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MEMMENTO

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Live well and write more!



Scribblogy
SCRIBBLING FROM MEMORY®

MEMENTO

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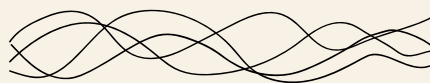
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MEMENTO

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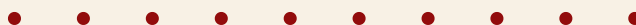
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Dear Scribblorists,

I have such a soft spot for the elderly even though I never got the chance to meet my mother's parents and have vague memories of my grandparents on my father's side. Being the youngest daughter, however, I was left with Mama and Papa when my two older sisters immigrated to another country as a way of giving back to them. I saw how our parents gradually aged –their skin wrinkling, their backs bending, and their hair graying like leaves wilting through time. It felt like a blessing and a curse to be there to witness how our 'heroes' were betrayed by their own body as they tried to stay strong for our family. It was a rather painful sight.

Since then, I've started seeing every elderly person as having the same story. I am moved by their hard work to keep their strength and 'functionality' despite their physical vulnerabilities. Imagine those who'd limp on their way home while carrying heavy grocery bags. Some slowly shuffle towards the other side of the street without a companion. On the street, we see them pushing carts and rummaging trash bags for plastic bottles. Although they don't always express it, we know how frustrated they are by their limitations. Some of them would even silently endure their pains so as not to be 'another problem' for their family.

Message from the Founder



This issue is dedicated to them. This is not just a space to remember our memories of them, but a call to love, appreciate, and treat our elderly better. It is also a reminder for us, younger ones, that even though our elderlies are physically feeble, their inner strength is unparalleled.

Our grandparents are our 'true heroes'.

Let's celebrate them.

With love,
Elaine



An Author's Journey

by A.M. Caneda

I was told that I won't get rich with writing.

Well, that's somehow true unless I become the world's best-selling author. That is one of the cultural stereotypes about writers—we can't make a living out of this. However, as writers or authors, our success is determined more by influence, by the lives we touch, and by the minds we shape, rather than by what's in our pocket. I didn't realize this until I viewed my pen from a purposeful perspective.

I started my writing journey when I was a kid. I used to write poems and essays about anything I had observed. I guess, this is how writers are. We are always in tuned with the world around us. We flesh out the words to narrate stories the world is scared to confront. At some point, this becomes our mission. It was my father who was with me during my early writing journey, accompanying me to every writing contest I joined, telling me that I could really write. He's the first person to believe in me and who believes in me still even at times that I don't.

But things changed when life's reality set in, and I had to decide whether to pursue my passion, which is writing, or a career that seemed more sustainable. Therefore, I chose to drop writing for a while and took a day job for years. Yet, there were times when I would write at night, or when my schedule wasn't tight. I wrote in silence. There were also instances where I took writing gigs, doing all sorts of writing stuff. But it's a different feeling and a different kind of fulfillment when you write a book.

My book writing journey started during the pandemic, when I decided to join a fiction writing contest. I wrote several fiction books after that. Writing, particularly fiction, has a space in my heart. Our desire to see justice served and wrongs righted drives us to seek virtue in writing. I saw how in most works of literature, particularly in fiction, how poetic justice is important. We wish good to triumph, goodness to be rewarded, and evil to be punished. We want the life and pain in fiction to make sense in a manner that reality itself doesn't always make sense of. These are the very reasons why I love writing fiction. But at some point, I came to realize I no longer wanted to wrap life's bittersweet in fiction. I wanted to write straightforwardly. So, I came up with my first nonfiction book - *Calm in the Chaos*. And since I didn't know much about the technicalities of non-fic writing, I joined Ukiyoto and Scribblory's The Dream Book Project for that.



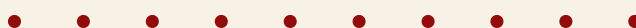
For me, to be a writer or an author is more than just seeing your work published. There's such a power that writing holds, and that's to educate, to affect others, and to inspire. Written words possess great emphasis—and are stronger. For me, we are a writer or an author not just because our name goes with the works we publish. More than that, we have stories to tell and words to say, and our readers resonate with that. It is through our words written that we are remembered.

As a writer, don't ever think you can't make a living out of it. We are now in a digital world. As you see, it seems like everything nowadays needs a good wordsmith, from business marketing to Google content and social media ads. As an SEO writer myself, when it comes to the business side of writing, I could say that we have entered into a new era.



A.M Caneda is an SEO publicity writer, language teacher, and author. She has published numerous fiction books and her first nonfiction work, *Calm In The Chaos*, signifies her love for life and her faith. She is also a pastor's wife and a mother of two. An advocate for mental health and unity in diversity, one of her quotations on unity was featured in a 2021 EOD (Embracing Our Differences) billboard exhibit in Sarasota, Florida.

When she is not writing stories, or working, she uses her pen for her advocacies. In her free time, she enjoys teaching, painting, archery, or she's taking care of her two children.



Golden Memories:
Celebrating Our
Elderly Heroes



A TRIBUTE TO THE ELDERLY

by Albert Banico

I am always captivated by the stories of the elders. I love their heritage. The forgotten aspirations of the old only rest in the deeper look in the weakening sharpness of their smiles behind their teary eyes.

The public is so attracted to youth. There is a fascination with and constant worship of the cult of youth as if the fountain of youth and the state of being forever young is approaching.

I mourn this culture. Youth is only a stage of life. It is not forever. It will not. The earlier the young understand that the energy, attractiveness, vigor, strength, vibrancy, and qualities of being young will fade and will not last; the more a sustainable civilization can be realized. It is in the wisdom of every society that lessons of life are to be found.

Once, the elderly are the youth in their prowess, but in a few decades that counts, the young population will find themselves already old and to be taken for granted. The new generation will be replaced, and the elderly themselves will be fascinated with the young with their own language—perhaps to try to understand the new music of a young generation that may be difficult to understand.

Why invest in our youth yet neglect the benefits and lessen the tribute to the elderly?

In some cultures, they regarded the elderly as partners in a productive society. In Korea and Japan, the elders are respected and continue to be part of the workforce. No one is discriminated against. The elders work and walk with respect and dignity. They continue to be accepted in the workplace and earn money for a living. They are not considered as burdens. As long as they can work and be productive, they are part of the fruitful population.

In many other Asian countries like those influenced by Confucian ethics, piety, and family are regarded as two important virtues. They look back with high regard to their roots, ancestors, and, heritage wherever they came from.

Filial piety is about respect, caring, and being kind to one's parents in old age. It may be rooted in the moral duty that the young owe their families, especially to parents. Ethically, it may not be exclusive to Asian cultures, as world religions or global faiths recognize filial obligations as an imperative value. Going further, it may sound more religious or universal, yet for real and cannot be disregarded.





In some Western graying cultures, the elderly are confined to the home for the aged. They live in their loneliness—being put in home care together with those in similar circumstances. Alone they may have been forgotten by their families and soon died in the arms of total strangers.

Our society is in between. We still regard our parents and ancestors with respect, yet in a changing time, the piety itself is waning.

Several years ago, I encountered many middle-class families who were impatient with their elders. And in some rural areas, their sick parents are neglected even waiting for them to die soon by not providing regular food in their sickbed.

In fact, recently, “*utang na loob*” is being questioned—supposedly a highly regarded act of reciprocity, a Filipino trait of generous mutuality in showing our gratitude for every act of goodness.

Virgilio Enriquez, the father of Filipino psychology studies, articulated in the 1970s that the natural tendency of true Filipino psychology is not to preserve the self but to achieve a harmonious interpersonal connection or “*pakikipagkapwa*.” It is said that a true Filipino considers each person and every person in others or the so-called *kapwa*. In this framework, the elders are considered to be one of us, not considered outsiders or “*ibang tao*.”

In his study, the pure longing for reciprocity or “*utang na loob*” truly signifies an appreciation or an act towards the unity of the whole. Though in some instances, “*utang na loob*” can sustain an oppressor to be a benefactor just like in the present entrenched patron-client relationship between dynastic politicians and tax-payers. Yet, if harmonized and utilized positively and in purity, reciprocity will be the true incarnation of the self in others or *kapwa-tao*.

