



OSA

Bi-Annual Issue 2 JULY-DECEMBER 2021

# SPECTRUM

The Official Newsletter of the Office of Student Affairs, Central Luzon State University

*Be a spark of  
Hope!*

"BE A SPARK OF  
HOPE THIS SEASON!"



# NEWS

## GUIDANCE SERVICES THROUGHOUT THE PANDEMIC: GLEAMING AND BEAMING

by A.B. Masanda

The Guidance Services Unit (GSU) of the Office of Student Affairs has always been an active agent in delivering services that will uphold the collective mental health of the students. This goal did not waver in any single bit since the advent of the pandemic. As an affirmative response, the following activities were spearheaded, facilitated, and conducted by GSU-OSA:

### **The FriYEY! Wellness Session**

Started since October 2021, it is a weekly Friday activity which aims to mainstream psycho-social support to the students. During its first leg in October, the 4-Friday sessions focused on mental health awareness and its importance and implications especially in the context of the pandemic. Its second leg furthered its initial inputs and gave emphasis on strengthening family ties in November. Both topics aimed to inculcate psychological wellness among students and the rest of the stakeholders of the university.

### **The Radyo CLSU**

Since January 2021, the GSU has already been actively involved with the Radyo CLSU in airing guidance services to the entire CLSU through mass media. Topics being discussed during the Tara Usap Tayo program regularly aired in DWFA 107.3 FM and as a Guest-Counselor in Love and Life with DJ Grei which has been a constant favorite by its avid listeners.

### **Virtual Orientation Program**

As part of the guidance services thrust of the OSA, a virtual orientation program for all students were conducted from August to September. This aimed to equip the college students with necessary knowledge and preparations for their college life in general especially amid the ongoing pandemic.

### **Virtual KumusTAHANAN Brain Break Edition**

This event was conducted per department in each of the colleges of the university to check on the overall mental health of the students. This was conducted after the 1st Term Examination. This is part of the BrainBreak Edition program of OSA which aims to provide a “mental health break” for the students so they can better gear towards college learning especially amid the pandemic and virtual classes.

### **Series of Webinars**

Being a resource center, OSA also provided series of webinars to the stakeholders of CLSU. Specifically, GSU partnered with the Human Resource Management Office (HRMO) of the university and facilitated a work-life balance event for the faculty and staff to better prepare them to joggle in between employment tasks and personal matters especially these times of the pandemic where the line separating work and life has been blurred due to work-from-home arrangements. Similarly, GSU partnered with the Agricultural Science and Technology School (ASTS) top provide a 7-series webinar on gender sensitivity with the interested faculty members and students which run from October to December.

# CLSU LAUNCHES ITS STUDENT INFORMATION DRIVE TASK FORCE (SIDTF)

**by K. K. Dukha**

The Central Luzon State University is committed to provide and develop programs and/or projects that will be beneficial for its students, especially now that the pandemic has greatly affected their academic experience.

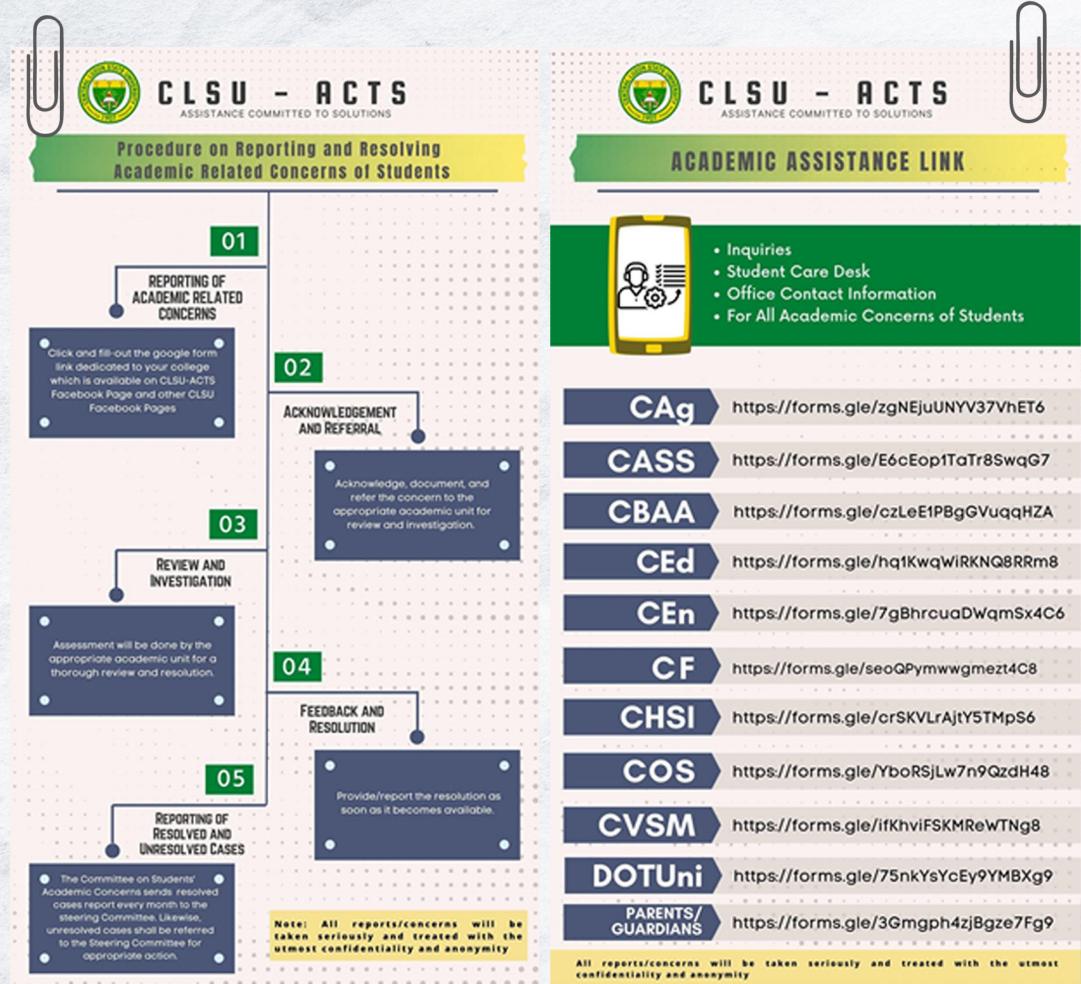
On August 24, 2021, the Student Information Drive Task Force (SIDTF) was launched, virtually. It was organized by the Office of Student Affairs and the University Gender and Development Office headed by Dr. Irene G. Bustos and Prof. Janet O. Saturno. More than 300 participants attended the launching program including Dr. Renato G. Reyes the CLSU Vice President for Academic Affairs, Deans, Department Heads, Guidance Services Unit of OSA, Guidance Coordinators, University Supreme Student Council, SO Presidents, College Councils, CLSU Collegian, Records in Charge, GAD Focal Point System, Accounting Section, CLSU faculty members, staff, and students.

The Deans and Heads of different offices were invited to serve as resource speakers for the launching program. They are as follows: Dr. Anna Maria Lourdes S. Latonio of the CLSU Testing and Evaluation Center; Dr. Cesar Ortinero, Dean of the Office of Admissions; Prof. Janet O. Saturno, Director of UGADO; Mr. Aijhon Santos, USSC Chairperson; Dr. Nuelah SJ Reyes of the University Library; and Mr. John Mark Tangonan, in-charge of Student Services of the Accounting Office. They discussed the services and programs they offer to the students.

After the presentation of the Deans and Heads, the participants were asked to join their respective college's breakout rooms to discuss the CLSU-ACTS (Assistance Committed to Solution) a program under the SIDFT. This program aims to ensure that all students are reached out and empowered. It serves as a platform that will receive, process, document, and address the academic concerns of the students from the different colleges. These concerns and issues will then be properly channeled to the various concerned offices/departments/units of the University for appropriate action.

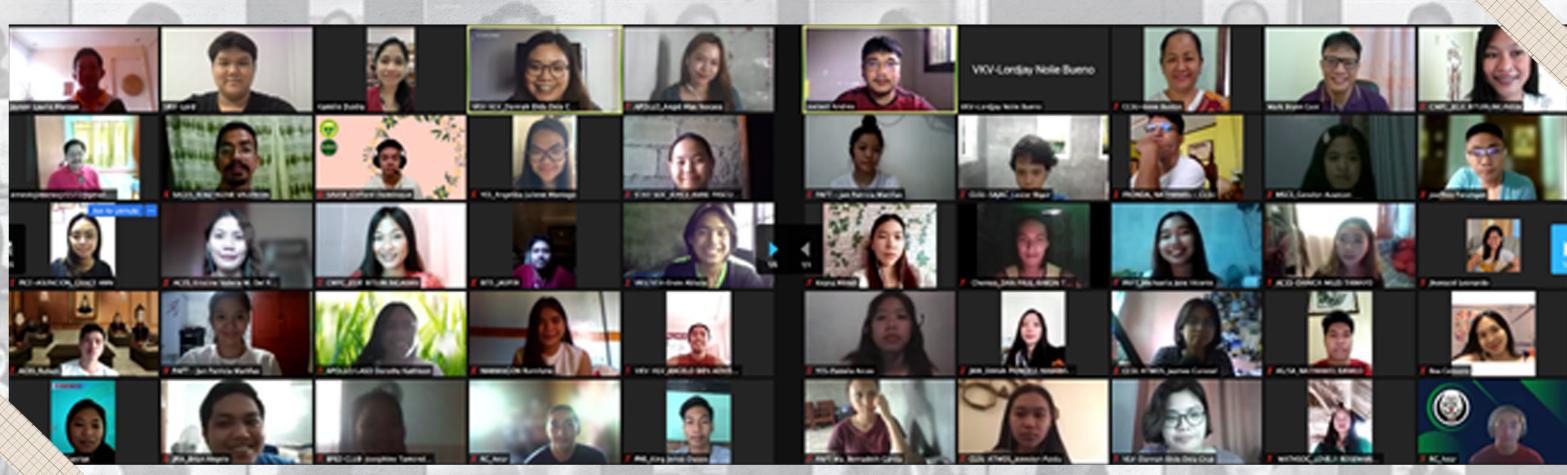
The CLSU-ACTS is composed of the Steering Committee, Technical Committee, Committee on Information and University Promotion, and Committee on Students' Academic Concerns. These groups will be working hand-in-hand with the concerned units/departments of the University to address the difficulties and issues of the students and to continuously provide quality service to them.

Here is the procedure for reporting and resolving academic-related concerns of students:



# SOU EQUIPS STUDENT LEADERS TO BE IN THEIR PRIME

by K. K. Dukha



With the aim to assist the SO Leaders and Members in crafting relevant and excellent activities and projects, the Office of Student Affairs, through its Student Organizations Unit, conducted a two-part comprehensive workshop titled *PRIME (Proposing Relevant, Innovative, Multidisciplinary, and Excellent) SO Activities*.

The first part of the workshop was held last July 12, 2021 via Zoom in which over 100 student leaders from different organizations participated. The topics discussed on the first day were the following: Crafting activities and projects that are in line with CLSU's Vision, Mission, and Philosophy; High-impact activities; Error-proofing the activity permits and reports; and Strong and effective leadership. The Dean of Students Dr. Irene G. Bustos, with the SOU In-charge Dr. Jayson L. Marzan, and the SO Coordinators Prof. Ernesto T. Jimenez, Jr., and Ms. Kamille K. Dukha served as the resource speakers for the workshop.

