





# ANG BATANG MARAMING BAWAL



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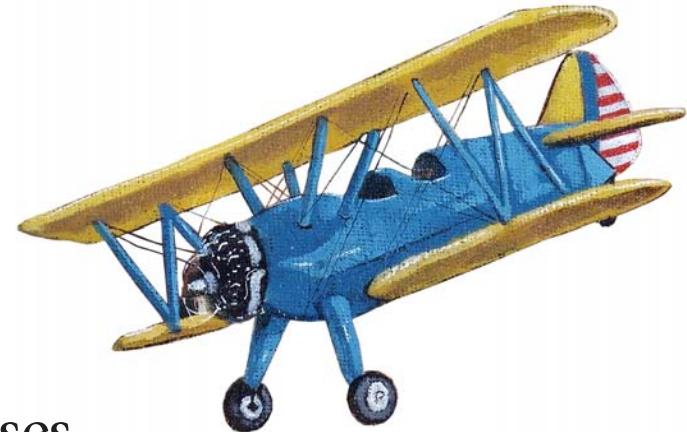
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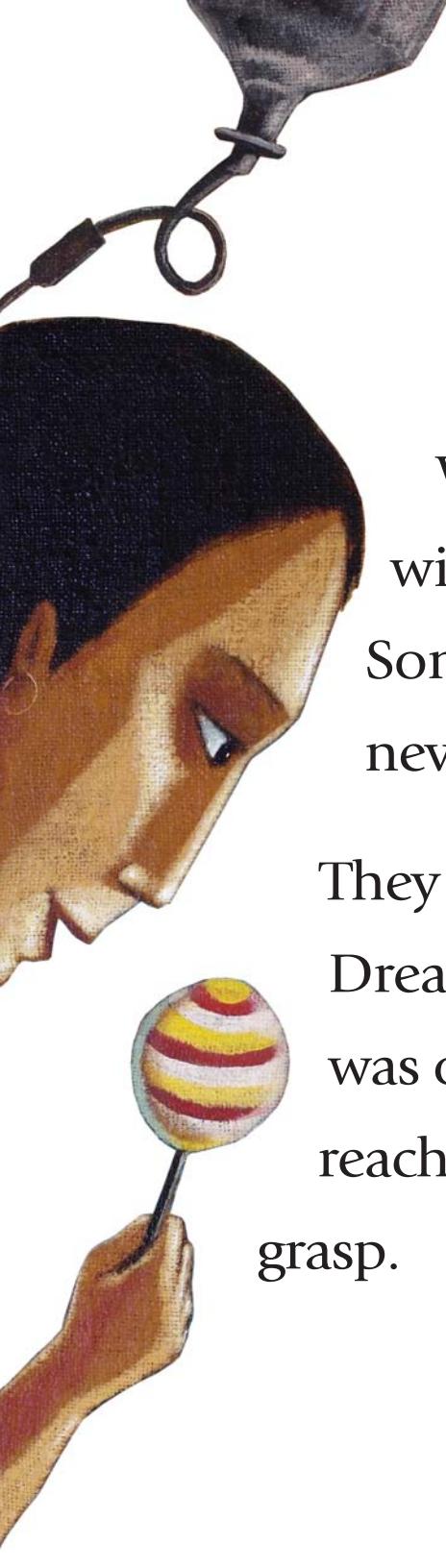
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Other children might dread hospital visits, but I, among them, would find it odd if a month passes without seeing the doctor.





We are the children born  
with certain disabilities.  
Some say that children like us  
never grow old.