Furthermore, in the context of Filipino culture, a chance to repay each kindness is not necessarily a burden. As in the case of the elderly, repaying them with the goodness due to their kindness, may not be essentially a difficult obligation but a virtue of love.

Thus, before being indulged in the cult of youth, I will encourage everyone to look also at the state of our elderly. In a society that worships the young, the sick, the jobless, and neglected elders, their previous kindness is not often ignored but mostly forgotten.

Soon, in a life like a dream, the strong youth would be weak. The beauty will wane only to be replaced by more gorgeous and younger ones.



Being a youth is a temporary state, though its idealism does not rest only on the young. The vision of a better world rests in partnership with the experience, success, failures, and wisdom of our elders.

I hope that with this essay, the reader will realize how their parents and the elderly take care of them when they are at their most vulnerable, remembering how the elders showed their selflessness before we can stand on our own wherever we are today. Of course, those who experience traumatic experiences because of their parents are an equally different story.

Likewise, I encouraged everyone to talk to their parents and their elders. Ask them. Discover their adventures and stories. Learn from their hardships, successes, and aspirations. Value their legacy and continue their dreams for a better life.

During the funeral of my mom, I wrote a poem titled, *If Life is But A Dream*, where I highlighted her sacrifice for us, together with my father, which was considerably unmeasurable.

I will stay in my sleep,
there in your arms,
and wake up beside you.

In a restless sleep,
I suddenly get up,
only to nap again.
Before you are gone,
I will chase and run
for a destined life,
momentarily.

In a span so brief,
I will think,
I will remember
when you are with me.

Recalling your loving
swing
and embrace, as always.

If life is but a dream,
will you also wake up?
Leave in your sleep,
awaken each morning,
open your eyes,
and finally know.

Everything is waning,
each moment fading,
like leaves falling
from once-fertile trees.

If life is but a dream,
every morning,
I will not forget
your memory
and wake up with you.



We need to value the elders, giving them a constant warm embrace and allocating them a daily conversation. If you can prepare a hot-cooked meal at the table with your parents, please do so. Never neglect the opportunity to smile with them, or even just to hear their stories and wisdom. You may not have the opportunity later on, or you may regret failing not to do so.

If society would only be like this, discovering how to pay homage - second to the Creator - the hardships of the previous generations and their memories would not be turned into waste, and the youth would not become wasted in their young because, yes, perhaps a better world will come.

AT THE BUS TERMINAL

by Plumarupok



At the young age of seven, my father was rushed to the nearest hospital in the city of our province in Isabela because of a gunshot head wound. He was almost dying and needed to undergo urgent surgery. He had to be transferred to one of the biggest hospitals in Manila by plane.

My father was a farmer, a good husband, and a model father for me. He was a victim of harassment by rebels called New People's Army (NPA).

At that young age, my five siblings and I lived with *Lola* Diz, my grandmother on my mother's side. Time flies so fast, and after a year of successful surgery of my father, we migrated to Manila. We left *Lola* in our hometown.

Growing up, I missed *Lola* and all the people in our province. One day, we had a big surprise: *Lola* arrived. She was standing in front of our door and had travelled on her own by bus. She brought *pasalubong*: vegetables, mangoes, and also camote tops. What we love the most were the *bibingka*, *binalay*, *inupra*, and some *kakanin* and *suman*. We sat and talked about how she managed to travel twelve hours alone by land. *Lola* was always like that; she loved visiting us when she could.

When high technology and gadgets arose, we bought *Lola* a cellular phone. At the age of seventy, it was her first time to have one. It was not easy for her to use it, but the first thing she learned was how to call. And that was the beginning.

Soon, I lost count of how many times she called me. She also developed a routine—she always picked me up at the bus terminal in Cubao, a tradition that went on for a decade.

Since *Lola* was getting older, it was no longer good for her to travel alone. It was amazing though that even though she couldn't travel anymore, she always dropped me a call, picked up my cargo at the bus terminal, and say, "I sent you something... I know how you miss all those foods... I just added some vegetables and fruits..." *Lola* knew how much we missed the *bibingka* from Isabela, as well as the *binalay*, the *inatata*, *inupra*, and *suman*.

When I gave birth to my first son, my amazing *Lola* traveled alone. She took care of me and my son, Cyrus. She just left us when she was assured I could manage to move and do the household chores alone. She did the same thing when I gave birth to my second child, Alexa.

At the age of 80, *Lola* was getting weak. Oh, how we loved to go home to our hometown every fiesta with my children! And in 2021, *Lola* became bedridden. At the time, she asked me, "When I die, can you come here?" I answered her timidly with teary eyes, "Yes, *Lola*, I will - no matter what, I will come."

In 2022, *Lola* passed away at the age of 83. When I received the message that *Lola* was gone, I filed an urgent leave at my work and rushed to the nearest bus terminal. I was crying throughout the trip until I reached my *Lola*'s burial.

Now, it was my turn. From then on, I visited her yearly as I had promised.

HER LOVE

Grandma's love is...

*The light in the deepest night,
The shadow that guards in the dark,
The sunshine past the strongest storm.*

Grandma's love is...

*The voice that fills every silence,
The peacemaker of every trouble,
The sweet lullaby through lonely nights.*

Grandma's love is...

*The endless wave that heals every heartbreak,
The undying hope in moments of failure,
The timelessness of everlasting.*



BRAVERY BLEEDS

by Marjive Destinado

When my *Lolo* died, I wore the last smile he ever saw on my face, convinced that strength meant swallowing the hurt whole. In a typical Filipino household, tears were weakness—a cracked mirror reflecting shame. We built our pride like a fortress, brick by brick, learning to suppress our sorrow like it was a sin. Choking it back, we swallowed the bitterness like a bitter medicine that burned our throats.

At his funeral, I stood rigid as a statue, while the world around me blurred into a haze of black and white. I thought I was tough, a granite figure facing the tide of grief. I believed that if I swallowed the salt of loss, it would somehow make me strong, allowing it to dissolve into something palatable, something I could carry without choking on the rawness of loss. But toughness is a lie we tell ourselves to escape the pain that clings to our skin, leaving us hollow inside.

Growing up, my parents believed in tough love. They taught me to swallow my emotions and to dismiss vulnerability as a weakness. I learned to push through the pain, to keep my head high and my heart hidden. They meant well, of course. Their intentions were laced with love, but love can sometimes be blind, can't it?

Tough love—meant to prepare us for the brutality of the world—often left us raw and bleeding inside, the kind of hurt that doesn't show on the surface but festers in the shadows. We were conditioned to believe our worth was tied to achievements, and that love was earned through endless toil and sacrifice. But my parents didn't see how their relentless pursuit of perfection cut deeper than any blade, how it left scars on our spirits, bruises on our souls. They sacrificed their own vulnerabilities in the name of strength, demanding the same from us as if being tender was a crime. They forgot that we are not machines, programmed to churn out success.

In my mind, I had imagined superheroes with capes, swooping in to save the day, but the reality was far less glamorous. I had seen the posters hanging in my brother's bedroom, bright colors and bold letters promising adventure and heroism, but I didn't watch movies much. I knew, for example, that Superman existed—this invincible figure everyone admired—but I couldn't tell you what powers he had. I just knew that my younger brother would sit wide-eyed in front of the television, a bowl of popcorn in his lap, waiting for the magic to unfold. And every time he pressed play, my *Lola* would settle in beside him. *Lola* had always been there, not as a caped crusader but as the quiet hero in our lives.



When she cried for *Lolo*, I saw a hero—a beautiful, aching hero—who taught me that strength lies in the willingness to feel, to grieve, and to let tears flow when they need to. Her eyes held the weight of the world—knowing precisely when to break and when to hold on.