The second part of the workshop was held on August 4, 2021 via Zoom wherein more than 60 leaders and members from different organizations participated. The points for discussion were writing and/or creating GAD-related SO proposals. Mr. Mark Bryan Gusi from the University Gender and Development Office served as the resource speaker.

# CAREER WORLD: HOW PR<sup>3+2</sup>EPARe-D ARE YOU?

by B. O. Binayug

For the last four years, you have been studying for your degree, with the hope that all of your hard work will eventually pay off. But who could have predicted that 2020 would be the year the world would crush to a complete halt? For this reason, the Office of Student Affairs through its Career Development and Employment Services Unit conducted a series of Career Orientation and Education Webinars for all college students for SY 2021-2022, 1st semester from September 17, 27, 29, Oct. 15, 27 and Nov. 12 via Zoom and live-streamed on the Official OSA Facebook Page. Several students attended as well as some of the Deans, the College Guidance Coordinators, and respective year-level advisers.

The PR<sup>3+2</sup>EPARe Webinars is a series of webinars intended to help college students deal with the most fundamental yet unrelenting issues they face in college in connection to employment. PR<sup>3+2</sup>EPARe is an acronym of the ten webinars designed to meet these goals: PRe-employment Preparation; PReSSure Management; PRactical Financial Literacy Webinar for College Students; Responsive Work Ethics and Workplace Etiquette for College Students; Raising the Bar in Speech Communication; Enriching Careers after College; Proficiency in the English Language; Attitude Revisited; Reassurance, Acceptance, and Positivity: Addressing College Students' Low Self-Esteem; Evaluation for College Freshmen.

Ms. Joyce Catacutan of Jobs180 tackled with second-year students the Pressure Management: Reducing Daily Stress and Concerns in Life. The webinar gave clear examples that may lead a participant to examine personal issues, such as emotions and work styles, that contribute to stress. For the first-year college webinar, our very own vibrant speaker, Asst. Professor Allan Mananggit talked about the Reassure, Acceptability, and Possibility: Addressing Students' Low Self-Esteem.

He empowered the students by assuring them that their concerns are valid, that they are acceptable, that they can be positive, and that they should be freed from the shackles that have been limiting their potentials. Moreover, the third-year students became more conscious of their speaking skills and gained confidence after having acquired speaking techniques in the webinar titled Raising the Bar in Speech Communication by Mr. Proverbs "Kawi" Fernandez, an HSG Development Pty LTD Company based in Australia.

Aside from these, the webinar Attitude Revisited assisted second-year students in increasing their awareness that can either make or break their performance in school. Asst. Prof. Alex G. Ramirez said that "in a competitive workplace, one must see an undergraduate degree as a stepping stone towards more advanced career-oriented education." In addition, the participants learned that students' attitude towards college life is a strong determinant of how well they will do after graduation, towards looking for a job, and when they are already working. In the webinar Enriching After College, planning and preparing for the future, specifically after college, were discussed.

Lastly, the Practical Financial Literacy webinar by Dr. Jayson L. Marzan encouraged third-year students to give importance to saving money at an early age. The said activity taught them about the consequences of misusing money, the dos and don'ts in budgeting, and other life hacks in financial management.

These Career Orientation and Education Webinars were aired on the Official OSA Facebook Page. To date, a total of 2140 participants registered for the webinar series; the webinars have 8,342 views; and reached 16,733 people. All webinars can still be accessed on the CLSU Office of Student Affairs Facebook Page.

# OSA CONDUCTS PEER TRAINING SESSIONS FOR CLSU STUDENTS

*by JK. S. De Garcia*

Amid the pandemic, where many people suffer various hardships and challenges, there are still many students who are willing to help themselves and their fellow students. This can be proven by the sudden influx in the number of new members and aspirants who joined the CLSU Peer facilitators group. The Office of Student Affairs and the CLSU Peers Facilitators' Adviser, Asst. Prof. Mark Allan C. Mananggit organized and spearheaded the Peer Training Series. The activity aimed to equip these aspiring peer facilitators with some necessary life skills that can be used in helping themselves and their fellow students in the university.

The program, divided into a four-part lecture, intended to teach the new members new skills that they could use to help themselves develop as an individual and as peer facilitators. The first lecture was held on October 27, 2021, titled Know thy Self: Importance of Self-awareness in Facilitation, given by Mr. John Kelvin S. De Gracia, RPm. The lecture aimed to teach the importance of self-awareness or knowing yourself and how it can help in their future endeavors as a student and as peer facilitators. The second lecture held on November 10, 2021, titled Magnifying Self-worth to Boost Self-esteem was given by Ms. Ma. Amarlyn P. Santanilla, LPT. This lecture's purpose was to teach the member how to boost their self-confidence and in turn, they could also use what they have learned in this lecture to help boost the confidence of their fellow students. The third discussion was held on November 24, 2021, it is titled Stress Management: Turning Stress into Strength in Helping Other People and was given by Mr. Joshua E. Vergara, RPm. This lecture aimed to teach them how to grow amidst the hardships they experience in life.

**Peer TRAINING SESSIONS**

**Know Thy Self:  
The Importance of Self-Awareness in Facilitation**



MR. JOHN KELVIN S. DE GARCIA, RPm  
Speaker

October 27, 2021  
7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Meeting ID: 868 7091 4121  
Passcode: CLSUPEER21

LIVE

CLSU PEER FACILITATORS

**Magnifying Self-Worth to Boost Self-Esteem**



MS. MA. AMARLYN P. SANTILLANA, LPT  
Speaker

November 10, 2021  
7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Meeting ID: 835 7570 4280  
Passcode: CLSUPEER21

LIVE

CLSU PEER FACILITATORS

**Stress Management:  
Turning Stress into Strength in helping other People**



MR. JOSHUA E. VERGARA, RPm  
Speaker

November 24, 2021  
7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Meeting ID: 853 5449 8819  
Passcode: CLSUPEER21

LIVE

CLSU PEER FACILITATORS

# NEWS

The last lecture was held on December 8, 2021, titled Helping the Helpers to Help, Training on Basic Helping and Counseling Skill, given by Mr. Cristopher M. Pangilinan Jr., RPm, and Mr. Joshua E. Vergara, RPm. This lecture taught the members the know-how and the skills to be effective facilitators. All these lectures were intended to help them grow as an individual and as a young leader.



This section contains two screenshots from a video conference. The top screenshot shows a 4x5 grid of participants, with names listed below each thumbnail. Several thumbnails are highlighted with yellow boxes, including "J. Joshua E. Vergara", "M. Mark Allan Manangot", "M. Mylene Aguirre", "D. Daniela Corpuz", "B. Bonne Domingo", "F. Faith Ann Gonzales", "Aira Monica Lyn Cabiado, BSChem", "J. Julius Bernard Gobango", and "C. Crizzy Del Rosario". The bottom screenshot shows a larger grid of participants, with many more thumbnails highlighted with yellow boxes, including "H. Hermione Alexandra Asistio", "J. Jiggy Young", "M. Mylene Aguirre", "D. Daniela Corpuz", "A. Aira Monica Lyn Cabiado, BSChem", "J. Julius Bernard Gobango", "F. Faith Ann Gonzales", "K. Katherine Bautista", "C. Crizzy Del Rosario", "A. Alyssa Constantino", "J. Joshua Miguel Manzano", "D. Daniela Corpuz", "A. Aira Monica Lyn Cabiado, BSChem", "J. Julius Bernard Gobango", "F. Faith Ann Gonzales", "K. Katherine Bautista", and "C. Crizzy Del Rosario".

# 7 NEWS

## VIRTUAL ORIENTATION AND WELCOME PARTY FOR THE NEW MEMBERS OF THE CLSU PEER FACILITATORS

by JK. S. De Garcia

The Office of the Student Affairs (OSA) along with the leaders of the CLSU Peer Facilitators Group held a welcome party to meet and celebrate the new members of the organization. The virtual meeting was held last October 15, 2021, via Zoom.

This program was intended for the old members and the new members to get acquainted with one another and help them develop a sense of unity and camaraderie. It also aimed to orient the aspiring members on what a peer facilitator is and to talk about their responsibilities. The organizers invited four alumni to guide the new members through their journey by sharing their expertise and experiences. The guests are Ms. Angel Rose L. Taguinod, RPm; Mr. Renz Jason D. Sumalbag, LPT; and Mr. Emmanuel DG. Villa Agustin, NEUST Instructor. The program host is Ms. Hannah Sophia Ellarina, also a CLSU Peer alumnus.

The guest alumni tackled the duties and responsibilities of a peer facilitator and a student leader. They also talked about the skills and knowledge they have picked up along the way.



### OUR AWESOME SPEAKERS:



MS. ANGEL ROSE L. TAGUINOD

- CLSU Peer Facilitator Alumna
- Psychometristian, Central Luzon Drug Rehabilitation Center



MR. RENZ JASON D. SUMALBAG

- CLSU Peer Facilitator Alumnus
- Junior Teacher, MapleBear Eastwood



MR. EMMANUEL DG. VILLA AGUSTIN

- CLSU Peer Facilitator Alumnus
- High School Teacher, Solomon's Excellence Academy
- Instructor, NEUST Sto. Domingo

Hosted by:

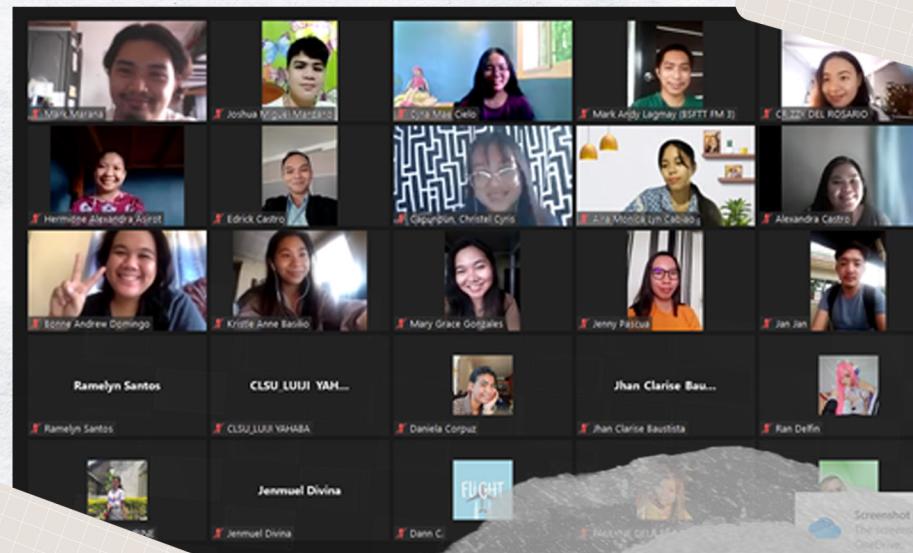


MS. HANNAH SOPHIA ELLARINA  
CLSU Peer Facilitator Alumna



15 OCTOBER 2022  
10 AM - 12 PM

LIVE  
Meeting ID: 812 4886 9916  
Passcode: CLSUPEER21



Overall, the program showed how grateful and welcoming OSA and the Peer Facilitators Group are. They are overwhelmed and thankful that several students signed up and wanted to become a part/member of the organization. It shows that even with all the hardships caused by the pandemic, there are still a lot of students who are willing to help themselves and their fellow students to grow and become better versions of themselves.