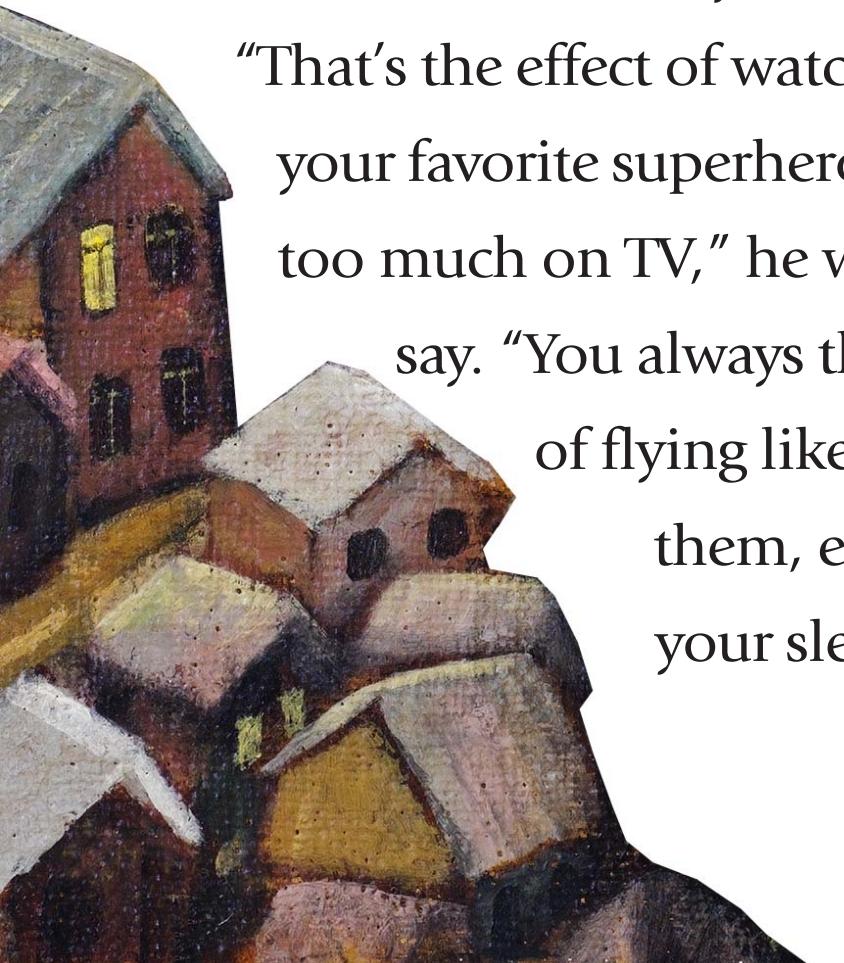
They call me Romeo the Day  
Dreamer. And, as an infant, I  
was observed to point to and  
reach out for things beyond my  
grasp.





From our rooftop, I found it a joy to watch a balloon here or there fly off from the occasional birthday celebrations of our neighbors. I also delighted in spotting birds among the clouds, butterflies hopping from flower to flower, and even rainbows.





In my dreams I am always in flight.

My father is moved to smile each time I tell him my dreams.

"That's the effect of watching your favorite superheroes too much on TV," he would say. "You always think of flying like them, even in your sleep."





But as I would wake up to the real world, an overpowering sadness would come over me, as I would feel so alone – far from other children, far from fun and games.

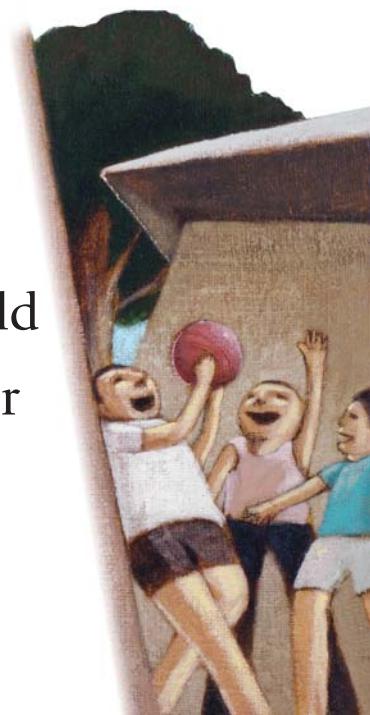
"Never leave the house, Romeo.

Don't run around, or you will trip on rocks.

Don't injure yourself.