Lola revealed that love never really disappears, even when the person does. It stays in the tears we shed—in the way we continue to hold on, even when it hurts. And maybe the greatest heroes aren't the ones who swoop in wearing capes, but the ones who hold our hands as we wade through the wreckage of our hearts, teaching us how to keep them wide open when the world insists on slamming them shut. Because in the real world, grief doesn't knock; it kicks down the door, barging in uninvited, demanding a seat at the table where we thought we could find solace. When the weight of grief feels unbearable, heavy as a storm cloud settling on our shoulders, the only way through is to let down our guard, to be completely vulnerable with someone who understands—someone like my *Lola*.

MY LATE UNCLE: MY GUARDIAN, OUR CLAN BENEFACTOR AND AN INDEFATIGABLE BOOKWORM AND COMMENTATOR

by Cleofe S. Pastrana



If he were still alive today, he would have been two decades past the coveted centenarian age by our dear seniors in the Philippines like me. But even at that age, when eyesight/vision is already fading or problematic, I am pretty sure that he would still be in his favorite nook or comfort zone in our living room, busy reading and underlining a book, magazine, newspaper, or whatever printed matter that he gets hold of, and writing his comments on the side of the reading material.

A day, hour, or minute would not have passed without him immersed in his Reading-Underlining-Checking-Commenting (RUCC) hobby! And if you are curious enough to look at the materials that he has read, you would be astonished to see that all sentences, phrases, words, and everything have been underlined! And maybe for further emphasis as if the underlines made are not yet enough – normally, we do underlines for phrases or sentences for emphasis – check marks are still provided for some words or phrases!

Mind you, intelligent comments even proliferate and decorate the side, top, or bottom margins of the books or reading materials that have passed his scrutiny! How I wished he had submitted such comments as book reviews in leading newspapers or magazines at that time! It is good that writing pens were not so costly then, otherwise he would have used a major portion of his meager monthly pension for buying such writing pens.

If only I had been keen and diligent enough then to record the number of books or reading materials that he had done RUCC, I would have endorsed or submitted his achievement to the Guinness World Records for having read so much and for being such an elderly bookworm or as a formidable senior-aged RUCC enthusiast! Who knows, he would have surpassed the feat of Olubunmi, the Nigerian who held a world record with 120 hours of non-stop reading (Source: YouTube Channel Television, March 7, 2018). And my uncle's unique achievement was not merely non-stop reading, but an RUCC!

In heaven, where he is right now since the year 2000, I'm sure he must still be reading and doing RUCC for whatever printed material, particularly the Bible – that's found in Heaven's Library!

His RUCC hobby must have worked to his advantage since he was spared from having dementia or Alzheimer's, the dreaded disease for old people like him. In fact, he had the sharpest mind I've ever known so far!

That's my uncle – a devoted bachelor all his life and my guardian during my high school and college days. In fact, he was the one who greatly influenced me to read a lot and to take up the Economics course at that time when it was not yet a popular area of study. In 1973 – when I was about to enter freshman college – he forecasted that Economics would be the most in-demand area of study by the 20th century. Since I had a high regard for him and believed so much in his intelligence, I dropped my initial plan of taking up Chemistry and enrolled in AB Economics instead. He even patiently accompanied me to enroll then at the oldest university in the country just to catch up for the last day of registration! True enough, when I graduated in 1977, there was already a huge demand for Economics graduates!

He was also a benefactor to his siblings and his nephews and nieces – I was one of them – for he was the only one who had a good source of income then, having been a Provincial Auditor and a part-time college teacher while his other five siblings were either farmers, construction workers, or musicians with less income to support their respective families. He sent most of my cousins to college, and fortunately, I somewhat lessened his load when I passed the National State Scholarship Examination for my college studies.



I was a witness to his fatherly concern for my cousins as if they were his own children. I can still vividly recall how he greatly cried and slapped the face of one of my cousins, who was still in third-year college then and eloped with her boyfriend who was also an undergraduate, hence employability was not assured yet. At an early age – as I was still in elementary – I could sense the tremendous frustration that my uncle had for having poured out so much for my cousin’s college education, hoping that she would be the one to uplift her family from poverty but ended up in an early, unplanned marriage. This scenario was repeated when my other cousin also had the same fate. I know my uncle had high dreams for us, his nieces and nephews; he, having finished college education (he was one of the first graduates of the University of the Philippines), would get us out of poverty. This was imprinted in my mind at an early age, thus pushing me to really excel during my academic years – from elementary to college – and rewarding him with my achievements.

Another memorable thing that my uncle did for us was his kindness and excitement in bringing us to Manila during the early ‘70s to meet and visit our other cousins there for us to be acquainted with them and to personally experience the beauty of the historical places like the Luneta, Intramuros, the Manila Bay, Lawton area, and other places.

If not for him, I would not have seen at an early age those famous places that we read about in our History textbooks and stepped inside the earliest malls like Ali Mall, Shoe Mart (now SM), Harrison Plaza, and savory restaurant dishes. I still cherish the train ride that we took from San Fernando, La Union to the Tutuban Station, where along the way, we had a good view of the coastal places in La Union and Pangasinan. Oh, how grateful I am for these wonderful memories of early childhood with my uncle!

What’s so amazing about him was his unceasing inertia to work, that even after he retired from public office, he still sought a teaching job in a private college in a nearby town. His earnings, however, were simply funneled to his needy siblings, nieces, and nephews as he lived simply, having no vices and cravings except for his exceptional passion for reading and doing his RUCC hobby! Other than that, he spent his days feeding the stray cats that came into the house, feeding them with whatever food was left on the table.

Indeed, my uncle was an extraordinary yet simple man, having been well educated during those early days, yet very humble, generous, and loving to his family, siblings, nieces, and nephews. He remained a bachelor all his life with only one woman in his heart whom she never met again after World War 2! Thus, he poured all his years, supporting us and perusing all the books and reading materials that he could get hold of, exercising his mental faculty with all the underlines, check marks, and side comments he made on those materials! He was truly a superhero to all of us!



A GIFT OF THE MOMENT

by AL Reyes

No matter how grown up we have become, we are always like little children in the presence and eyes of our mothers. No matter how independent, wiser, and older we have grown, the presence of our mother – even when frail due to age – somehow gives us inner strength, our bastion of strength. As grown-up children of elderly parents, a little compliment from them always seems to matter so much now – a precious, cherished, and treasured moment.

My dearest 90-year-old mother seems to have shrunk in size and her memory started to fade with her age. She barely recognizes us her children and remembers very little or nothing at all about anything. Mama is a naturally nice and gentle person. I am glad that despite all these, she has retained her being good-natured. Except for occasional tantrums, she is generally nice and respectful to everyone. If old age should take away her memory, I pray, that the good and happy memories remain with her. She may feel always surrounded by love from people who may be strangers to her but are actually her own loving family. That she is not alone. That she is taken care of.

During one of my visits, I dropped by her room, and she was lying down in bed. We always introduce ourselves first every time we visit and Mama will nod her head as if she assures us that she remembers, even if she does not. I exchanged some pleasantries with her. I asked how she was feeling – if she had eaten already or if she drank enough water. She replied with either a nod, a smile, or a “Yes, I have.” Conversations with Mama are now limited – a monologue. We talk, and she listens. She smiles and nods.

While I was talking, I noticed Mama looking at my eyes. She seemed to be listening to me, but her eyes were locked in a gaze straight into my eyes. Mama does this often especially now that she does not remember a lot of things. I stopped talking and smiled at her which she returned with a faint smile – a polite smile you give to a stranger who greets you.

I wondered what she could be thinking: *Who is this talkative man who cannot stop rambling? Who is this person in my room? Why is this man in her room? Who is he and why is he talking to me like I know him?* I wonder if she’s afraid. Oh, how I wanted to assure her that she is safe where she is and who she is with, but I did not know how. We gazed at each other.