To ensure continuity of social skills and psychosocial support of students and to provide continuity of quality communication with students despite the absence of face-to-face mode of instruction virtually, the Office of Students Affairs and the University Gender and Development Office (UGADO) conducted an Online Kumustahan with the GAD Beneficiaries entitled "KUMUS-TAHANAN" last December 10, 2021 (Friday) 9 AM to 12 PM attended by about 100 GAD Beneficiaries. The activity was hosted by Ms. Kamille Dukha, one of the SOU coordinators. Dr. Irene G. Bustos, the Dean of Students, gave the welcome remarks followed by different games with prizes given by generous sponsors.

Truly the beneficiaries had a blast through the games prepared and facilitated by Prof. Ma. Magdalena C. Galang, Prof. Ferlyn Reyes-Colar, and Mr. Jay-Ar Calderon a BSABE student who is also a GAD Beneficiary.

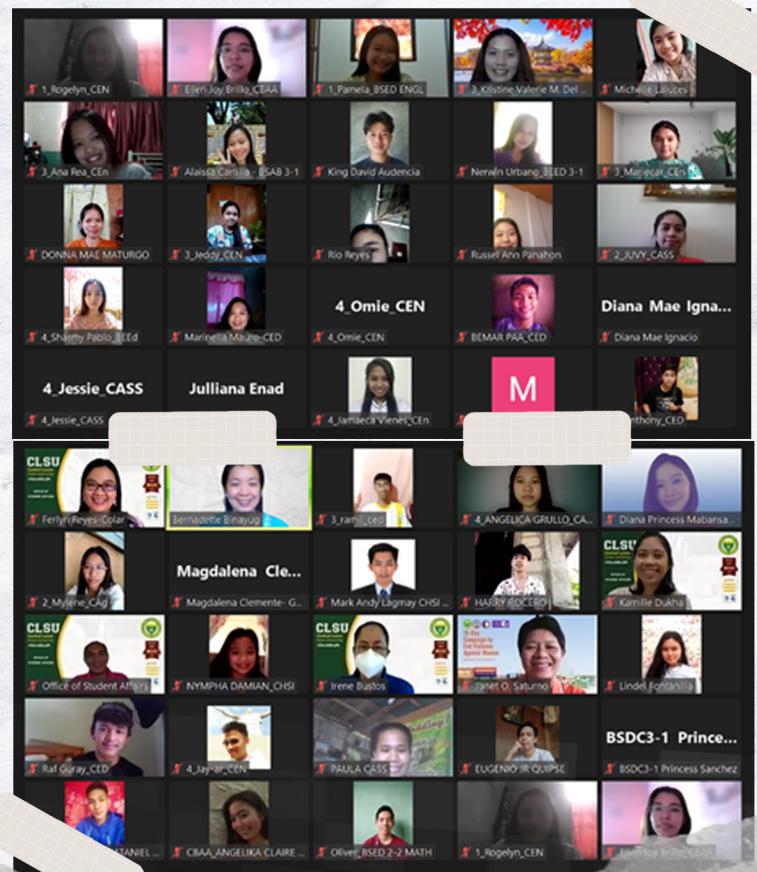
Prof. Janet O. Saturno, Director of UGADO gave her inspirational message by encouraging the beneficiaries to study harder, to continue learning, to maintain their passing grades, and to strive more so that in return they can help others as well. The closing remark was given by the GSU Unit-in-Charge Prof. Alexis G. Ramirez by acknowledging the presence of everyone, the generous sponsors, the creators of GAD poster and program who are GAD beneficiaries as well.

Before the program ends, the GAD Beneficiaries also gave their testimonies of how the scholarship helped them in their education through chats provided by Zoom. Certain Anthony, a first year from College of Education inspired to create "G-A-D" acronym: "G- gamit ang progamang ito, nagkaroon ako ng pag asa sa buhay na lumaban at magsumikap. A- alam naman natin na hindi madali ang mag aral sa gitna ng pandemya. D- dagdag pa ang sandamakmak na gastusin araw araw. Kaya naman ako ay lubos na nagpapasalamat sa GAD, marami itong nagawa sa aking buhay sa pag aaral at sa pamilya, Sobrang laki nito at naibsan ng konti ang aking pag iisip. Salamat po, keep safe and God bless all. From Jessie of CASS "Ang GAD scholarships ay nakatulong po sakin upang makapag-focus na lamang sa studies ko. Bago po ako maging scholar ay nagtatrabaho po ako sa isang BPO

## KumusTAHANAN with GAD Beneficiaries by R.V. Pararuan & B.O. Binayug

company to support my study. Dahil po sa GAD nag-stop na po ako magwork and now ay fulltime student napo ako." From Mark Andy Lagmay CHSI BSFTT "Nakatulong po ang CLSU GAD sa akin at sa aking pamilya para matupad ko ang aking mga pangarap. Isa po akong Fashion and textile student at nakabili na po ako ng sewing machine na ngayon ay nagagamit ko pong pang-arál at pang business. Sa pamamahitan po ng pananahi ay nakakabenta na po ako. Salamat po talaga!"

More others have taken time to write their gratitude to GAD scholarship. It was truly inspiring and moving to know how grateful these beneficiaries are to GAD, on how it helps them in their studies, their families, their essentials in daily living, and to never stop dreaming by continuing on their studies.



# CLSU-OSA LAUNCHES *KUMUSTA KA?*

Another inspiring music video entitled “Kumusta Ka?” was launched by the Office of Student Affairs via Radyo CLSU last December 3, 2021 through the program of Ms. Karryl Abon-Amis, Tatak CLSU.

The music video was written to inspire, give hope, and send love to everyone especially the students and community of the Central Luzon State University. Some student leaders, staff, faculty, and Deans from different Colleges spent time to perform unreservedly to make the everyone feel that they are not alone in this battle of mental stress and anxiety caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Also, The Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Renato G. Reyes, and the University President, Dr. Edgar A. Orden, delivered messages of inspiration to assure everyone in CLSU, especially the students to stand firm. As Dr. Orden says, “Kasama ninyo kami. Walang iwanan at walang maiiwan.”

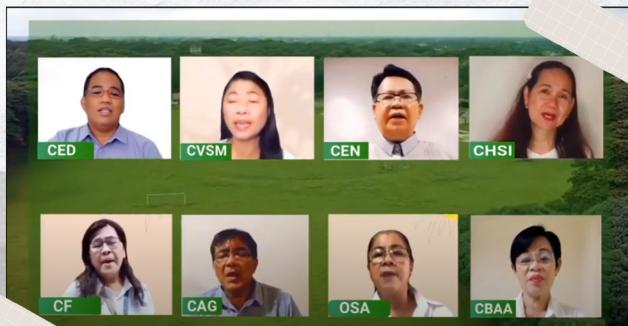
The song Kumusta ka? was written by the talented CLSU students namely Justin Ladia, Arvin Marcelo, and Roman Rafael Manucdoc. It was arranged by Alex Ibarra and Roman Rafael Manucdoc. The music video was edited by Jellien Marie Santos, Desiree Macapagal, Karen Angelyn Gumangan, Coki Gerrison Lacambra, Hannah Belle Soliven, and Jason Muan. It was directed by Asst. Prof. Christine L. Saturno.

Kumusta ka? is now uploaded in different CLSU Facebook Pages such as OSA, USSC, and Collegian as well as in OSA YouTube Channel.

Here are the links for the music video:

Here are the links for the music video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=piLyMiVW7S8>

<https://www.facebook.com/officeofstudentaffairsCLSU/videos/282391403902238>



# ORIENTATION WEBINAR ON NATIONAL ISSUES AND CONCERNNS

The National Intelligence Coordinating Agency Region III is stepping up efforts to end online and campus-based recruitment of the New People's Army (NPA).

With this, NICA III conducted an orientation webinar on National Issues and Concerns in collaboration with the Central Luzon State University through the Office of Students Affairs via zoom meeting and streamed on Facebook Live on November 29, 2021. The said webinar was attended by the NSTP students of CLSU, University Supreme Student Council Members, and the CLSU Collegian.

NICA III Regional Director, Ma. Luisa F. De Guzman, in her message, said that insurgency will be completely eradicated if the communist terrorist group will not be able to recruit new members.

NICA also believes that insurgents resorted to other tactics as the health crisis hindered their regular recruitment efforts, organizing and mobilizing activities, as well as raising funds for logistics.

A former rebel, Ka Mae, also shared some of her experiences to lend substance to the presentation the team made.

NICA III and the Office of Student Affairs emphasized that the said webinar does not intend to condemn, suppress, or even red tag the (student) activists but to disseminate information and give light to national issues, specifically the insurgencies of some groups of people and/or organizations. Moreover, NICA III Regional Director, Ma. Luisa F. De Guzman reiterates that their objective is not to silence and red tag anyone but to end local communist armed conflict.

In relation, the Dean of Students, Dr. Irene G. Bustos, assured the CLSU students, especially the members of the University Supreme Student Council and CLSU Collegian, that the CLSU administration does not tolerate red-tagging. Also, she mentioned that the University does not encourage attitudes and behaviors that are against the ideals of the university, of the nation, and of human nature in general. As long as the students do not go beyond the bounds of humanness, Dr. Bustos also said that OSA and CLSU in general will protect students relative to the issue.

# FEATURE FEATURE

## GUIDANCE SERVICES UNIT GEARED TWICE STRONGER

by A.B. Masanda



**Assoc. Prof. Rochelle Ann V. Pararuan**



**Asst. Prof. Argel B. Masanda**

Came the 2nd half of November 2021, the Guidance Services Unit of OSA welcomed back its two faculty members who were on study leave for their doctorates. Assoc. Prof. R.A.V. Pararuan is pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology major in Clinical Psychology in Far Eastern University, Manila City. She is currently wrapping up her dissertation which focuses on creating a Mental Health program for tertiary level students who are experiencing psychological crisis. This undertaking is hoped to be a responsive and proactive action towards the total mental health needs of college students across the entire Region III: Central Luzon.

Further, Asst. Prof. A.B. Masanda has completed his Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology major in Forensic Psychology from Far Eastern University, Manila City, making him the first-ever professional in the entire country to have received such a degree specialization. His dissertation was about the development and validation of a Positive Psychology Intervention program for drug reformists – an answer to the national call for treatment and rehabilitation of those persons who use drugs.

Together, the GSU-OSA is now more equipped with two additional guidance counselors, psychometricians, and faculty members to serve the guidance-related and academic needs of the students of our university.

# Near-Death Experience: A STORY OF TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS

by Ferlyn F. Reyes-Colar, LPT, RGC

Oxygen level 47 - "Lord, ito na po ba ang katapusan ko? Tutubuhan na ba ako kagaya ni Daddy Burcio? Abo na po ba akong makakauwi sa pamilya ko? Ayoko pa pong mamatay... Maawa po kayo sa mag-ama ko... maliit pa po si Ellyn, Lord... maawa po Kayo sa kanya... Please po... Kahit para kay Ellyn ko... Buhayin Niyo pa po ako, Lord..."

Marami sa atin ang nakaranas ng iba't ibang mga pagsubok nitong pandemya. Isa na dito ang magkasakit ka ng COVID-19 at pneumonia. Ikaw, o ang magkasakit ang isa sa miyembro at mahawaan ang buo mong pamilya, ay malaking hamon na. Ngunit dito masusukat ang samahan, suporta, at pagmamahalan ng buong mag-anak.