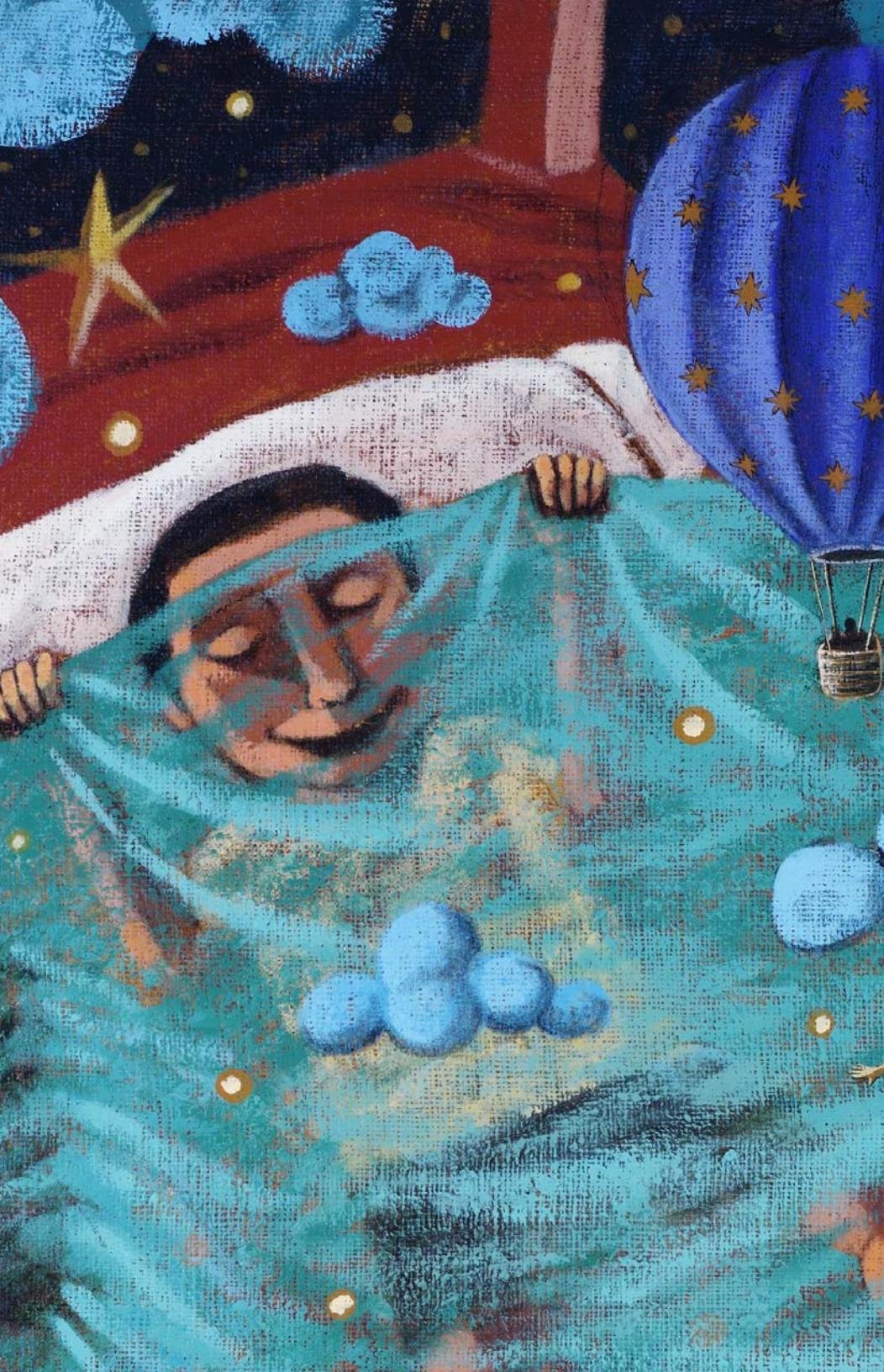
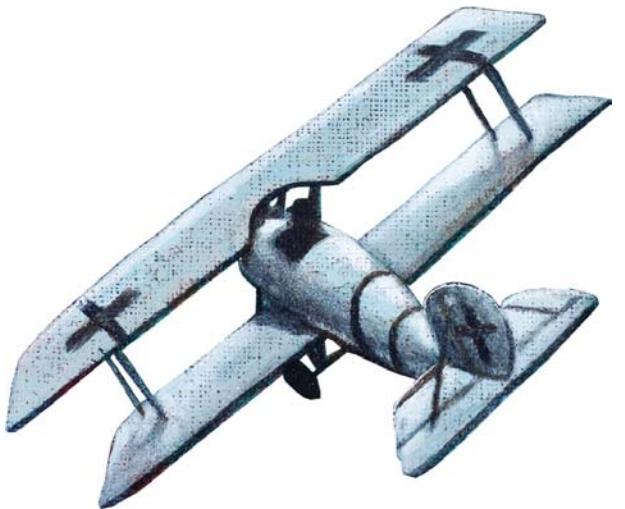
Don't get bruised.