I asked her, “Why are you staring at me, Mama? Do I have dirt on my face?” Then, she sweetly smiled and softly said, “You are a good person.” She continued to gaze at me. I felt a lump in my throat. Overwhelmed. I could not speak for a while. My Mama who barely remembers anything was telling me, affirming me what I am as a person. I am not the kind of person who seeks validation from others, but at this very moment, I felt it was important for me to know how Mama looked at me as a person. Her words were precious, filling my heart with joy and pride. It was a moment of grace - a gift of the moment. All I could muster was a heartfelt and grateful “Really? Thank you, Mama!” I kissed her on the forehead, told her to go back to sleep, and that we would wake her up when it was time for lunch.

Proverbs 31:26-27 describes the valuable role a mother plays in the lives of those in her family: “She opens her mouth in wisdom; kindly instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.” Mama’s life is us - her children, her family. She maintains a few friends although she was nice and friendly to everyone. Wherever her frail memory will take her, I know she will always find her way back to us with the core of her being, the mother that she is, the kind God has made her to be.

Mothers care for the heart of a child. They spend countless hours selflessly caring for us when we are being raised. They fill many different roles: teacher and voice of wisdom, and they also empathize with us. God uses the metaphor of mothers to describe the ways He loves and cares for His children. “As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you.” - Isaiah 66:13.

Thank you, Lord, for embracing me with your love and comfort through the words of Mama. I am in many ways a huge work in progress. By Your words of affirmation spoken through Mama, I will strive to live a life worthy of how Mama sees me as a person.

I will make her always proud of me as I persevere to grow in Your image and likeness.



LOLO FAUSTO

by Alfred Pagunsan Gadayan

The scent of freshly cut grass and the rhythmic chirping of crickets always bring me back to *Lolo* Fausto's porch, a haven of warmth and wisdom where the air was thick with the aroma of coffee and the comforting hum of his stories. My grandfather, *Lolo* Fausto, wasn't just a family member, but he was also a living encyclopedia of history, a repository of wisdom gleaned from a life lived with purpose and passion.

Our bond was forged in the shared language of stories. As a child, I would sit on the worn, wooden steps of his porch, mesmerized by his tales of a simpler time, hardship and resilience, love and loss, and laughter and tears. Each story was a window into a world I had only glimpsed through faded photographs - a world where life moved at a slower pace, where community was paramount, and where every day was a gift to be cherished.

Lolo Fausto wasn't one for idle chatter. His words were measured - each one carrying the weight of experience, a lifetime of lessons learned. He taught me the value of hard work, the importance of kindness, and the necessity of finding joy in the simple things. He instilled in me a deep respect for family, a sense of community, and a belief in the power of human connection.

One of his most profound lessons - one that has stayed with me throughout my life - was the importance of finding purpose. He often said, "Life is a journey, not a destination. Find your purpose, and you'll find your way." These words resonated with me, especially during times of doubt and uncertainty. They reminded me that life is not about chasing fleeting goals or seeking external validation, but about discovering what truly matters, what ignites a fire within, and pursuing that with passion and dedication.

Lolo Fausto's perspective on life was shaped by the hardships he had endured. He had witnessed war, poverty, and loss, yet he had emerged from these trials with an unwavering spirit and a deep appreciation for the simple joys of life. He taught me that happiness wasn't a destination but a choice, a conscious decision to find joy in the midst of challenges and to cherish the small moments that make life beautiful.

He taught me the art of patience, the importance of listening, and the power of empathy. He was a master of observation, noticing the small details that others often missed, and he had an uncanny ability to connect with people on a deeply human level. He taught me to see the world through a lens of compassion, to listen with an open heart, and to offer kindness without expecting anything in return.



His love for his family was unwavering, a constant source of strength and guidance. He taught me the importance of family, the value of tradition, and the power of unconditional love. He showed me that family wasn't just about blood ties but about the bonds we forge through shared experiences, mutual support, and unwavering love.

As I grew older, our conversations evolved. We delved into deeper topics, exploring the complexities of life, the meaning of faith, and the importance of leaving a positive mark on the world. He taught me the value of integrity, the importance of standing up for what I believe in, and the necessity of using my voice to make a difference in the world.

Lolo Fausto's influence on my life is immeasurable. He taught me the importance of finding my purpose, embracing challenges with resilience, cherishing the simple joys of life, and leaving a positive mark on the world. His wisdom, his compassion, and his unwavering love have shaped me into the person I am today.

One of my most cherished memories with *Lolo* Fausto was during a particularly challenging time in my life. I was struggling with a difficult decision, feeling lost, and unsure of my path. I sat on his porch, pouring out my anxieties and doubts, seeking his guidance. He listened patiently, his eyes reflecting a lifetime of wisdom and understanding. Then, with a gentle smile, he said, "My dear, life is a journey, not a race. Take your time, trust your instincts, and always remember that you are loved." His words, simple yet profound, calmed my anxieties and reassured me that I was not alone.

Even though *Lolo* Fausto is no longer with me, his spirit lives on in the stories I tell, the lessons I carry, and the choices I make. He is a constant presence in my life, a guiding light that reminds me to live with purpose, embrace life's challenges with grace, and find joy in the journey. He is a testament to the enduring power of love, the importance of family, and the wisdom that comes with a life well-lived.

His legacy is not just in the stories he told but in the values he instilled and the kindness he shared.



THE MOST VALUABLE PLAYER



by Ella Mae I. Masamayanor

I come out of Toby's Sports with a six-piece set of ping-pong balls, a mini-basketball ring, a volleyball, and a soccer ball. I wish I were as sporty as my shopping bags make me out to be, but I have zero athletic talent, apart from the occasional pickleball and badminton games with friends. I could not compete in sports if my life depended on it. But I enjoy throwing a party, and that's exactly what I'm doing now - I'm organizing my *Lolo Tete's* 97th sports-themed birthday, and this haul is party paraphernalia.

Lolo Tete is my mom's father, a retired high school shop teacher from our province in Siquijor. We've been throwing him birthday parties ever since he turned 90. Our family likes to make a big deal about it, complete with a theme, poster invitations, party games, custom-made family T-shirts, and an elaborate birthday cake. It's certainly an exercise in creativity. We have different versions of T-shirts, party favors, birthday cakes, and theme-appropriate games. This year, Mommy came up with the brilliant idea of a sports-themed party, and I could not get over how adorable the idea is. Imagine guests coming in sports attire, sports-themed decorations, a Zumba dance-off, little basketball rings for the games, and sports headbands for party favors. The vision is perfect, and as the amateur party planner and host in the family, it's my job to execute it.

It's perfect for *Lolo Tete* too, because *Lolo* is an athlete. Aside from being a high school shop teacher, *Lolo* was also the school soccer coach. *Lolo* doesn't tell me much about it, except when his team competed in Manila, playing against the Bacolod delegates. He doesn't remember the competition or the year they played, but it's one of the few times *Lolo* tells me about his younger days. Mommy tells me he was always active. He used to walk two kilometers to and from school every day. He has never driven a car or a motorcycle, but sometimes *Lolo* would ride a bike to school. I like to think of *Lolo* being up and about like this. *Lolo* wasn't running about or biking around when I was a kid, but I remember him walking around the house. He tended his roosters in the backyard and brought them to the town cockpit to win a few pesos. Whenever he wins, he brings home a tub of ice cream or some *bibingka* for us to share.



I'm excited about the party, but as an amateur party planner, I am cramming and grasping at straws throwing this party together. Sports-themed parties are best celebrated in a park, an auditorium, or a basketball court, but 1) we can't fill up an entire auditorium; 2) we don't know anywhere we could rent on such short notice; and 3) truth be told, I didn't have the time to search for a venue, so here we are making do. We reserve our condominium's function room for the party. I created a sporty design from Canva, inspired by templates of high school try-out announcements, with an eclectic mix of random sports icons: basketball, volleyball, tennis, table tennis, swimming, cycling, chess, and even hula-hoop dancing. Of course, to honor *Lolo's* sport, a soccer ball is in the center, just above the "*Lolo Tete is turning 97*" sign. This design becomes the base for the poster, the invitations, and all the party favors.