Ang asawa ko lang na si Joel ang lumalabas ng aming tahanan. Work-from-home ako, kasama ang aming anak. Nagsimula ang lahat sa mabilisang yakap at halik nang minsang dumating si Joel mula sa palengke. Dalawang araw matapos noon, nilagnat ako. Nasundan ng trangkaso at matinding pag-ubo. Tahimik akong nagdasal para sa kaligtasan ng aming munting pamilya.

Ihiniwalay ko agad ang aking sarili simula pa lamang ng ako'y trangan kasuhan. Inagapan ng mga gamot para hindi lumala. Nag-aalala na ako noon dahil kakaibang ubo na ang aking nararanasan. Masakit sa dibdib at nahihirapan na akong huminga.



Nadagdagan pa ng takot nang mawalan na ako ng pang-amoy at panlasa. Nakiusap ako sa Diyos na huwag mahawahan ang aking mag-ama.

Kinailangan na akong dalhin sa ospital dahil nahihirapan na akong huminga. Mula sa ospital ng San Jose City (OLSJC), inayuhan akong magpa-antigen at magpa-X-ray. Habang hinihintay ang resulta, kinabitan na ako ng nasal canulla oxygen dahil mababa na ang oxygen level ko. Alam ko na sa aking sarili na contaminated na ako ng virus. Hanggang sa nakompirma, positibo ang antigen ko. Ngunit imbes na kainin ako ng pag-aalala, inisip ko ang paraan kung paano ko tutulungan ang aking sarili para mabilis na gumaling. Nagtanong ako sa mga kaibigan ng mga dapat at hindi dapat gawin. Alam ko kasing makatatulong ang mga payo ng mga nakaranas na at napagtugumpayan ang COVID-19.

*"Ako po si Covid-19 Patient No. 1733 ng San Jose City, and this is my story..."*

Pansamantalang pinauwi ako kasama ng mga gamot. May maliit na oxygen tank na nahiram namin at iyon ang tumulong sa akin para makahinga nang maayos. Nakahiwalay ako ng kwarto malayo sa mag-ama ko. Mag-isa... habang nahirapang huminga... Walang ganang kumain, mahina ang katawan, maraming negative thoughts ang naglalaro sa isip ko pero pinaglalabanan ko. Sigurado kasi akong kung kontrolado natin ang ating iiispin, mas mapapadali at mas mapapagaan ang sitwasyon kahit gaano ito kabigat.

Napakahaba ng gabing iyon habang inihahanda ko ang aking sarili sa mga susunod pang pagdadaanan ko. Isa lang ang laman ng aking mga dasal. Ingatan ang aking mag-ama at huwag silang magkasakit. Hanggang sa naubos ang laman ng aking oxygen tank nang madaling araw. Humihinga ako ngunit parang wala akong hangin na nalalanghap. Nakaramdam ako ng takot. Naghanap si Joel ng makukuhanan sa mga ospital sa bayan ng San Jose hanggang sa makahiram kami sa CLSU Infirmary. Sobra ang pasasalamat namin lalo kay Kuya Rizaldy Pangilinan dahil sila din ang naasahan namin at muling nahiraman ng oxygen na aking magagamit para makahinga nang maayos dahil sa di inaakalang nakabilang aking kapatid ng oxygen tank na wala palang laman. Sa oras ng kagipitan at mga alanganan sitwasyon, may mga taong magmamalasakit para sa iyong buhay.

Lahat na halos ng simtomas ng COVID-19 ay mayroon ako ngunit kinailangan pa rin isagawa ang RT-PCR test para makompirma. Sa tuwing susunduin ako at ihahatid ng ambulansya, nakikita ko ang aking anak na bitbit ng nag-aalaga sa kanya mula sa aming bintana. Babatiin niya akong nakangiti at sabik kapag ako ay darating at maiiyak na magpapaalam kung ako ay aalis. Nakakadurog lang ng puso sapagkat hindi ko siya maaaring lapitan at hagkan. Hindi pa niya mauunawaan kahit ako ay pansamantalang magpaalam kaya't sinabi ko sa aking sarili na kailangan kong magpakatatag at gumaling para sa kanya.

Mula sa 89 oxygen level ay bumaba pa ng 85. Bitbit ng aking asawa ang malaking tangke ng oxygen kung ako ay pupunta sa banyo. Hindi ko na kinakayang huminga nang maayos kung wala ang tulong ng oxygen. Kaya't sa tulong ng ilang CLSU Infirmary nurses, IATF, sa pangunguna din ni Sir Nathaniel Vergara, San Jose City, at Barangay Sto. Tomas Health Workers, nai-refer at naidala ako sa PJG hospital sa Cabanatuan City upang matugunan ang mga pangangailangan kong medikal. Nakasunod si Joel habang ako ay nasa loob ng ambulansya, patuloy akong nagdasal... nakiusap na sa aking paglayo sa aming tahanan, alagaan at proteksyunan NIYA ang aming anak at bigyan ng sapat na lakas at tatag ng loob ang aking asawa.

Pagdating sa ospital, sumailalim ako sa Triage. Agad akong kinabitan ng dextrose. Muli akong nag-RT-PCR test at X-ray. Bumaba pa sa 80 ang aking oxygen level. Habang pinapipirma ang aking asawa ng mga waiver and consent sa mga posibleng mangyayari at gagawin sa akin kapag tuluyang lumala ang aking sitwasyon. Paglagay ng urinary catheter, nasogastric tube, at intubation. Kasabay ng panghihina ng katawan, panghihinaan ka din ng mental na aspekto kapag ikaw na mismo ang makakarinig ng mga ito. Ipinaliwanag din ng nurse na nag-asikaso sa amin na wala ding obligasyon ang ospital kung ako ay mamatay habang naka-confine. Alam ko, kagaya kong may kaba at takot, iyon din ang nararamdam ni Joel. Hanggang sa napilitan na siyang pumirma dahil kailangan na akong iakyat sa loob ng ospital. Bawal ang bantay sa ospital. Kakailanganin kong alagaan ang sarili ko. Ako ang mag-aasikaso sa lahat ng dapat kong gawin hanggang sa ako ay gumaling. Pigil ang mga luha naming mag-asawa. Halos ayaw niyang humiwalay sa stretcher kung saan ako nakahiga. Tinitigan niya ako habang hawak ang aking mga kamay... "Beh, kaya mo ba?"



Iyon din ang tanong ko sa aking sarili pero humugot na lamang ako ng lakas ng loob sa Diyos na sumagot. “Oo Dad. Huwag kang mag-alala...Kaya ko. Kakayanin ko.” Kahit hindi ako sigurado sa mga pagdadaanan ko. Alam kong magiging mahirap at malungkot pero kailangan kong magtiis at manalig sa paraan at proseso ng pagpapagaling sa aking sakit. Sa ganitong sitwasyon, mas mararamdam mo pala ang kahalagahan ng isang asawa. Mabigat sa dibdib na maghihiwalay kayo nang walang kasiguraduhan kung mayayakap at makikita niyo pa ang isa’t-isa. Gayumpaman, kailangan mong maging matatag at matapang para hugutan ka din niya ng tatag at tapang para sabay kayong umasa na matatapos din ang lahat at patuloy kayong magsasama.

Dinala ako sa 6th floor ng ospital. Habang papaakyat, kinausap ko ang Diyos. Sabi ko, “Lord, kayo na po ang bahala. Pagalingin niyo po sana ako kaagad. Gamitin ninyong instrumento ang mga doktor at ang mga gamot. Samahan ninyo po ako, Lord. Ang totoo, natatakot po ako...” Pigil ang mga luha ko. Hindi ako pwedeng umiyak dahil mas bababa ang oxygen level ko. Pagdating ko sa loob ng kwarto, may nadatnan akong apat pang pasyente. Kapareho kong mga naka-oxygen. At siguro, kapareho kong positibo sa COVID-19. Mula sa nasal canulla ay pinalitan ng oxygen mask ang ipinagamit sa akin. May dextrose na nakalagay at oxygen monitoring device din na nakabantay. May schedule lang ang mga nurses sa pagpasok sa kwarto para magbigay ng mga gamot at maglinis sa kwarto. May intercom for emergency purposes.

Tinatanggal ko ang aking oxygen mask, bitbit ko ang aking dextrose, tissue, at sabon papuntang CR. Pagbalik ko sa aking kama, hingal na hingal na ako, nasa 75 na ang oxygen level ko at dali-dali ko ng ikakabit ang oxygen mask. Para akong mawawalan ng hininga at dali-daling lalanghap ng hangin mula sa oxygen. At sa tuwing langhap ako ng hangin, naiisa-isa ko sa aking isip ang mga mahal ko sa buhay. Ganoon ang routine ko sa tuwing pupunta sa banyo. Kapag hirap na hirap na ako sa paghinga pabalik ng kama, si

Joel, si Ellyn, ang Papa ko at mga kapatid ko ang naiisip ko. Kapag pala nasa alanganan sitwasyon ang buhay mo, malayo sila sa’yo at nag-iisa ka lang, mas mapahahalagahan mo sila at maibubulong mo na lamang sa iyong sarili na mahal na mahal mo sila at ipapakiusap mo sa Diyos na muli pa silang makita.

Nakita ako ng isang nurse na kapos sa hininga at isinusot ang oxygen mask. Pinagbawalan nya akong pumunta sa CR nang malaman niyang doon ako nanggaling. Marami na daw kasi ang nabuwat at kinapos ng hininga kapag tinatanggal ang oxygen para lang mag-CR. Pinayuhan akong mag-diaper para hindi na ako aalis sa aking kama at huwag tatanggalin ang oxygen mask. Kahit hindi ako komportable, nagsuot ako ng diaper. Ako din ang nagtatanggal at naglilinis sa aking sarili sapagkat walang ibang maaaring asahan. Ang mga nurses-on-duty ay limitado lamang at nakakahiya din naman kung magpapalinis pa ako sa kanila. Sa sobrang hirap, naiiyak ako, madalas kasabay ng matinding pagkahingal. At mas mahirap pa minsan na kailangan kong pigilang maging emosyonal at iwasang maiyak kahit alam kong makaluluwag sana sa aking dibdib dahil ang magiging kapalit noon ay pagbaba ng oxygen level ko. Kinailangan kong isakripisyo ang bigat ng aking puso para sa ikaluluwag naman ng aking paghinga.

Mahirap talaga ang walang katuwang sa buhay higit lalo sa sitwasyon na dapat sana ay may kasama ka. Pero nasa sitwasyon ako na kailangan kong pagtiisan ang lahat. Sitwasyon na kailangan kong lumaban para muling makauwi sa aking pamilya. Kailangan kong lumakas. Kailangan kong gumaling. Kaya kahit hinihingal ako sa bawat pagkilos ko para maasikaso ang aking sarili, kinaya ko. Palagi kong pakiusap, “Lord, tulungan Ninyo po akong makahinga nang maayos at bigyan Ninyo lang po ako ng lakas para magpatuloy at para matulungan ko ang aking sarili.”

May rasyong pagkain at tubig, tatlong beses sa isang araw, pero mas madalas na hindi ako makakain dahil sa halo-halong emosyon at kakaibang panlasa sa mga pagkain. Gayumpaman, pinilit kong kainin ang mga prutas at pagkain kahit paunti-unti. Araw-araw



ay pumupunta sa ospital ang aking asawa para magbigay ng mga pagkaing madali kong kainin. Salamat sa bagong teknolohiya dahil nakakapag-video call kami, nagkikita, at nagkakausap kahit hindi magkasama. May mga pagkakataon din na sa kanyang pag-uwi, nakakausap ko din ang aming anak. Ngunit iba pa rin talaga kung kasama mo ang iyong pamilya. Iba ang dulot na kaligayahan kapag sila ay iyong kapiling, nakikita, nayayakap, at nakakasama.