Don't play ball as you could be hurt by your playmates, or get hit with the ball..."





And so, given the many things  
that I am forbidden to do, I would  
prefer to go back to and dwell in  
my dream world. In such a world,  
I am free to do what I wish to,  
things I am unable to do in the real  
world.

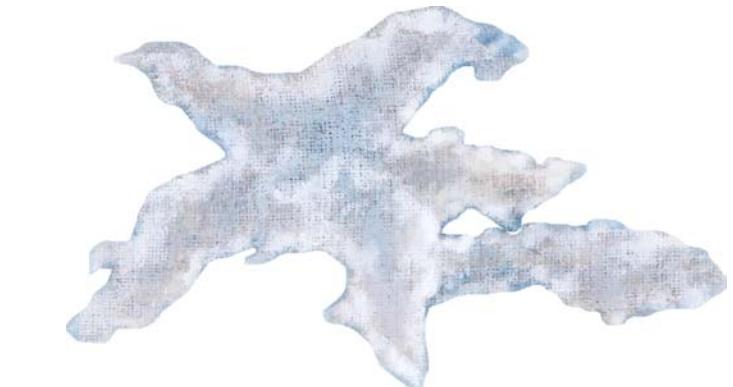




One day, a thought came to me.

Is the world only for  
the strong,  
the talented,  
the quick,  
the brilliant,  
the agile?





I was lucky that Father was there to console me.

"Son, remember that even if you are unable to do some things, this should not stop you from doing what you can. Your mother and I will always be here to provide support."





My teachers in school did find  
and felt delighted that I could  
compose poems.

Where does the wind move  
But in music?

Leaves will fall

But the tree stands marvelous.

"Where did those verses come  
from, Romeo?" my Mother once  
asked?

"I'm only pretending to be  
Balagtas!" I kidded in reply.

I found frequent company in books  
and reading. And I wrote poem after  
poem in my notebooks for school.

I wish to keep company with you  
That I might not have to remain  
alone.

And I wonder, why would the  
maya fly all over  
And yet still find its way back to  
its Mother?





"You are truly a poet, Son!"  
Mother exclaimed when I  
showed her my work.

She enveloped me in a tight  
embrace, and I had to  
wriggle free.

"Mother, don't hug  
me too tightly, or I  
might get bruised!"