On the day of *Lolo's* birthday, we start decorating hours before the party. I'm no stylist, but I do my best to create the vibe I'm going for. I put up the sports decor I ordered online and the basketball rings I bought from Toby's. I realize the space is too small for actual basketball games, but I put it up anyway, as long as it fits the aesthetic. Before I know it, it's thirty minutes before the party starts, and guests begin to come in. Most are from Metro Manila, but a few guests traveled from Dumaguete, Cebu, and Bohol. I'm pleased they followed the dress code, coming in shorts, sneakers, and leggings. As expected, some aunties came in full-on Zumba attire. We distribute the party T-shirts. Every shirt has a 97 at the back in jersey font, with "The Best Player" printed below that. We give out sports headbands with the same line, and guests start wearing the headbands like kids putting on party hats.

Before we start, I lead the prayer and remember fondly how around 27 years ago, *Lolo* led the prayer at my 6th birthday party. It was my first and only Jollibee kiddie party, and my first birthday after my dad passed away. Mommy was devastated, and *Lolo* and *Lola* flew from Siquijor to Manila to stay with us at our apartment. I don't remember much from that time, but I find it beautiful that my grandparents came to the city to help my mother grieve. *Lolo* tells me how little I was, stick-thin and short because all I would eat was Jollibee's Chickenjoy. He must have brought me to school at some point because he remembers how I always carried a big backpack. It was a long walk from the school gate to the classroom, and the security guards were strict about parents and guardians coming in, forcing me to bring the heavy luggage alone. When *Lolo* tells this story, he impersonates how I walked, swaying his shoulders side-to-side from the heavy luggage. I don't remember any of this, but the memory always makes *Lolo* laugh, and I'm suddenly happy I had all those books to carry.



I'm the obligatory host of this party - obligatory because I'm the only one in the family who loves holding a microphone to talk. As with all of *Lolo's* parties, he has a grand entrance. As I call his name, he enters the room and is paraded through the guest tables in his wheelchair, greeting everyone he sees. *Lolo* looks adorable in his sports attire. He's wearing a jersey over a white shirt with matching white shorts and sneakers. He's also wearing a wristband, a knee support band, and a white baseball cap. To top it all off, he has a soccer ball on his knee. He even has a sports towel over his shoulder for good measure. The program starts with a Zumba dance from YouTube that everyone bops along to—the perfect song that's catchy enough to dance to but simple enough for people to follow.

It's almost a shame that *Lolo* can't play sports or dance Zumba with us. In the last few years, he's been wheelchair-bound and assisted in daily activities. When I was in college, *Lolo* could still climb up to the second floor and walk with me every Sunday on our way to church. Eventually, he started needing a cane, then a walker, and now a wheelchair. His knees became weaker, his movements much slower, and the years of deconditioning became harder to overcome. He was later diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, a movement disorder that made *Lolo* progressively slower and weaker. He needs help feeding, changing clothes, bathing, and transferring from his bed to a wheelchair. For exercise, we ask him to raise his arms and stretch side-to-side in the morning. Occasionally though, *Lolo* and I toss a ball back and forth in the living room, stopping only when he says he's tired. I'm not one for sports, but if I ever had a favorite sport, that little ball game with *Lolo* would be it.

Speaking of games, the program proceeds with a little trivia contest. The audience is asked a series of questions about *Lolo* - the names of his children (all 12 of them), his siblings (8 sisters and 1 brother), and his parents (Magdalino and Damasa); where he went to school (Silliman University), and his favorite dessert (halo-halo). I ask the same set of questions every year. Sometimes, depending on the new stories I get from *Lolo* or Mommy, I throw another one or two questions into the mix.

Lolo possesses an impressively sharp mind for his age. Although dementia blurs his memories now and then, *Lolo* still remembers so much. I'm surprised when he remembers tidbits about me, like when my birthday is, or that I graduated cum laude, or that my favorite food is fried chicken. He can also name all six towns of Siquijor, sing various English and Visayan songs, and occasionally share a random anecdote during dinner. One time, he told me how they fled to the mountains in Negros during the Japanese occupation. He talks about how the Japanese raided the towns and raped the women. *Lolo* was barely twenty years old, and I can't imagine how terrifying it must have been.



I play two more games before dinner, *Lolo's* favorite part of the party. *Lolo* has always loved to eat. On a random day, he would request his favorites: *humba*, *lechon*, and *pansit*. He has a sweet tooth too, and is always quick to reach for the *biko*, cake, or ice cream after dinner. Watching him eat is so amusing because he has such a good appetite. He chews his food heartily and always lets you know that the food is good. *Lolo* is the reason why I come straight home for dinner and stay home on the weekends –eating with *Lolo* has become one of the most precious parts of my day.

Since I'm the doctor in the family, I'm always asked if *Lolo* has any diet restrictions, and people are surprised when I let *Lolo* eat anything he wants. People his age deserve to eat whatever they enjoy. Besides, his blood sugar, blood pressure, and lab exams have always been top-notch. This is not to say that *Lolo* has never gotten sick. Aside from Parkinson's, *Lolo* has hypertension, diabetes, heart failure, and kidney disease. He's had a bed sore, cellulitis, contact dermatitis, and a particularly bothersome neck pain. With each complaint or symptom, my family calls me first. It's no secret that *Lolo* is my favorite patient, if not my favorite person in the world. The moments I've been most grateful for my medical license are those when *Lolo* needed me. Whether it was to check his lungs, refill his prescription, prescribe an antibiotic, or order a lab test, I was always glad I could do something. Granted, I didn't always know what to do, but I knew enough to figure out what to do next, even if it was just to ask my colleagues for help.

One time, *Lolo* became excessively sleepy, dehydrated, and dyspneic, and we had to rush him to the hospital where I worked. I called everyone I knew and talked to everyone on duty that day. I checked on *Lolo* in between patient rounds and clinic schedules. It took a few days of antibiotics and intravenous fluids to help him recover, and those days were some of the most frightening days of my life. In time, *Lolo* woke up and sang songs again, soon becoming strong enough to go home. I realized then that, more than the status or the financial security, the true advantage of a doctor is access—access to knowledge, connections, and resources that aren't always available to everyone. I've never been more acutely aware of that advantage than when I needed to use it for *Lolo*. Toward the end of dinner, we brought out *Lolo's* big birthday cake, a soccer-themed money cake. Money cakes allow the celebrator the joy and excitement of pulling out actual money from the cake, and *Lolo* always loves receiving money. When he still could, *Lolo* always counted the bills in his wallet. He knew how much he had and how much anyone owed him. He also enjoys asking for money, even when he doesn't buy anything. He just enjoys having money to count. My uncle keeps his wallet for him now, but *Lolo* continues to ask for money. He used to ask Mommy, but now that he knows I have a salary, he's learned to ask me, too. He must also know that I could never say no to him. My family knows I am one of the stingiest when it comes to money, but all of that comes to a crumble when *Lolo's* involved. Now, as he blows out his birthday cake, he also pulls out the paper bills from his money cake, and seeing him smile his big smile makes all the effort (and literal cash) worth it.



After the obligatory pictures are taken, the party proceeds to the *karaoke* and dancing portion of the celebration, and *Lolo* soon retreats for his bedtime. He's tired, but he's happy to see so many people: children and grandchildren, nieces and nephews, friends and well-wishers, a few of whom, to his delight, gave him extra cash. *Lolo's* happy, and that's all that matters.

I forgot one part of the program though. Earlier on I bought a medal, the generic kind that you receive from a sports competition. I wanted *Lolo* to receive The Most Valuable Player award—like how champions are lauded in the closing ceremonies of sports events. That's who *Lolo* truly is to me, the MVP, the Most Valuable Person. Of all I am in this life, I am proudest to be his *apo*, and for as long as I can, I will cherish every meal we share, every song he sings, and every joke he randomly cracks. I will never tire of telling him this every day: that I love him, that he's my favorite person, my best friend, my *palangga*, and my MVP.