Mas nahirapan pa ako sa mga sumunod na araw. Kasabay ng patuloy na pagbaba ng aking oxygen level ang hirap ko ding pagkilos at pag-aasikaso sa aking sarili. Bawat galaw ay may katumbas na pagod at hingal, kasunod ang mas mababa pang oxygen level mula sa mga datos ng monitor na nakatutok sa akin. Nadagdagan pa ang bigat ng kalooban ko nang kung ilang beses din akong nakasaksi at nagkaroon ng katabi na kung hindi nahirapang huminga, naghingalo, hindi na nagising, namatay, umiyak at sumigaw dahil siguro sa hirap, sa lungkot at sa iba't iba pang dahilan. Gusto ko sana silang tulungan, pakalmahan at bigyan ng pag-asa, pero paano? Ako rin ay nangangailangan ng tulong. Wala akong kakayahan dahil kahit ang magsalita ay hindi ko magawa dahil sa aking ubo. Gustong-gusto ko silang kausapin kagaya ng dati o mga nakagawian kong makatulong, makapagpasaya, makapagpalakas ng loob, at magabayan para makapagpatuloy na may positibong pananaw sa buhay. Nakalulungkot isipin na wala akong nagawa kundi ang isama sila sa aking panalangin na magkaroon pa ng lakas ng loob at maisip na habang may hinining, may pag-asa. Tumulo na lamang ang aking mga luha. Lilimitahan ka talaga ng iyong sitwasyon kahit alam mong may kakayahan kang tumulong.

Maasikaso ang mga nars at doktor.

Naibibigay ang sapat na mga gamot. May kung ilang beses din akong nae-X-ray para makita ang aking baga dahil kompirmado, ako ay may Severe Pneumonia. Sabi ng doctor, kakailanganin pa talag ang manatili ako sa ospital.

Mababa pa rin ang oxygen level ko kaya nilakasan pa

nang bahaya ang oxygen machine para makalinya ako nang maayos. Ilang araw na ang nakalipas, pero walang nagbabago. Nahihiapan pa rin akong huminga at hindi ko na kinakaya kapag walang tulong ng oxygen. Nakatitig lang ako sa monitor screen habang inaalala ang aking mga kaibigan at ang aking pamilya... Dalawang kaibigan din ang bigla kong naisip: si Elk Rizz at si Jackilou. Hindi ko alam kung bakit ko sila biglang naalala pero siguro dahil isa sila sa ilan na itinuring kong kapatid na dapat kong kausapin at kumustahan. Pero bakit? Mamamatay na ba ako? Taimtim akong nagdasal na sana ay malagpasan ko na ang lahat ng hirap at lungkot at mapagtugumpayan ko rin ang aking kalagayan.

Nakaramdam ako ng pagsikip ng dibdib. Humihinga ako ngunit parang wala akong nalalanghap na hangin. Mula 70...65...60...natakot ako kasabay ng paghihirap kong makahinga. Pinilit kong bumangon para iadjust ko nang personal ang supplemental oxygen ko... sagad na... pinakamataas na ngunit wala akong malanghap na hangin... 55...50... mamamatay na ba talaga ako? Sumigaw na ako at nagtawag ng nars. Nanginginig na akong inabot ang intercom, umuubo-ubo at pautal na nasabing hindi ako makahinga. Ikinalma ko ang aking sarili... Nagdilim na ang paningin ko pero pinipilit kong makakita ng liwanag. Muli, taimtim akong nagdasal... Umiiyak na ako... Oxygen level 47—“Lord, ito na po ba ang katapusan ko? Tutubuhan na ba ako kagaya ni Daddy Burcio? Abo na po ba akong makakauwi sa pamilya ko? Ayoko pa pong mamatay... Maawa po kayo sa mag-ama ko... maliit pa po si Ellyn, Lord... maawa po Kayo sa kanya... Please po... Kahit para kay Ellyn ko... Buhayin Ninyo pa po ako, Lord...”

Dumating ang mga nars, dala ang isang oxygen machine at isa pang monitor device. Pinayuhan akong kumalma. Sinabihan akong kapag tuluyang hindi ako makahinga nang maayos ay tutubuhan na ako. Pigil ang luha ko... patuloy na nagdarasal... “Lord, kailangan ko na po bang magpaalam sa pamilya ko? Kasi kung end of mission na po ako, hayaan niyo naman pong makausap ko pa sila. Makahingi ako ng tawad sa kung anumang nagawa kong masama at magpasalamat sa lahat ng mga nagawa nila para sa akin... Yung mag-ama ko Lord, paano na sila? Ibibilin ko na ba sila kay Papa?” 60....70....75....80. Muli akong nakahinga nang maluwag... Ngunit hindi maalis sa isip ko na baka tinugunan ng Panginoon ang dasal ko para makausap ang aking pamilya at para nga makapagpaalam at maghabilin na sa kanila. Hindi na ako nagdalawang isip. Kinontak ko sila sa pamamagitan ng group video call. Nang sagutin nila at nakita ako, ramdam ko ang kaba naming lahat



dahil alam ko na mabigat din para sa kanila na makita ako at ang kalagayan ko. Akala nila, naka-intubate na ako pero tubo mula sa oxygen machine ang nakalagay sa ilong ko. Bumuwelo ako ng tapang para maghabilin at magpaalam pero wala akong nasambit...Hindi ko kaya...Sa aking isip, kausap ko ang Diyos...“Lord, ayokong magpaalam. Ayoko pa pong mamatay. Patawarin Niyo po ako pero hindi ko po kayang gamitin ang ibinigay niyong hininga para magpaalam at maghuling habilin sa kanila. Gusto ko pa silang makita at mayakap, Lord.” Pigil ang pagluha ko... mabigat sa dibdib...Hindi pa ako handang magpaalam at ayoko pa talagang mamatay.

Malakas ang pressure ng oxygen machine. Dumudugo na ang ilong ko sa hapdi. Paminsan-minsan ay tinatanggal ko dahil hindi ko na matiis ang sakit na umaabot na hanggang ulo ngunit ang kapalit ng kaginhawahan sa ilong ay ang pagbaba naman ng oxygen level ko. Sariling sikap pa rin sa lahat. Kailangan kong tulungan ang sarili ko sa lahat ng aking gagawin kahit nakakapagod...kahit mahirap...Mas natutuhan kong kontrolin ang lahat ng hirap sa pamamagitan ng pag-iisip na kaya ko, kakayanin ko, makakaya ko. Humuhugot ako ng lakas ng loob sa aking pamilya kahit na madalas ay nalulungkot ako dahil gusto ko na silang makasama.

Napadalas ang tawag ko sa aking pamilya bagamat hindi kami nakokompleto sa group video call na aking ginawa. Mas madalas kong kausap ang aking asawa at anak, ang aking Papa, at paminsan-minsan ay ang aking mga kapatid at mga pamangkin. May ilang mga kaibigan na nakaalam ng aking kalagayan. Ang ilan sa kanila ay naging dahilan para muli akong sumaya, mabuhayan ng loob, at tumawa kahit hirap sa paghinga. Salamat kila Dikyo, Isteh, Isang, Timay, Io, at Jun. Walang bakas ng lungkot sa kanila nang kami ay magkaroon ng group video call ngunit nag-uumpaw na kaligayahan at pag-asa ang naibigay nila. Bumuhos pa ang mga dasal mula sa mga nakaalam—pamilya, kaibigan, at mga estudyante. May nagpadala ng tulong pinasyal, pagkain, at mga prutas. Sa mga alanganan sitwasyon, makikilala mo talaga ang mga taong may malasakit at sa ganitong sitwasyon din maiisa-isa mo ang mga taong walang pakialam kahit alam na alam nila ang iyong karamdamian at iyong kinalalagyan. Pero para sa akin, hindi na mahalaga pa ang mga taong walang puso para makisimpatya at umunawa. Mas mahalaga ang mga taong nakikiisa sa panalangin gumaling ka at nakatataba ng puso ang maramdamang mayroong nagpapahalaga sa’yo at natatakot ding mawala ka sa buhay nila.



Lumipas ang isang linggo ng puro hirap at pagtitiis. Isang linggong halos isa o dalawang oras lang ang tulog, hindi makakain, walang ligo, hirap sa paghinga, umuubo, nalulungkot, naiiyak, at nakikiusap na gumaling na para makauwi na at mayakap ang aking mag-ama. Gusto na din akong iuwi ng aking asawa dahil alam niya ang lahat ng hirap ko at pakikipaglabang mag-isa. Ngunit kailangan ko pang makompleto ang gamutan sapagkat kung ako ay uuwi, mahihinto ang lahat. Hindi pa maayos ang aking pulmonya. Umuubo pa ako at hirap pang makahinga. Masasayang ang nasimulan kung ipipilit kong umuwi na. Nagtanong ako...“Lord, matagal pa po ba?” Mabigat sa loob na bunuin muli ang isang linggo pa na hindi kasama ang aking mag-ama. Pagod na akong asikasuhin ang sarili ko sa kalagayan na limitado ang aking paggalaw. Sa kabilang lahat, may isang taong gumabay sa akin mula simula ng pakikipagbuno ko kay COVID-19: si Dr. Irene G. Bustos. Kung mayroon mang nanghikayat sa aking lumaban, magpatuloy, gawing inspirasyon ang asawa at anak, siya yun...Kung mayroon mang nakiramay at pumawi sa aking kalungkutan, at nagpaalala ng mga nakakapagpasaya sa buhay ko, siya din yun. Kung mayroon mang nagalit sa akin sa tuwing nawawalan na ako ng pag-asa, sa tuwing nakakalimot sa aking kakayahang tulungan ang aking sarili, siya pa din yun. Kung mayroon mang isang inang nakatutok sa aking kondisyon...siya yun...at alam ko...sigurado ako...ang Panginoon ang gumagalaw sa buhay niya para bigyan ako ng pag-asa at ipaunawa na ang sitwasyong nararanasan ko ay may mensaheng “anak, gagaling ka...maniwala ka lang...at magtiwala.”

Ilang beses ding nagbara ang aking mga ugat na kinakabitang ng dextrose. Kinailangang hanapan ng ibang posisyon para maibigay ang mga nararapat na gamot para ako ay gumaling. Kaliwa't kanang kamay ko ay magang-maga na. Dahilan upang mas lalo akong mahirapang kumilos at asikasuhin ang aking sarili. Pero naka-isang linggo na akong naghirap. Nakayanan ko naman kaya kakayanin ko pa rin hanggang sa ako ay gumaling. Pinipilit kong kumain kahit wala pa rin akong maayos na panlasa. Palagiang pag-inom ng tubig at paminsan-minsang pagkain ng mga prutas. Kailangan kong lumakas. Kailangan kong tulungan ang sarili ko at isiping lalakas ako, gagaling, at makakauwi.