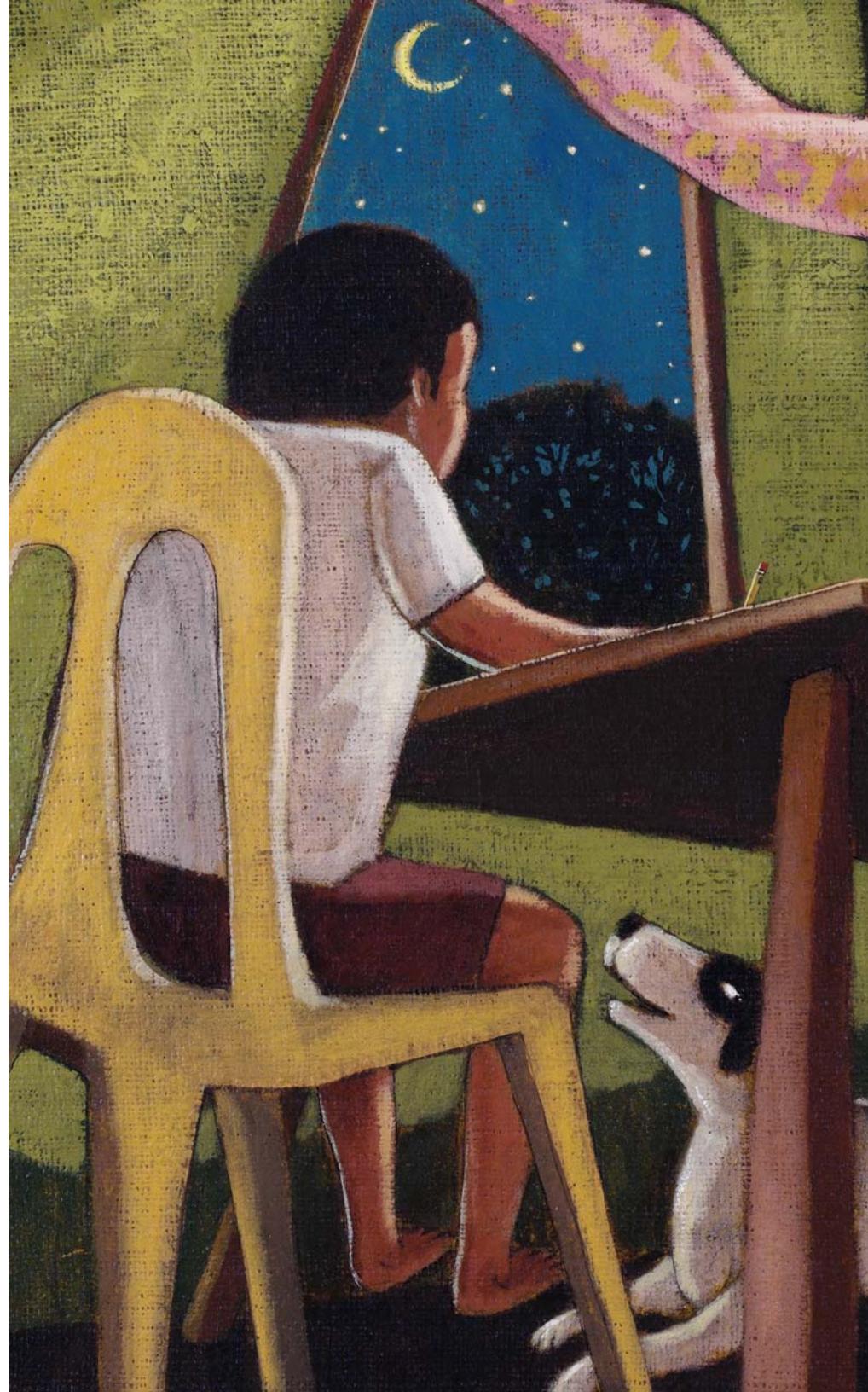


One night I wrote a poem for my parents.

Why You Two are Dear to Me  
By Romeo the Daydreamer

You are sugar to bland coffee  
Salt for my favorite kare-kare

Ice cubes for juice and jelly  
A colorful feast for a bowl  
of rice that's me!





"What would you like for your birthday?" my Father asked.  
"Objects that fly, Father – balloons, clouds, birds, rainbows..."

My father is an able artist. He smiled, then began work on a painting.

For my birthday, he gave me the painting alive with and full of my favorite images: balloons, clouds, birds, and other flying objects.

