin to shut.

"Jesus...Jesus...Jesus..." Marina slowly and methodically says his name.

As usual, truck drivers make deliveries on the two shifts at the loading dock, early morning

drop offs, early morning pulls, and early afternoon deliveries. There was something familiar about the afternoon delivery that day for Anthony Dubois and his partner of two years, Regino Elustrado. Regino had just opened a box with his new yellow box cutter. The box cutter handle was a cheap plastic yellow cover, but underneath was a two inch shiny steel blade, as sharp as any steel blade that Regino used to cut open boxes. Regino had a certain way of opening up cardboard boxes, a slit on the front, a slit on the back, and just a smidgen of a cut down the center line of the box. This pattern, plus with the help of gravity, allowed the contents of the box to naturally and gradually fall to the desk where he would count the merchandise, label it, and move on to palletize the remaining items. Tony is sitting on the forklift and looks down at the desk full of merchandise. The break alarm rings and Regino goes to the break area where Alice's birthday cake is.

Regino put the box cutter in his back pocket and tells Anthony he'd want to sneak him back some cake, since never liked to take the last break, he'd rather finish the truck off with the last hour.

Just as he leaves the shipping/receiving dock in walks Clyde Perry through the truck driver's entrance. In all the years of Clyde Perry being a truck driver, he had never had a short haul in NethCo Distribution Center. He'd always done long hauls up across the 48 states. He always wanted to visit where Marina worked and with this shipment, it gave him the perfect opportunity. Two weeks had passes since he pulled a gun on Marina and Regino, but he was so high off the oxycontin, that he didn't care if the cops caught him. He was just glad that his employer didn't ask questions and liked to pay him under the table in cash, so as to not affect him as much financially.

"Hey dummy, how long is this count gonna take, I gotta go pay a visit to my old lady!" barks Clyde.

"I'se nawt no dummez, yew sahn ef a mutherles goat!" Tony responds back.

"Aw forget you, dude, just hurry up!" Clyde quips back.

Tony drives the forklift as far away from Clyde Perry as possible. He knows, that given the wrong circumstances and if he this jerk says one more thing, Tony the Liberian would literally ram the forklift right into Clyde Perry.

Clyde turns around and asks where the vending machines are.

"I'se nawt tellin yeh nethin, go lewk fer dem yersef. Idiot!" Tony says as he drives off.

Clyde begins to walk to the front of the warehouse on this hot Stockton day and ends up in the break room where the rest of the warehouse staff are celebrating Alice's birthday with the birthday cake. The candles on the cake are more than Alice thought they needed, but she blows out the candles anyways and makes her birthday wish. Marina, Regino, Alice, and the rest of the warehouse workers are enjoying the workplace celebration.

Alice asks Regino if he could cut the cake in 20 small squares, but to save her a frosting rose in the corner. Regino begins to cut the cake and Marina hands out slices of the dessert to her co-workers.

Like a fast blur. Things occur.

Dumbfounded and not sure where he is going, Clyde Perry walks in through the lunch room doors and sees Marina standing next to Regino smiling. He runs full on to Regino and tries to sucker punch the escrimador, and Regino sees him out of the corner of his eye and takes the birthday cake knife and thrusts it square into Clyde Perry's throat 4 times. A strike number one, followed by a number 5 stab to the stomach. Clyde Perry's blood is splashed across the remainder of the birthday cake and across the room, his blood covers the walls of the lunch break room. Regino gives a quick ankle break to Clyde Perry's right ankle as he screams in agony at his body slit in many places. People are trying to pull Regino off of Clyde, but he pulls out the box cutter from his pants pocket, now drenched in blood and frosting. They see him lunge the box cutter, slicing the nose off of Clyde

at the tip. Clyde Perry throws a lifeless punch at Regino, but misses by a long shot. Marina is screaming and crying. It takes five warehouse workers to pull Regino from the continuous stabs and slashes into Clyde Perry, who now is bleeding out on the floor of the lunch room.

Ms. Lana Barnabus, the Human Resource Manager is yelling at Regino and asks, "What are you thinking? You're gonna spend the rest of your life in prison for what just happened!"

Marina is crying and crying and crying as Regino sits in the chair, as quiet as can be.

Chapter 26: The Alarm rings on

The alarm rings on her cell phone. Marina wakes up with tears in her eyes and realizes it was just another of her terrible nightmares. Clyde Perry hadn't arrived at her job. In fact, he was so scared at pulling the trigger on Regino, that he took his truck all the way to the east coast and lived under the grid for 5 years under various aliases in places like Boston, Miami, and Alabama. He never ever got back his family heirloom of the Colt .45 gun that had belonged to his racist great-great-grandfather. When he did finally come back to Stockton, he found out that Regino was a Christian now. So instead of asking forgiveness, he tried to borrow \$500 from Marina and Regino and run off again. Regino told him he didn't have the money to lend him, so Clyde Perry cusses him out and runs back to his other baby mama in Boston.

Some people never learn.

Marina walks down the stairs from her office to talk to Regino at the loading dock.

Marina looks at Regino who is cutting open another cardboard box in his unique cutting pattern. Regino is intent on getting the truck done within an hour.

"Hey, can I talk to you?" Marina smiles at him.

"Yeah," he looks at her.

"I just need to tell you that I really really like you Reggie. We've known each other for a very very long time. I don't want anything to come between us. But..." She pauses.

"Look, if you're going to make me go to church with you, it ain't happening. I saw how my mother....." Regino responds.

"I just need to know if you can give God another chance. Oh my God Reggie, Jesus protected you from getting shot at, can't you see that!" Marina looks at him.

Regino thinks about it for a moment and answers. "Okay."

"I found something great in my life, and I don't want to lose it." Marina says to him with great confidence. At that moment, Regino notices she is the most beautiful woman in the whole wide world and if he turns away now, he would never get a second chance with her.

"One more thing." She demands.

"When we get married after our prayer and courtship, I'm not getting a stupid tattoo!" she smiles and walks away.

"Wait, what's prayer and courtship mean?" Regino is perplexed.

"You'll see. I'll see you at church tonight, right?" Marina says as she walks away with the biggest grin on her face. As she walks away glowing, Jesus walks her back to her office.

Tony was still sitting on the forklift the entire breath of the conversation, watching and listening to them.

"Wet, woose wat dat guy? Ded use sez dat guy wid Mereenha! Woose dat guy ell glewin an stef!" Tony is stunned to see a glowing figure next to Marina.

Regino says "Oh, him, that's Marina's Fella!"

The End

School Submission

The schools listed teach Filipino martial arts, either as the main curriculum or an added curriculum.

If you have a school that teaches Filipino martial arts, or you are an instructor that teaches, but does not have a school, list the school or style so individuals who wish to experience, learn and gain knowledge have the opportunity.

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Physical manuscripts should be typed in black, double spaced, and set to 1-1/2 margins (right and left).

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