Lumipas pa ang ilang araw. Sa kagustuhan kong makasama na kaagad ang aking pamilya, tiniis ko ang mga pagkaing hindi maganda ang lasa. May mga pagkakataon na naisusuka ko ang mga iyon kasunod ng pagbaba muli ng oxygen level ko pero hindi ko na iniinda. Desidido akong gumaling. Nagsimula akong magkaroon ng regular breathing exercise, tatlong beses sa isang araw kahit kapos sa hininga at umuubo-ubo, pinagtiyagaan ko. Kailangang tumaas ang oxygen level ko. Kailangang matanggal ang oxygen machine at makahinga ako gamit ang sarili kong baga. Mas tinatagan ko pa at nilakasan ang loob para lumaban sa kagustuhang lumakas at gumaling. "Mind over matter" sabi nga nila. At totoong may kapangyarihan ang ating isip para gumaling ang ating puso...ang ating katawan at maging maayos ang ating pagkilos.

Sa bawat oras na nakikipagbuno ako sa hirap ng sitwasyon ko, naaalala ko pa rin ang mga natigil kong trabaho. Kumusta na ang mga estudyante ko? Kumusta na ang mga kasamahan ko sa trabaho? Napakarami kong gawaing nahinto subalit mas naramdaman ko ang kahalagahan ko bilang isang guro, bilang isang GAD focal person, bilang isang Guidance Counselor. Kahit paano pala, marami rin ang nagagawa ko para sa iba at sa kabilang mga naiwan at nakabinbing trabaho, gusto ko pa ring balikan at asikasuhin para tapusin ang lahat. Malaking bagay ang suporta, pang-unawa, pagdarasal, at pagmamahal ng mga taong kasama mong naglilingkod isa na dito si Prof. Janet Orden-Saturno. Pero higit sa ano pa man, gusto kong gumaling na at makauwi hindi lamang para sa trabaho kundi higit lalo para magampanang muli ang pagiging isang asawa at ina sapagkat naniniwala akong hindi pa natatapos ang misyon ko sa kanila at sa lahat ng mga ipinagktiwala sa akin ng Panginoon.

Napakahalaga ng bawat oras. Sa isang iglap, maaari kang bawian ng buhay. Sa isang iglap na gustuhin ng Diyos, maaari ka niyang kunin at wala kang magagawa. Huwag mong hintaying magkasakit ka at mapunta sa sitwasyon na halos nasa bingit ka na ng kamatayan bago mo mapahalagahan ang mga mahal mo sa buhay. Huwag mong hintaying mailayo ka sa iyong pamilya bago mo maisipang hagkan sila at pasalamat. Totoo ngang kapag nawala sa iyo, at saka mo hahanap-hanapin at maiisip ang kahalagahan nito sa buhay mo. Pero bakit natin hihintaying mawala pa ang mga bagay at taong nasa iyo na? Ako, sa panibagong buhay na ipinagkaloob sa akin, marami akong natutuhan na kailangan kong gawin at isabuhay. Kasabay ng unti-unti kong paggaling ay ang napakaraming mga aral na natutuhan ko sa loob ng ospital.

Dalawang araw bago ang aking pag-uwi, sinubukan nang tanggalin ang aking oxygen machine at muli ay ipinagamit sa akin ang oxygen mask. Nakayanan kong huminga kahit wala ang oxygen ngunit nakaantabay pa rin dahil may mga pagkakataong bumababa pa ang aking oxygen level lalo kapag ako ay babangon para kumain o uminom ng gamot at kapag lilitisan ko ang aking sarili at magpapalit ng diaper. Sa pamamalagi ko sa ospital, nasanay na din ako sa dating hirap na hirap akong takbo ng buhay ko sa loob ng kwartong iyon. Habang iniaayos ko ang aking mga gamit, may mga bagong pasyenteng pumasok sa aking kwarto. Mabilis na bumalik sa aking alaala ang aking sitwasyon nang una akong ipasok sa ospital. Kagaya nila, malungkot, mahina, hirap makahinga, at naka-oxygen. Nakita ko ang aking sarili sa kanila. Nagpatugtug ako ng Praise and Worship songs para kahit paano ay may marinig silang musika at pag-asaya.

Nagsimula akong makipag-usap sa kanila. Pinagkwento din nila ako ng mga pinagdaanan ko. Naikwento ko sa kanila ang mga posibleng pagdadanang nila. Sinigurado kong mabalaan sila ngunit mabigyan ng pag-asa na gagaling sila basta't piliting kumain, isipin na gagaling, uminom ng maraming tubig, piliting matulog, magdasal, makipag-usap sa mga mahal sa buhay kahit sa pamamagitan ng tawag, text, chat, o video call, at manalig na malalagpasan ang lahat kahit gaano katagal, tatagan ang isip at loob sa mga araw na lilipas hanggang sila ay lumakas.

Hindi ko mailarawan ang saya ko nang marinig ko ang pangalan kong tinawag para gumayak sa aking paglabas at pag-uwi. Iyak ako nang iyak habang nakangiti. Walang ibang naisambit kundi "Salamat,

Lord...Marami pong salamat." Hingal na hingal akong nakapag-ayos ng aking gamit pero hindi ko ininda. Lumuluha pa rin ako habang pinagmamasdan ang bawat sulok ng kuarto kung saan ako namalagi sa loob ng halos dalawang linggo. Tinitigan ko ang mga monitoring device, oxygen machine, ang mga pinagbalatan ng gamot at mga bote ng tubig. Walang tigil ang pagluha ko sa kaligayahan.

Isang tawag mula sa aking asawa para ipaalam ang aking hospital bill. Sa kabuuhan, nasa mahigit kumulang dalawang-daang libong piso ang kailangang bayaran. Pakiramdam ko, magkakasakit uli ako. Saan kami kukuha ng ganoon kalaking halaga? Tinanong ko ang aking asawa kung kami ba ay may sapat na ipon para doon. Tumugon siyang mayroong naipon, pero iyon ay pera ni Ellyn. Tinanong ko siya kung hihiram na ba ako ng pera sa aming mga kakilala ngunit sinabihan niya akong huwag muna, may mga kakausapin lamang siya at gagawan niya ng paraan. Mabilis kong naisip ang lahat ng maaari kong hingan ng tulong pinansyal. Salamat sa isang matalik na kaibigan, si Jenny Cabanayan-Miller, isa siya sa nagpaabot ng tulong lalo na para sa mga gamot na kakailanganin ko paglabas ng ospital. Ngunit napaisip ako, makakalabas nga ba ako kung ganoong may malaking halaga muna ang kailangang mabayaran bago ako makaalis ng ospital? Lumipas pa ang ilang oras ng paghihintay at pagdarasal. Muling tumawag ang aking asawa at sinabihan niya akong okay na, bayad na, makakauwi na kami. Hindi ko alam ang eksaktong mga ahensya, opisina, o mga taong tumulong sa kanya para matunton at maisaayos ang mga dokumento para sa mga babayaran. Salamat sa PhilHealth (case-based payment of benefits) sapakat naka-laan na ang Php 333, 519.00 para sa mga miyembro na mayroon o nagkaroon ng Severe Pneumonia na isa sa mga epekto ng COVID-19. Muling pasasalamat sa Panginoon sapagkat patuloy siyang kumikilos sa aming buhay. Hindi kailangang mag-alala sapagkat tunay ang Kanyang pangako na "tutugunan Niya ang lahat ng ating pangangailangan, basta't humingi ka nang may pananampalataya."

Habang hinihintay ko ang wheelchair na maghahatid sa akin pababa at palabas ng ospital, kinausap ako ng aking katabing pasyente. "Mabuti ka pa, uuwi na. Ako, mukhang matatagal pa..." Kasunod ng tanong na iyon ay ang pagkaway ng isa pang pasyente na naka-oxygen machine na tila nagpapaalam nang may ngiti at saya para sa akin. Nangilid ang mga luha ko ngunit nag-iwan ng mga mensaheng, "Tatay, Nanay...lakasan niyo po ang loob niyo ah...makakauwi din po kayo...gagaling din po kayo kagaya ko. Kailangan nyong lang pong maniwala at magtiwala. Pilitin nyong pong kumain kahit gaano kapangit ang inyong panlasa. Uminom palagi ng tubig at magpahinga. Makiusap kayo sa Panginoon habang nakahiga at nakapikit na pagalingin Niya kayo. Tulungan nyong po ang mga sarili ninyong lumakas at gumaling. May mga pamilya po kayong umaasa at naghihintay sa inyong pag-uwi."

Pinigilan ko ang aking sariling umiyak, pero isa lang ang sigurado ako...sa aking panibagong buhay, magpapatuloy akong gagabay, magbibigay pag-asa, tutulong, at magpapasaya. Mula sa aking mga karanasan, kahit gaano kahirap ang aking pinagdaanan, na kahit na may pagkakataong gusto kong sumuko at tila katapusang ko na, may pag-asa...at may Diyos na sasagip sa lahat ng pagdurusa...may magpaparamdam at may mga tulong na darating kapag nanghihina ka na...at sa bawat gabing madilim, may panibagong umaga para makapagsimula nang may mas matibay na pananampalataya at buhay na mas maliwanag, may kabuluhan, at puno ng pag-asa.

Sa wakas, nakalabas na ako ng ospital. Nagkita na kaming mag-asawa at nakahanda ng makauwi. Ambulansa pa rin ang aking sinakyan dahil hindi pa ako pwedeng lapitan ng kahit sino. Kakailanganin pang ma-isolate ako nang isang linggo bago tuluyang makalapit sa mag-ama ko. Pagdating sa bahay, nakaantabay pa rin ang oxygen tank. Hindi pa ako malakas at kakailanganin pa ang mahinahong pagkilos at pagsasalita. Dalawa hanggang tatlong buwan bago daw tuluyang bumalik ang aking lakas. Garalgal pa rin ang aking boses. Tila parang napanat din ang aking mga balat. Lubog at maiitim ang paligid ng aking mga mata. Humpak

ang aking mukha at bakas ang hirap na dulot ng aking naging sakit. Kailangan kong bumawi ng tulog at lakas.

Natapos ang self-isolation ko kaya't isinunod kong bigyang oras ang aking anak. Isang buwan na halos hindi ko siya nalapitan at nahagkan kaya't umagos pa rin ang luha ko nang muli siyang lumapit sa akin at yumakap. Walang kahit anumang salita ang makapaglalarawan ng kaligayahan ang naramdamang ko. Matagal kaming magkayakap. Lumapit na rin sa amin si Joel at para akong nasa alapaap sa saya na muli ko silang makasama. Ang kalbaryo ko sa COVID-19 ay nagsimula sa yakap at halik ngunit nagtapos din sa yakap at halik ng aking munting pamilya.

Nais ko lamang ding ibahagi ang ilang liriko sa awiting "Grace" ni Laura Story. Isa ito sa mga awiting nagpalakas sa akin ng loob at nagbigay pag-asa. Sa pakikinig dito nang paulit-ulit ay napaalalahanan ako na wala talagang impossible sa Diyos basta't hiniling mo at nanampalataya ka. Na kung ipagpapasa-Diyos mo ang lahat, Siya ang kikilos sa iyong buhay nang naaayon sa Kanyang kagustuhan.

And You answer: "My child, I love you  
And as long as you're seeking My face  
You'll walk in the power of My daily sufficient  
grace."