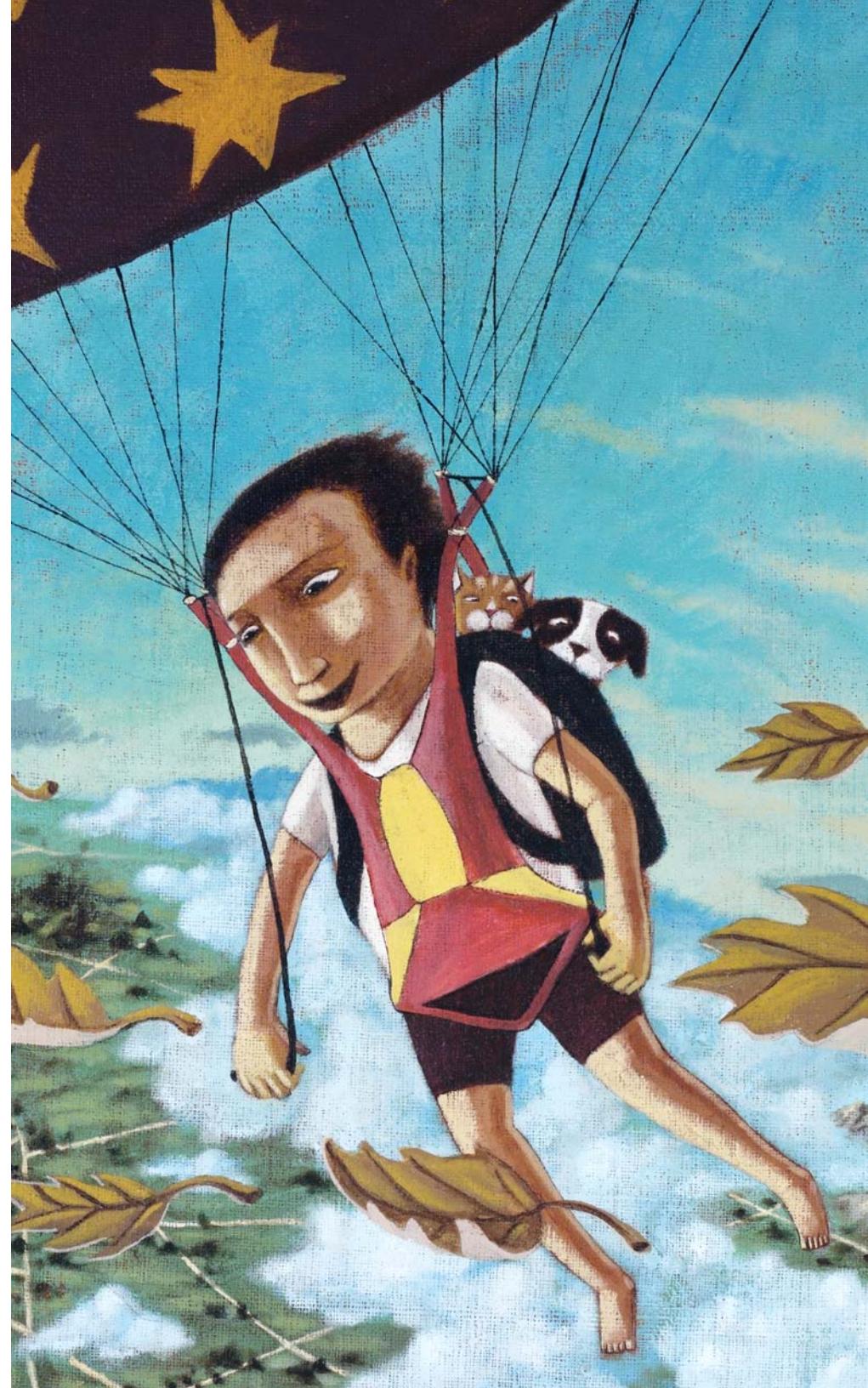




That night, I was so happy that I dreamt that I was riding in a parachute kept aloft by the wind, and unable to land on the ground.

"What if I could explore the whole Philippines in one day?" I wondered to myself.

No playmates to bully me. No one to laugh at me. And best of all, no more things that I am forbidden to do.





Someone must have heard my  
wish to go around the Philippines in  
one day.

I made it to so many places that  
night.

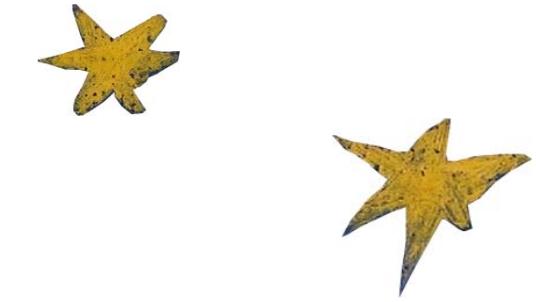
From the skies I saw the Banaue  
Rice Terraces, Mt. Mayon, and also  
the gentle Hundred Islands of  
Pangasinan.





My eyes gladly scoured the ricefields of central Luzon, the historic churches of Ilocos, and the whales in Donsol.