WALKING WITH GOLDEN HEROES

by Ma. Elena Yusay

I've heard that walking prolongs vitality.
My great-grandma lived to over a hundred;
Her secret was walking.
She witnessed the second war between nations;
Walking helped her escape the red sun's bayonets.

She was married to a soldier who loved her,
My great-grandpa was a fearsome warrior;
They had a beautiful daughter before he was captured.
They've told me he was part of the Death March;
Walking showed him the cruelty of foreign imperialism.



My great-grandma and her daughter became a fierce tandem;
Saints and ancestral spirits were their divine guides,
Holy statues protected their household,
Novenas and rosaries were their tools;
Walking signified their devotion to Latin prayers.

They were devotees of a colonist's religion,
But the land awakened the *babayanism* in their blood;
My grandmother became a curious mystic.
She learned the whispers of local herbs and spices;
Walking helped her learn other kinds of spirituality.

She was outlived by her mother and husband,
My grandfather was a chess aficionado;
He was a strong giant who loved dogs.
The Moirai showed his death to me in a lucid dream;
Walking reunited him with his soulmate.

My great-grandma tried to stay longer,
But the pandemic had a quota to reach;
It was her time to transcend to the other realm.
Her recipes were her gifts to her descendants;
Walking gave us wisdom shared by our elders.



REMINISCING...

by Michelle Joy M. Velasco

Their love is truly precious,
Resonating deep within our hearts.
As children, they gifted us
With memories as beautiful as art.

Their embraces and kisses
Carry the sweet scent of chocolate.
Unwavering and never lost,
Their love illuminates the path,
Saving me from despair.

Grandpa's touch soothes my pain,
Akin to the warmth of summer days.
His legacy persists, in the darkness,
Shining like rays.

It's the little things he did
That bring a smile to my face.
Though I lament his absence,
knowing he's with the Creator,
I find solace.

Grandma's words comfort my soul,
Enveloping me like a baby
In a blanket of blossoms.
Her affection is stitched into every word,
As if she's sending her embrace
In a fragrant perfume.

Her scent, her laughter,
And the smile I've longed for.
I yearn for her presence
To celebrate and share
In my accomplishments with glamour.

They have been my source
Of inspiration, strength, and rest.
Their little bird is now ready
To leave the nest.

With their guidance and wisdom,
I've carried their teachings in my heart.
As I've grown braver,
I am now prepared
To take flight and do it right.

Grandpa and Grandma,
The big arms the Lord blessed us with.
With their patience and unconditional love,
They complete us and make us breathe.

I pray for their souls,
As they were created for a purpose.
Never forgotten, never overlooked,
They embody God's love,
The love that lifts us.



THERE WAS A HERO

by Dr. Sebastian Flanders-Aline, d.p.s., mba, dba, m.p.s.y., r.p.s.y., p.s.y.d

A pair of prescriptive eyeglasses did the trick,
Washing away the blurriness of crash and burn.

With reddish, weary eyes—close them all,
And bring back the next day of rainbow bright.

A pair of bionic legs were priceless,
They seemed to be a traveler's accompaniment.

Walking with; running with—a courier to heaven.
There is no fiery furnace in a haven of peace.

Rest, as the saying goes,
From ghosts, ghastly, and ghosted.

Down, where to rest.
Carvings on a tombstone:

Tata Santelmo



TO MY PARAGON: AN ELEGY

by LA Detera



You once told tales and stories,
Now they're part of golden memories.
Your voice was a night's lullaby,
Before it turned into a beautiful goodbye.

You visited me in my dreams,
And left a letter—
An angel waited in a white dress.
No more pain, just a continued love story with her.

I wrap my love, summoning the wind
To deliver it wherever you are.
With regrets and apologies—I've been unkind,
I'm sorry for not being there at your last hour.

No shining heirloom to pass on,
But I have your strength and resilience to wear.
You were the pillar of our home,
My bloodline's true beacon.

In the month of flowers and hearts,
A paradise opened with singing harps.
And I'll forever thank the heavens
For your ephemeral yet meaningful existence.

REMINISCENCE

by Chris Opeña Oruise

My grandpa built a bridge when I was just a boy,
A bridge I used to cross during my kiddy's school,
He also carved a wood and made a wooden toy,
And gave it to me, filling my heart with joy.

He also built a house, a place where we lived in,
Where harmony, love, and happiness were seen,
It was a meeting place for relatives and friends,
A homestead where we danced and savored cuisine.

And my grandma, so beautiful and kind,
Her love for cooking was always on her mind.
Whenever I asked for a meal, she couldn't decline—
She'd serve it with smile, her joy intertwined.

A good seamstress of clothes, both damaged and torn,
She wouldn't let her grandkids be scorned.
She swept our yard at the break of dawn,
Then sat with hot tea, and boiled sweetcorn.



CONSIDERATIONS IN LATER LIFE

by Dennis Espada

Meet-up

I brought my unworthiness to your feet—
 you've seen all of me,
 you fully appreciated
 and loved me totally.
 Now, rest assured, you will do the rest,
 while I rid myself of restlessness.

U-turn

I'm turning towards the skies—
 turning off all my turnoffs,
 turning from my way to God's.

 I turned myself into a penitent
 when I turned away from sin.
 Then He turned my life around.

Ask

Don't ask
 to become successful
 in the world;
 rather,
 ask God
 to succeed
 in your whole life.

Precipice Ahead

Busloads of complacent people,
 merrily speeding along a highway,
 ignoring all warning signs—oh,
 if only they knew what awaited them!

Unfollow

Unfollow the world.
 Unfollow your own passions;
 instead, follow our Lord's Passion
 and set the world in motion
 to humbly follow Him.



RICARDO, EMEDINA, AND ROBERTO

by Mitchie Gonzalez

Ricardo

The memories I have of you
Are stories etched by tongue,
Into words whose letters
Scramble themselves to form your face.

From your kindest principles,
The way you let your gentlest heart
Take different punches,
Making your daughter's heart
Out of rock instead.

To how you taught your children
English, and how to command
A stage, an audience,
Just like how my mother's words
Captive me when she talks of you.

These gray, ashy words, scribbled,
Sketched into a white canvas
Beside your beautiful wife,
your smile, passed to my uncle,
Are the only memories I know of you.



When I asked my grandmother how you died,
She told me your heart broke,
But I know her heart broke
Into a million pieces when yours did.

Emedina

What would I do to bring you back?
Your heart of steel, your sharp wit,
Your scoffing laugh, and your sly grin.
If my mother cannot save me,
I know you would.
If you could send an army to my enemies,
With pointed swords, you would.
You have the bravest heart I've met,
At times cold like Albsir,
But from you, my mother became stronger—
And I became stronger.

You have a penchant for red nail polish,
Pretty dresses, and the sweaters
You sewed for me. And don't forget the blankets
You brought from Bicol, just so I could
Pretend they were capes across my back
As I marched like a queen in a parade!
And in the night, I wrapped them around me,
Their warmth like your warmth



I witnessed how your words
Could tame my mother, make her listen
To wisdom, to sound advice.
We were always part of your thoughts,
Had special places in your heart and home.
Do you remember that I used to sleep
Beside you under a mosquito net during the summers?
You told me stories of dwarves
Playing in your orchids, who would play with me
If I proved myself to be a good girl.

I wonder how you left–
I was in the car; they just picked me up
When they gave me the news.
I remember wondering why I didn't sense it
A few days had already passed
Since your passing.
What was I doing? Studying for the next exam?
Drinking milk teas with friends?
What were you doing in those last minutes?

Did you wish I was there? That I was already a doctor?
Not a mere medical student.
Did you go willingly into the light?
Did you struggle to keep your soul within, to stay alive
For a few moments?
But you always fought battles silently–
I never knew why your stomach hurt,
Never knew why you lost weight suddenly.
And my mom went on a mission to build you up
With bottles of Ensure.