You are so patient with me, Lord  
As I walk with You, I'm learning  
What Your grace really means  
The price that I could never pay was paid at  
Calvary

So, instead of trying to repay You  
I'm learning to simply obey You  
By giving up my life to you  
For all that You've given to me

Mas napadali ang lahat ng aking pagbawi, pagpapagaling, at pagpapalakas. Nagkaroon ako ng kapanatagan dahil kasama ko na ang aking mag-ama. Ngunit higit sa lahat ng mga ito, ay ang kapayapaan at kapanatagan ng aming puso at isip kasama ang Panginoon. Ramdam ko ang pagpapala at pagmamahal ng Diyos sa akin at sa aking pamilya. Walang kahit sinumang tao o anumang bagay ang makahihigit sa pabor na ibinigay NIYA. Ang lahat ng aking naranasan sa loob ng halos isang buwan ay maituturing palang oportunidad para kapulutan ng mga aral at maging inspirasyon sa iba. Magiging instrumento pala ang kwento ng aking buhay para sa mga taong nagkasakit, nahirapan, nanghina, nasaktan, naospital, at nawalan ng pag-asa. Hindi pa rin ako makapaniwala na kinaya ko at napagtugumpayan ang lahat. Isa lang ang sigurado ako. Pinakinggang ng Diyos ang aking pagsusumamo. Kaya kahit gaano pa man kahirap ang mga susunod ko pang mararanasan, panatag ako na may Diyos na makikinig sa aking mga dasal at nakaalalay sa lahat ng aking pagdadaanan.



*Ako po si COVID-19 Patient No. 1733 ng San Jose City, kinaawaan ng Panginoon at pinagkalooban ng panibagong buhay... Ito po ang aking kwento...*

# Near-Death Experience: A STORY OF TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS

by Ferlyn F. Reyes-Colar, LPT, RGC

Oxygen level 47 - "Lord, is this my end? Will I get intubated just like Daddy Burcio? Will I still be able to go home to my family? I still don't want to die...Lord, please have mercy...Ellyn is just a little child...Lord...have mercy on her...Please...Even for my Ellyn...Please let me live, Lord...Let me live..."

Many of us have experienced various trials during this time of the pandemic. One of these is when you get sick of COVID-19 and/or Pneumonia. Infecting your whole family is a challenge. During these trying times, it measures the stability, support, and love of the whole family.

My husband, Joel, was the only one leaving our home for our daily needs. My COVID-19 journey started with a quick hug and kiss when Joel came home from the market. Two days later, I had a fever. Followed by flu and severe cough. I isolated myself from that moment and took medicines to prevent it from getting worse. I was worried then because I was having an unusual cough. My chest hurts and I have difficulty breathing. I got nervous and fear increased when I lost my sense of smell and taste. I just prayed to God not to infect my husband and my little Ellyn.

I had to be taken to San Jose City hospital (OLSJC)

because I was having difficulty breathing. I was advised to get an antigen and X-ray. While waiting for the result, I was given a nasal cannula because my oxygen level was too low. I knew that I was already contaminated with the virus. Until it was confirmed, my antigen was positive. Instead of worrying, I just focused on ways to help myself



for fast healing. I asked some friends what to do for I believe that the advice of those who have experienced and overcome COVID-19 will help.

I was temporarily sent home with medications. We borrowed a small oxygen tank which helped me to breathe properly. I was separated in a room away from Joel and Ellyn. Alone...while having difficulty in breathing...I had no appetite and my body was weak. Negative thoughts played in my mind but I took control. I still believe that when we control our thoughts, the situation and burden will be easier to manage no matter how difficult it is.

It was a very long night for me. I prepared myself for the next situation I would go through. I prayed for my family's safety. I asked the Lord to protect Joel and Ellyn and that I will get better as soon as possible. I was breathing then but I felt like I had no air to breathe. My oxygen tank was empty. I was so scared back then. Joel looked for an oxygen refilling station but even the hospitals in San Jose had none. We are very grateful to the CLSU Infirmary, especially to Nurse Rizaldy, because they provided and lent us oxygen. My brother unexpectedly bought an empty oxygen

*"I am COVID-19 Patient No. 1733 of San Jose City,  
and this is my story...."*

tank in the middle of the night and I badly needed one just to survive, they are the ones we relied on. It's true that in times of crisis and difficult situations, there are people who, surprisingly, will care for your life.

Almost all of the symptoms of COVID-19 manifested in me but still had to take the RT-PCR test to confirm. Whenever the ambulance had to fetch me, I see my daughter carried by a caregiver from our window, she would greet me with a smile and would cry when I leave. It breaks my heart because I can't approach her and kiss her. She still couldn't understand the situation, even if it's temporary. I told myself that I needed to get stronger and heal for her.

From 89 oxygen level, it dropped to 85. My husband carries the big oxygen tank whenever I go to the bathroom. I won't be able to breathe properly without the help of supplemental oxygen. So with the help of some CLSU Infirmary nurses, IATF San Jose City, in the person of Mr. Nathaniel Vergara, and Barangay Santo Tomas Health Workers, I was referred and taken to PJG hospital in Cabanatuan City to meet my medical needs. Joel followed while I was in the ambulance, I continued to pray...begged that as I left our home, HE would take care and protect our child and give my husband enough strength and courage as well.

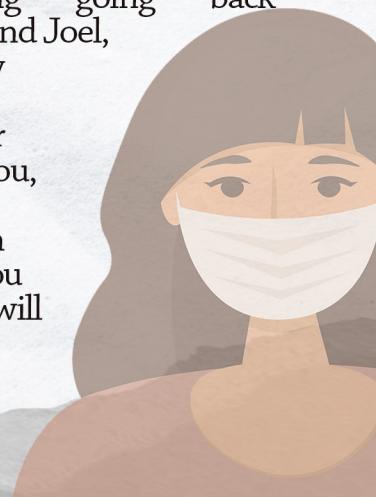
Arriving at the PJG hospital, I underwent a Triage. I was immediately hooked on dextrose. I did RT-PCR test and X-ray again. My oxygen level dropped to 80. As my husband signs waivers and consents to what might happen when my situation worsens, that they might place in me a urinary catheter, nasogastric tube, and intubation. The nurse who assisted us also explained that the hospital had no obligation if I died while in confinement. I know, just as I was nervous and scared, Joel felt the same way. Until he was forced to sign the forms because I had to be taken inside the hospital.

A caretaker for a patient inside the hospital is not allowed. I need to take care of myself alone until I am healed. My husband and I held our tears back. It's time for us to say goodbye in the meantime. He almost didn't want to get parted with the stretcher where I was lying. He stared at me while holding my hands..."Baby, are you okay? Can you make it alone?" I just smiled at

him because those were also the questions I asked myself but I just prayed for courage from God to answer. "Yes, Dad...Don't worry...I can do this...I can do it." Although I'm not sure what I will be going through, I needed to assure him that everything will be okay. I knew it would be hard and lonely but I had to endure and believe in the ways and processes of healing my illness with the help of the doctors. I just realized then that in this kind of situation, you will feel the importance of a husband. And so with a heavy heart, you will get separated with no certainty if you can still hug and see each other again. However, I need to be strong and brave so that he will also have the resilience, courage, and hope that everything will end and we will be together again.

I was taken to the 6th floor of the hospital. While going up, I talked to God and said, "Lord, I surrender everything to you now...Please heal me immediately. Use the doctors and the medicines as Your mighty instruments. Come with me, Lord...I'm scared..." I held back my tears. I have to control my emotion because my oxygen level will get lower. When I got inside the room, I found four more patients with oxygen masks. And maybe, they are also COVID-19 positive. My nasal cannula was replaced with an oxygen mask. There is dextrose attached to my arms and an oxygen monitoring device was also on guard. There was a specific schedule for nurses' visitation to give medicines to patients and when they need to clean the room. There is an intercom for each patient for emergency purposes.

I need to remove my oxygen mask every time I go to the comfort room. I carry my dextrose, tissue, and soap. When I went back to my bed, I was always out of breath. My oxygen level was down to 75 so I put on the oxygen mask as quickly as I can. Every time I was in that situation, I think of my loved ones one by one. That's my routine every time I go to the bathroom. When I'm having a hard time breathing going back to my bed, I think of my husband Joel, my little Ellyn, my dad, and my siblings. When your life is in a challenging situation, and your loved ones are far away from you, when you're alone, you will appreciate them more. You can just whisper to yourself that you love them very much and you will ask God to give you one more chance to see them again.



That's really how it goes...

One of the nurses on-duty saw me having a hard time breathing while wearing my oxygen mask. He forbade me to go to the bathroom. He warned me that several patients have collapsed and lost their breath inside the comfort room when they removed their oxygen masks. I was advised to wear a diaper so that I would not have to leave my bed and not remove my oxygen mask. Even though I wasn't comfortable, I wore a diaper. I am also the one who removed the diaper I used and cleaned myself because no one else can do it for me. Nurses on duty are only limited and it would also be embarrassing if I ask them to clean and assist me. It was really hard for me when I need to clean myself up. I cried often along with severe shortness of breath. And it's even harder sometimes that I have to stop crying and control my emotions so that my oxygen level will not get low.

It's really hard to be alone especially in a situation where you should have someone with you. But I was in a situation where I had to endure everything alone. The situation that I had to fight to get back home with my family. I need to get stronger. I need to be healed. So even though I was out of breath with every move I made to take care of myself, I just ignored the hardship and pushed myself to live with it. I always begged for strength and prayed to Him, "Lord, help me to breathe properly and just give me the strength to continue to help myself..."

There was a food and water ration three times a day, but more often than not I could not eat because of the mixed emotions and strange taste of the food. However, I forced myself to eat even in small amounts. Every day, from our home in San Jose City my husband goes to the hospital to provide food that I can easily eat and other stuff I need. Thanks to the new technology because we can have video call all the time. There are also times when he comes home, I can also talk to our daughter, Ellyn. But it's still really different if you're with your family talking, laughing, and embracing tight together.

I struggled even more in the days that followed. As my oxygen level continued to drop, I also found it more difficult to move and take care of

myself. Each move had corresponding tiredness and breathlessness, followed by an even lower oxygen level from the monitor device beside me. I got stressed and afraid when I witnessed someone next to me who is either experiencing difficulty breathing, dying slowly, not waking up, crying, or sobbing maybe because of hardship, sadness, and some other reasons. I would like to help them, calm them down and give them hope... but how? I also need help. I have no ability because I can't even speak because of my cough. I love talking to other people as I used to help, cheer, encourage and guide people to move on with a positive outlook on life. It is sad to think that I could not do anything but include them in my prayers—to give them more courage and to think that while there is breath, there is hope. My tears just flowed. Your situation will limit you even if you know you have the ability to help.

Nurses and doctors were attentive. Adequate medications were provided. I also had a few X-rays to check my lungs because it was confirmed, I have Severe Pneumonia. The doctor said I need to stay longer in the hospital. My oxygen level was still low so they had to increase the supplemental oxygen a little more so that I could breathe properly. A few days have passed, but it seemed nothing has changed. I still have difficulty breathing and I can no longer breathe without the help of supplemental oxygen. I just stared at the monitoring devices while remembering my friends and my family. Two of my friends suddenly came to my mind: Elk Rizz and Jackilou. I don't know why I suddenly remembered them but maybe because they were some of the few that I considered siblings. Should I communicate with them? Am I going to die? I just asked myself why I suddenly thought of those people I love...With a heavy heart, I just sincerely prayed that I would be healed. I miss home...I miss my family.

I felt tightness in my chest. I was breathing but I felt like I had no air to breathe. From 70...65...60...I was scared...along with my difficulty breathing, I forced myself to get up so that I could personally adjust my supplemental oxygen...but it was filled...it was the highest but I didn't have any air to breathe...55...50...am I going to die? I shouted and called the nurse. I was shaking as I reached the intercom, with a heavy heart, slightly coughing, having difficulty in breathing, I demanded help. I calmed myself...My vision has darkened but I tried to seek the light. Again, I prayed fervently while tears continuously



flow...With the presence of mind, I looked at my monitoring screen... Is this real? Oxygen level 47—"Lord, is this my end? Will I get intubated just like Daddy Burcio? Will I still be able to go home to my family? I still don't want to die...Lord, please have mercy...Ellyn is just a little child...Lord...have mercy on her...Please...Even for my Ellyn...Please let me live, Lord...Let me live..."