I was awed by the snaking San  
Juanico Bridge that connects  
Samar and Leyte! Mt. Apo was a  
majestic sight, and the Pagsanjan  
Falls were lovely!





I woke up hugging the painting to myself. I was so thirsty that I gulped down a glass of water quickly. It felt as if I had traveled far and wide!

My father said I looked so happy, grinning ear to ear, in my sleep.



"Father, the Philippines is such a beautiful country."

"Really? How can you say that? We have not been around much."

"Oh, but in my dreams, I saw how beautiful our country is."





"Go, get dressed," my father said.  
"we're going somewhere."

In a while, I was to be taken to  
the doctor for my regular check-up.

I couldn't wait to see my doctor  
and my fellow patients. I couldn't  
wait to tell them about what  
happened in my dreams.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is the winning story of CANVAS' second annual Romeo Forbes Children's Storywriting Competition. Inspired by Rodel Tapaya's painting (shown below), Fernando Gonzalez' original piece is a timely tale of innocent hope and imagination.

Its publication would not have been possible without the support of our institutional partners: The Panta Rhea Foundation, Northlight Studios, UST Publishing House, and Artery Manila; and the participation of a number of individuals: Hans Schoepflin, Mike Cheung, Lito Zulueta, Becky Bravo, Oscar Campomanes, Rebecca Añonuevo, Delan Robillos, Daniel Tayona, Ninoy Leyran and Chrys Fernandez. We therefore recognize and sincerely thank them all for their continuing belief and confidence in our vision.

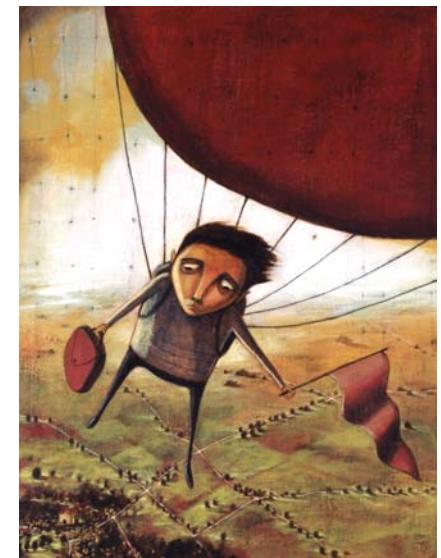
The biggest difficulty we had for this project was the title "Ang Batang Maraming Bawal," for which we could not find any appropriate translation.

Suggested English titles like "The Boy Who Couldn't Do Much," "The RX Kid," "The Boy Who Couldn't," or, what probably is the closest translation, "The Boy Who Wasn't Allowed to Do a Lot of Things" – all couldn't capture the spirit of the Tagalog title.

In the end, we chose the easiest solution, which was to simply refuse to translate the title.

We hope that you will enjoy this latest CANVAS production – again, the result of a collaboration between two young Filipino talents – writer Fernando Gonzalez and visual artist Rodel Tapaya. And as before, it demonstrates how the interaction elevates both of their arts, while making their work even more accessible to and appreciable by more people.

Gigo Alampay  
Executive Director, CANVAS  
Manila, Philippines  
June 2007



## About the Author

FERNANDO ROSAL GONZALEZ wrote "Ang Batang Maraming Bawal" at the hospital while awaiting the birth of his son. A multi-awarded fictionist, novelist, illustrator and musician, Don is presently the Creative Director of a Philippine-based multimedia production house, and the editor-in-chief of a news-magazine catering to the needs of overseas Filipino workers. He is also a member of Kuwentista ng mga Tsikiting (KUTING), the country's premiere writer's group for children.

Don is married to Josephine Añonuevo Gonzalez, with whom he has two children, Tiara Ysabelle and Ivan Zion.

## About the Artist

27-year old Rodel Tapaya-Garcia's unique style and humorous interpretation of life has made him a fast rising favorite of collectors. He is the recipient of numerous Philippine and international awards, including the grand prize of the 2001 Nokia Art Awards.

He graduated from the College of Fine Arts of the University of the Philippines, and also did intensive studies at the Parsons School of Design in New York and the University of Art and Design in Helsinki, Finland.

Rodel currently resides in Quezon City in the Philippines.