I knew there will be an end;
I knew, that's why I kept your picture
As a wallpaper, and your last documented smile
Posted on Facebook.
But I never imagined it too soon–
I keep asking, "Did you fight?"
Because I cannot imagine you giving up.
Never did, never will.
And now, in my own battles, I can't help but think:
If there's one person who can save me,
I always go back to you.



Roberto

You used to carry me with a proud smile,
 Looking back at all our pictures—
 You're smiling and looking at me.
 You used to carry me on the back of your motorcycle,
 Amidst the coconut trees and the rice fields.
 Oh, I even remember when you brought me
 To the "*hilot*" because my fever wouldn't stop.

It gives me a pang of regret that I was not
 The one who brought you to the hospital
 For your monthly checkups.
 When everything went downhill,
 You complained you couldn't understand your body,
 That it ached where it shouldn't,
 Bled when it shouldn't.



I was far away, still buried in medical books.
 The time was not ripe for me to act
 Like someone in a white coat
 With a hanging stethoscope.
 I wasn't there with you,
 And sometimes, I ask if you held that against me.

But you're one of my heroes, do you know?
 I think of you when I see the faces of my patients.
 I couldn't save you—something that I will carry,
 A cross I will drag with me until my deathbed.
 But maybe I can save the lives of many, for you,
 That you may still be proud of me
 From whatever star you're watching from,
 Because my patient may be someone's *lolo*,
 Like you were mine.

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Mentors Corner

*(Writing pieces by
Scribbly mentors)*



GOLDEN MEMORIES OF PAPA

by Aiko Hara, Fiction Writing Facilitator/Administrator

To the father I never knew from the day I was born,
The father whose voice I never called "Dad,"
The father whose hand I never held as I grew,
The father with whom I never shared talks of dreams or truth.

But to the grandfather who's been there since the start,
The steadfast figure I call "Papa" with all my heart.
The grandfather who taught me to love history and tales,
Who shared stories of heroes, beyond mere details.

To the father who never waited up when I came home late,
Who never scolded me for young love's fate,
The father whose tools I never learned to wield,
The father whose presence remains in memories sealed.

But to the grandfather who always stood by my side,
Defending me proudly, with arms open wide.
The grandfather who cheered for love in my life,
And who mended what broke with patience and light.

Golden memories engraved by gentle hands,
In every story, each lesson, and life's humble plans.
Though my father's place may be an empty space,
My grandfather's love fills that cherished embrace.

For the grandfather who will forever stay
In my heart, though he had gone away.
With strength and wisdom that won't depart,
His love remains, etched deep in my heart.

*Fiction
Story
Section*



ORION'S ARCHIVE: A SERIES (#8)

by Ulysses Tejano

I hid away Grandpa's little emergency gift inside my locker before anyone else was the wiser. I could not say a word of it to my friends and risk a teacher knowing about it.

"So, there is this great place I found that we should definitely check out this Friday," suggested Eric.

Homeroom is the first agenda of school—a moment for everyone to get that big reboot as the summer becomes a distant memory as we sit through the long hours of forced learning and a full year of homework, projects, and deadlines.

"Scram, nerds." A shrill pitchy cry rang through the halls, reminding us who reigns at the top of the pyramid.

Some monsters come in fangs and furs, others are drugged-up soldiers in a war zone but in the average adolescent scene of Greyback oaks. She wore Guzzi and Prado, and smelled of thick floral perfumes from Paris, France.

Her name is Evelyn Regan, a brunette with a fixation on leg-hugging short and tight skirts, and an ample bosom that older women would spend money to have. She's the captain of the cheerleading squad, daughter, and heiress of the Regan conglomerate. A real queen bee brought to life from the pages of a snooty teen novel or a drama show from the big TV.

She is in the parade today, attended to by her posse of ladies in waiting—a group of anyone rich or pretty enough to catch her eye. I very much decided against courting Evelyn no matter how hard puberty has hit her like a truck. My family would burn me alive at the stake if I brought a girl like that into our home. Not that it stopped a few boys from drooling over her looks.

Chills crawled up my spine as I heard one boy whisper in his thick nasally voice, "I hope she steps on me," and other similar bone-chilling comments.

Thankfully, most of them prefer to preen. They propped themselves up, stood on walls, and struck up every pose they had seen on the billboards hoping to catch her eye.

None of them succeeded. They were like ants before her high-nosed gaze. Nothing worth paying attention to, and she stayed that way until she stopped three lockers away from mine.



“Hello there, you must be new,” she says to Eric, her words warm and sweet like a spoonful of honey. “I think I can give you a better tour of the school, don’t you think so, Selena?”

“Oh we can manage just fine,” said Eric. He pulled Selena close to him. To my annoyance, her face is red like a tomato, even as she looks down and away from Evelyn’s eye.

I heave a sigh before I slam my locker shut and muster up the nerve to walk up to them. This was not going to be a pleasant five minutes. My friends and I got along with her about as well as cats and mice.

We’re the mice.

“Hey, Eric! Selena! Let’s get to class.” I called out to them. “It would totally suck if we were late.”

“Eric?” Evelyn raised an eyebrow and gave my friend an appreciative once over. “Eric McNally. Well, summer has certainly been kind to you.”

Then she looked over to me and sneered, “I wish I could say the same for you little onion boy.”

Her girls laugh at her dull wits. Obviously, I am a head taller than her, but all the same, I had their attention. Eric took Selena out of sight and he gave me a quick salute for my sacrifice in the small-time drama of high school life.

Every queen bee has a champion, and Evelyn had no shortage of them here. The first one to arrive kissed her gently on the cheek and greeted her with a quick ‘Hey, babe’ before grimacing at the sight of me.

Feathery blonde hair, bright blue eyes, and a lithe lanky frame—Troy looked more like the front man of a boy band than a star athlete.

“Oreo!” Troy called out. “Tryouts are two weeks from now, give us a good show! Like always.”

The embarrassing memory of tripping down half the court and scoring a hoop in my own basket was a little bit of a fresh memory despite the past school year. It had been months before everyone forgot about it on the other end.

I felt one meaty hand on my shoulder, and I turned around to see a brawny guy with a spiky mohawk glaring at me with his dark eyes.



"Don't forget the tryout for the wrestling team as well." Kurt cackled and cracked his knuckles menacingly. "It's to die for."

I still remember the hard body slams he had dealt me last year. The guy should check his hearing for those tap-outs. Maybe Grandpa wasn't wrong to pack in that stick for emergencies.

Thankfully, I was spared the early morning lynching by a loud rasping sound as a man in a Tweed suit glanced over, arms folded and beady eyes narrowed down to a stern gaze. I had never seen him before—a new teacher, I suppose.

He is probably in his early thirties, skinny and of average height, with wild chestnut brown hair that frayed all over the place like a scarecrow.

He looked like a dweeb; but the way he stood straight, with his head held high, he cast a large shadow of authority that most don't emulate except in movies.

"In a fun, non-morbid way." Kurt amended. He nudged Troy on the ribs and was hoping to beguile the new teacher, casually draped their arms over my shoulders, and had the most unconvincing smiles and thumbs up.

It did not fool the new teacher at all. He raised one quizzical brow before opening the door, beckoning us to get a move on.

So this is high school. The jocks hate my guts, the queen bees and her ladies hate me to the bone. The girl I like is crushing on my bestie, and apparently, I got my butt handed to me by the new girl.

Not the best story I can share on the dinner table.



OCTOBER 2024

MEMENTO



Publishing Section

HOW WILL MY BOOK SELL? (PART 1)

by Felz Storne, Founder of Metacognia

Have you ever wondered why traditional publishers release thousands of books even when they're just starting to launch new titles? It is because the big difference between traditionally published books and self-published ones is that traditional publishers have already projected the sales of their newly released books even before they are published. How do they do that? That's where the sales hook comes in.

