**Maya**

**Isinulat ni Diana Galang**

**Batch 26 - Group 5**

An 18-year-old woman named Clarisse works her ass off by giving out flyers and carrying boxes at the public market to pay her debts. She lives on her own in a rented bedspace in Manila. This became her daily routine after she left home two months ago thinking that life would be easier on her own.

Two months prior, Clarisse was staying with her family in Laguna. She is the youngest daughter of a middle-class family and people often see them as the *perfect* one. But for her, they are not perfect for she was often seen as the black sheep by her parents. It is because she wanted things to go on her own way which is why she often rebels against them. One day, she decided to leave the province and take a risk by going to the city. Her parents let her leave thinking that she will come back once she experiences difficulties. But her older sister, Claudine, always tries to contact her.

There, she took a bus to Manila and decided to look for a place to stay in. With no money in hand, she was forced to look for a job which is why she ended up working in a public market. She rejected offers of being a GRO, knowing that it’s not in her nature to enter something like that. And so right after work, she goes back to her bedspace to rest and just like any other night, she would open a cup of instant noodles for dinner and scroll down her phone to look for extra jobs that could help her earn money. Then, she would clean up her mess and sleep to get ready for another day. But tonight, it was different.

As she washes the dishes, her phone rings which she would answer without looking at it. It turns out that it was Claudine who was calling her. Their conversation didn't go well because Clarisse was too angry to listen to her sister who was just asking her to come back home. Clarisse had gotten mad and ended the call. She then saw a cockroach crawling on her last two stocks of cup noodles and out of frustration, she kills it with a slipper. She lets out her anger towards the cockroach that even if it’s already dead, she kept on hitting it. When she composed herself, she suddenly heard the continuous sound of slippers slapping together with a high-pitched cry from a little girl. She follows the sound and found herself looking outside her broken window. There, she saw the mother and daughter from the apartment across her room.

The woman was aggressively hitting the kid with a slipper in front of their gate. Clarisse thought she shouldn’t interfere so she just ignores it and went back to bed. But moments later, she felt guilty listening to the sobs of the little girl. So, she went out and headed towards her.

In their conversation, she gets to know the 12-year-old girl named Maya and why does her mother hit her. Maya, who was obviously blinded by the fact that she loves her mother, will explain that the woman tends to be abusive whenever Maya reminds her about her husband who she refers as to “*someone who ruined my future”*. Maya defended her own mother by saying that she only hurt her out of love.

As they talk to each other, Clarisse will be horrified by the abuse Maya was experiencing in the hands of her own parent. She also came to know that her mother starves her for days which alarmed Clarisse so she asked her if she wants to eat. There, Clarisse brings Maya back inside her bedspace and gave her the last two cups of instant noodles.

The night passed by with Clarisse and Maya laying beside each other, sleeping peacefully until Clarisse’s phone alarm blared. Clarisse walked Maya back to their gate but before she could even leave, a woman came out from the gate and called her out. It was the abusive mother. She was around Clarisse’s age but a bit older. She looks young yet exhausted. There, you can see how different their lives are. Two women with different responsibilities in life. The woman will thank her coldly and goes back inside their apartment with Maya in her hand. Clarisse proceeds to go to work and does the same things she does every day. Except today, she was fond of looking at children. Loving how innocent they are like Maya and probably because she missed the innocence she once had before she rebelled. It reminded her of the days when everything was still peaceful. When she isn’t running away from debts yet. But now, the difficulties are starting to take a toll on her as she receives messages from people she asked money from.

The night she went home, she didn’t encounter a crying kid in front of the apartment. Instead, she hears the little girl laughing as she passed by their gate. There, she was convinced that nothing bad happened like yesterday. Clarisse dozed off to sleep because of exhaustion that night.

The next day, she met Maya in front of her bedspace apartment. She was crying again as she rushed to hug her. Clarisse was taken aback and asks her what happened which Maya will tell her that her mother got mad and hit her again. Then, Maya says she wants to run away and never come back. Clarisse was suddenly reminded of how she wanted to run away before. Maya asks her if she could tag along with her. Clarisse was hesitant at first but when she made up her mind and was about to tell Maya, the child was pulled away.

There, she met the mother of Maya who looked like she was under an influence. Judging her by the way she looks and how red her eyes is, Clarisse was sure she was using an illegal substance. The mother who turns out to use drugs whenever she is stressed threatens Clarisse not to touch her kid and pulled her back inside the apartment. Clarisse wanted to convince the mother that she could help her and tell her that her future is not yet ruined. But she was left astounded as she watches the mother and daughter disappear from her sight. Clarisse still proceeds to work that day even if Maya’s state worries her a lot.

The night she went back to her place, she took a look at the apartment where Maya lives. She wanted check on the little girl but brushed it off and decided to do it tomorrow morning instead. Clarisse sleeps on her bed and dozed off to sleep due to exhaustion once again.

Until during the midnight, sirens were heard and it startled her. She took a peek on her broken window and saw people gathering in front of Maya’s apartment. Her heart sank as she prays that whatever she is thinking is not true. Hands covering her mouth and tears forming at the corner of her eyes, she opened the door and took a step with her bare foot. But she stopped on her tracks when she felt something under her right foot. There, she looked down and saw the cockroach she killed two days ago; on the night she met Maya. Her knees grew weak and she slumped down the floor as she cries. Her phone rings and she answered it as she kept repeating the words, *“Gusto ko nang umuwi.”*

*Note:*

*Maya wanted to be free like a bird but she was killed with no mercy, just like how Clarisse easily killed the cockroach.*

*Clarisse thought life would be easy when she becomes independent. But with everything she witnessed and experienced within the two months, she gets to know how lucky she was that her family wasn’t abusive like Maya’s mother and that she realized she doesn’t want to be like Maya’s mother who believes her future is ruined. So, Clarisse decided to live life again; this time, in the right way.*