The sales hook can be found in a book's premise, which is already determined as early as the querying stage. Yes, if you have been following my articles here in Memento, I already mentioned querying in one of my previous articles in the *A Publisher Nightmares* series. When an author submits a query letter, the literary agent looks for it there; if it has none, it will be automatically rejected. Hence, it is very important to craft the premise of the book even when it's not written yet.

Let's review what the premise is. It can also be called the log line. If we're going to put it down into a formula, here's what it looks like:

hero/main character + goal + problems/obstacles + stakes

Can you guess the most important part of that formula? If you guess the hero, you're wrong! The most important part there is the stakes. But of course, without the hero or main character, there can be no stakes. This is the most important part of the premise because this is what motivates the protagonist, and thus, what also makes the story move. In order to help you craft a premise well, it will be helpful for you to answer the following questions:

- Who is the protagonist?
- What does he/she want?
- Why does he/she want it?
- Who is standing in the way?
- What does the protagonist stand to lose when he/she does not get what he/she wants?

You need to answer all those questions in just one sentence, ideally—or two at most. But it's best to capture everything in just one sentence because literary agents have a very short attention span. They have zero tolerance when it comes to auto-rejection. The most important answer lies in the third question. Why? Because that's where you find the stakes. And what kind of stakes appeal to literary agents? The highest stakes for the main character. This brings us to the next important question: What does the protagonist stand to lose? Once you've nailed these two questions, you're good to go. Of course, you still have to complete the premise by answering all the questions above.

Why are stakes important, and what makes them sell? The higher the stakes for the main character, the better; so always go for the highest stake! You can identify that when you know your main character well and you know what will hurt him/her most when he/she doesn't get what they want. The most effective stakes are the ones that involve death or loss. Again, why? Because it makes your readers emotionally invested in the main character and the story. And that's how you make a sales hook!

Next month, in part two of this article, I will introduce how international publishers project book sales using 'comps,' or competitive titles.

If you have questions about publishing or suggestions for new topics, you can email me at metacognia2013@gmail.com or reach out to me through the following social media handles: @metacognia on Instagram or Facebook.



Writing Tips:



Writing Tip 13:

Dear burned-out writers,

You deserve rest. Take a week, two weeks, or a month of sabbatical from writing. It's okay. **Then come back.** And when you do, expect that it will be hard to start writing again. This is one of the reasons why some writers don't write again—for a long time. But don't get stuck like those writers.

Go to the writing space that you've once considered your sanctuary and search your truth. Then **"try to simply get things on the page"** as the creative unblocking teacher, Julia Cameron, said, until creativity begins to flow to its own accord.

Rekindle your joy for writing through writing again.

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Writing Tip 14:

Are you too busy to make time for writing? Here are a few solutions that you probably already know but haven't tried:

- Write your daily schedule and look for 'extra' hours that you can spend for writing instead of social media browsing.
- Write freely for 15 minutes every day.
- Get a writing mentor or an accountability group whom you can talk to or meet on a regular basis.
- Recall your writing dreams and decide to make them happen.

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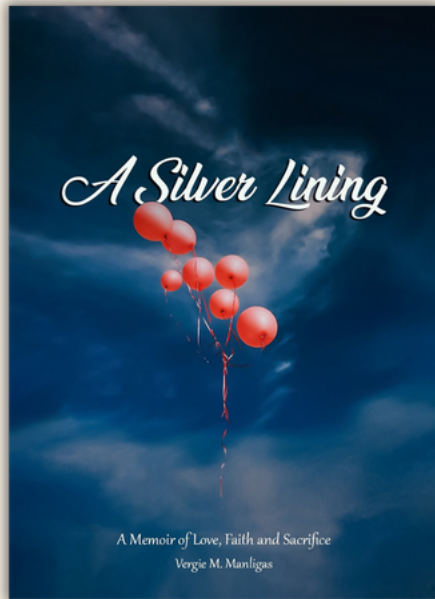


Need help with implementing these tips?

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Email your writing goals to scribblogy@gmail.com

Book Recommendation



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A Silver Lining: A Memoir of Love, Faith, and Sacrifice by Vergie Manligas

A Silver Lining is a memoir of L.I.F.E—love, inspiration, faith, and everything in between. It's a story of two people who kept their faith during trials, and sacrificed and found love amidst the struggle. It's the story of a silver lining behind the dark clouds.

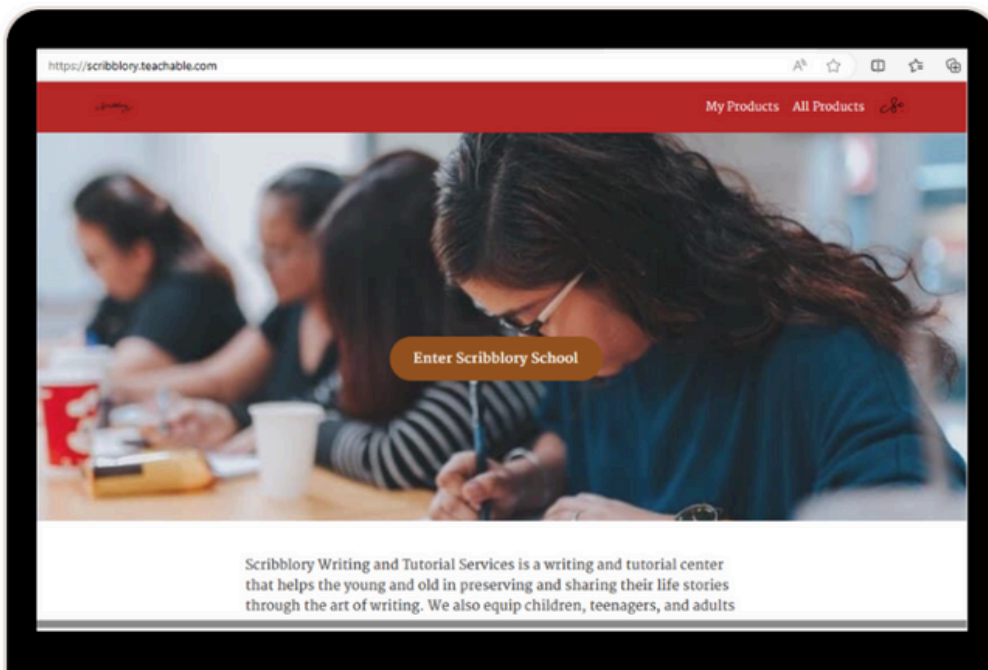
In this book, Vergie tells the story of her grandparents—how they found each other and stayed together through the test of time. This is their testament to great love.

"We will find out in A Silver Lining how a love that has been nurtured by grandparents can give birth to a writer enriched by their perspectives and who transformed them into a prose rarely captured in a first attempt. Vergie claimed she's no writing genius, but with how the words and points of view were interwoven in her story, you'd never mistake hers for a novice." - Feliza Charisse Etorne, Stories Advocate, Creative Enthupreneursiast, Founder of Metacognia

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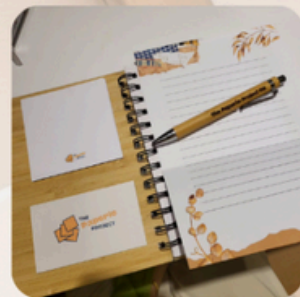
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Announcements



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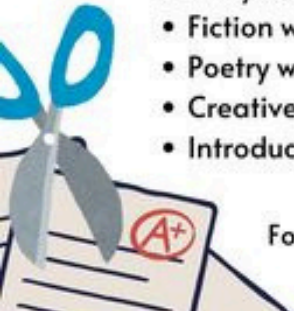
Writing Proficiency Tutorial

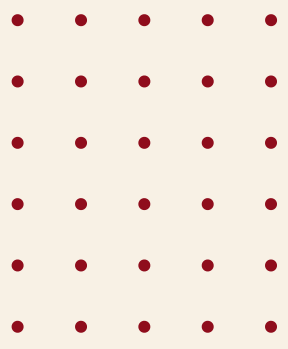
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