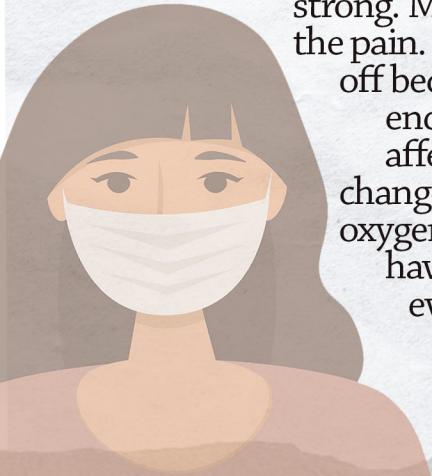
Finally, nurses arrived, carrying an oxygen machine and another monitor device. I was advised to calm down. I controlled my emotion and kept praying..."Lord, do I have to say goodbye to my family now? If this is the end, please give me a chance and let me talk to them so I can apologize for anything I have done wrong and thank them for all that they have done well for me...How about Joel and Ellyn? Shall I leave them to Papa?" 60...70...75...80. I breathed and have relief again...But I couldn't get it out of my mind that the Lord might have just answered my prayer and given me a chance to speak to my family. I no longer hesitated. I contacted them via group video call. When they answered, I felt nervous. I knew it was also hard for them to see my condition. They thought I was already intubated but it's just a tube from the oxygen machine which was placed in my nose. I started to talk to them but I did not utter any words. I just let them talk and as I listen to what they say in my mind, I am talking to God..."Lord, I can't do this...I still don't want to die. Forgive me but I can't use the life you gave me just to say goodbye to them. I still want to see them and hug them, Lord." I stopped crying...my chest felt heavy... I'm not ready to say goodbye yet. I don't want to die yet...

The pressure of the oxygen machine is strong. My nose is bleeding from the pain. Occasionally, I take it off because I can no longer endure the pain that also affects my head but in exchange for nasal comfort, my oxygen level will get low. I still have to help myself in everything I do even if it's

tiring...even if it's hard...I have learned to control all the hardships by thinking that I can, I can handle, and I can endure everything for my healing. I draw courage from my family even though I often feel sad because I want to be with them.

I called and talked more often to my father, my husband, my daughter, and occasionally my siblings. Some friends knew of my condition. Some of them made me happy via video calls and made me laugh again even with difficulty breathing. Thanks to Frederick, Cristina, Maria Riza, Fatima, Rio Myla, and Melvic. There was no trace of sadness in them when we had a group video call but it was overflowing happiness and hope that they provided. Prayers poured out from those who knew about my situation. Someone sent financial help, food, and fruits. In difficult situations, you can get to know people who care. In these trying times, you can also identify people who don't care even though they already know your illness and your situation. But for me, it is not important for heartless people who don't know how to sympathize and understand. I feel so blessed for the few people, but real ones...And it's heartbreaking to feel that someone cares about you and is afraid of losing you in their lives.

A week of hardship and perseverance passed. I just slept for about an hour or two. I couldn't eat, had no bath, still had difficulty breathing, and coughed. I was so lonely then, cried, and begged to be healed so that I could go home and hug my family. My husband also wants to take me home because he knows all my hardships and struggles alone. But I still have to complete the treatment because if I go home, everything will stop. My pneumonia is not well yet. I'm still coughing and having trouble breathing. It would be a waste of time if I insisted on going home. I asked..."Lord, is it still a long time?". It was really heartbreaking to struggle again for another week alone. I was tired of taking care of myself in a situation where my movement was limited. But after all, someone has guided me since the beginning of my fighting with COVID19; she's Dr. Irene G. Bustos. If there's anyone who encourages me



to fight and push myself to get healed, reminds me to think of my family. If there's anyone who takes away my sadness and reminds me of those who make my life happy, that's her too. If there's anyone who gets mad at me every time I lose hope, every time I forget my ability to help myself, that's still her. If there is a mother who focuses and monitors my condition...that is her...and I know...I am sure...the Lord is moving her life to give me hope and extend HIS message..."My child, you will be healed...just believe and claim it...have faith and trust the process."

Several times my arteries were also blocked by dextrose. The nurse had to find another position to give the necessary medicine for my recovery. My left and right hands are already swollen which caused me to find it even harder to move and to take care of myself. But I've been suffering for a week. I managed to conquer the struggles for the past week so I believe that I can still do it for more days until my recovery. I forced myself to eat even though I still don't have the appetite—drank water regularly and ate fruits occasionally. I need to get stronger. I need to help myself: I have to think that I will be strong, I will be healed, and will be able to go home.

A few more days have passed. The eagerness to be with my family pushed me to be strong. There were times I vomit when I had to force myself to eat more. My oxygen level dropped again but I didn't stop. I was determined to be healed. I started having regular breathing exercises three times a day despite experiencing shortness of breath and coughing, I persevered. My oxygen level needs to get higher. The oxygen machine had to be turned off so I could breathe with my own lungs. I became even more resilient and courageous to fight and have the desire to get stronger. "Mind over matter," they said. Our mind really has the power to heal our heart and our body and make us act properly.

Every time I struggle with the difficulty of my situation, I still remember my duties and responsibilities as a CLSU employee. It was put on hold since I was contaminated with the



virus. I was worried about my students, my colleagues, and my mentors. How are they now? I missed a lot of work. I realized the importance of my role as a teacher, a GAD focal person, and a Guidance Counselor. Despite the jobs left and pending, I just realized that I can do a lot. I still want to go back to work and finish everything. The support, understanding, prayer, and love of the people with whom you work is a great thing, one of which is Prof. Janet Orden-Saturno. She keeps sending messages of hope, love, and faith, extending sympathy and prayers all the way. But most of all, I want to be healed and start again...go home to be a wife and a mother again. I still believe that my mission to them and to all those the Lord has entrusted to me is not yet over.

Every hour is very important. In an instant, you can be deprived of life. In an instant, God willing, he can take your life and you can do nothing. Don't wait until you get sick and end up in a situation where you are almost on the brink of death before you can appreciate your loved ones. Don't wait to be apart from your family before you express your gratitude and love. It is true that when you lost someone or something, only by then have you realized their worth. But why wait for the things and people you already have to disappear? In the new life, the Lord gave to me, I have learned a lot that I need to do and put into practice. I will not waste my time...

Two days before I was scheduled to go home, the nurse tried to remove my oxygen machine and handed me the oxygen mask. I can breathe even without the supplemental oxygen but because there are times that my oxygen level drops still especially when I get up to seat or to eat, take medicine when I clean myself and change my diaper. During my stay in the hospital, I also got used to how hard I used to run my life in that room. As I was arranging my belongings, new patients entered my room. My situation quickly returned to my memory when I was first admitted to the hospital. They are sad, weak, hard to breathe, and oxygenated. I found myself in them. I played Praise and Worship songs so that somehow they would hear some music and hope.

I started talking to them. They also ask me and let me tell my stories about my experiences. I told them what they might go through. I made sure to warn them but give them hope that they will recover as long as they will force themselves to eat, have a positive thinking that they will recover, drink lots of water, force sleep, pray, talk to loved ones even through call, text, chat or video call and believe that everything will be overcome no matter how hard, no matter how long they need to stay.

I can't describe my joy when I heard my name and called to get ready on my way out to that hospital and come home. I cried with a smile and thanked the Lord. I took a deep breath and arranged my things. I got tired easily but I did not bother. I was still in tears as I stared at every corner of the room where I had stayed for almost two weeks. I looked at the monitoring devices, oxygen machines, medicine, and water bottles. My tears start to flow while I keep saying "thank you, Lord, thank you so much..."

My husband called to let me know about my hospital bill. About two hundred thousand pesos have to be paid. I feel like I'm going to get sick again. Where do we get such a large amount? I asked Joel if we had enough savings for that. We both know that we have savings, but that was for our daughter, Ellyn I asked him if I would borrow money from our friends

and relatives but he told me to just wait for a minute for he only had people to talk to and he would find a way. I quickly thought of every person I could ask for financial help. Thanks to my close friend, Jenny Cabanayan-Miller, she was one of those who extended help, especially for the medications when I got home from the hospital. But how can I get out if there is such a large amount to be paid before I can leave the hospital? A few more hours of waiting and praying passed. My husband called again and he told me it was paid already and that we could go home. Wondering how it was paid but I just thanked the Lord for His Mighty ways...it was an answered prayer. Thanks to PhilHealth (case-based payment of benefits) Php 333, 519.00 has been given for members who have or have had Severe Pneumonia which is one of the effects of COVID-19. We are really grateful for the Lord continues to work in our lives. HE is a good provider. Worry not because His promise is real "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (Matthew 7:8)

As I waited for the wheelchair to take me down and out of the hospital, the next patient before me spoke to me and said. "You're lucky, you will go home now. It looks like it will take a longer time for me to stay here." While the other patient with an oxygen machine was waving to me who seemed to be saying goodbye with a smile. My tears rolled down my cheeks but I left messages to them... "Please be brave... you can go home too... you will also recover... you just have to believe and trust the process. Force yourself to eat no matter how bad your taste is. Drink water regularly and rest. Pray to the Lord and please help yourselves to be strong and be healed. You have families hoping and waiting for you to come home. Get well soon."

I stopped myself from crying, but there is only one thing I am sure of... in this new life, the Lord gave me, I will continue to guide, give hope, help, and make other people happy and inspired. From my experiences, no matter how hard I went through, that even if there is a chance that you want to give up and it seems that you are in the situation you want to give

up, someone will save you... someone will give you hope. There will be a help to come in times you needed most and a brighter place as we experienced dark nights in our lives. There is another morning to start with a stronger faith and a brighter life...

Finally, I was released from the hospital. My husband and I have met again at last and are ready to go home. I still ride in the ambulance because no one could approach me yet. I would have to be isolated for a week before I could finally get close to my family. I am not yet strong and will still need to act and talk slowly. The oxygen tank is just beside my bed for emergency purposes. The doctor told me that it will take me two to three months before my strength finally returned and fully recovered. My voice is still rasping. My skin also seemed to lose. The area around my eyes was sunken and dark. My face was hollow and traces of the pain were visible caused by my illness. I need to regain sleep and strength. I need to recover...and so did I.

My self-isolation ended so I decided to give my child quality time. It had been a month since I had approached and kissed her so my tears still flowed when she came to me again and hugged me. Not a single word can describe the happiness I felt. We hugged for a long time. Joel also approached us and I felt like I was in a cloud of joy to be with them again. My calvary on COVID 19 started with hugs and kisses but also ended with the hugs and kisses of my family.

I just want to share these lyrics from the song "Grace" by Laura Story. It was one of those songs that encouraged me and gave me hope. Listening to it over and over again reminded me that nothing is really impossible with God as long as you ask and believe. That if you hand everything over to God, He will act in your life according to His will.

And You answer: "My child, I love you  
And as long as you're seeking My face  
You'll walk in the power of My daily sufficient  
grace."

You are so patient with me, Lord  
As I walk with You, I'm learning  
What Your grace really means

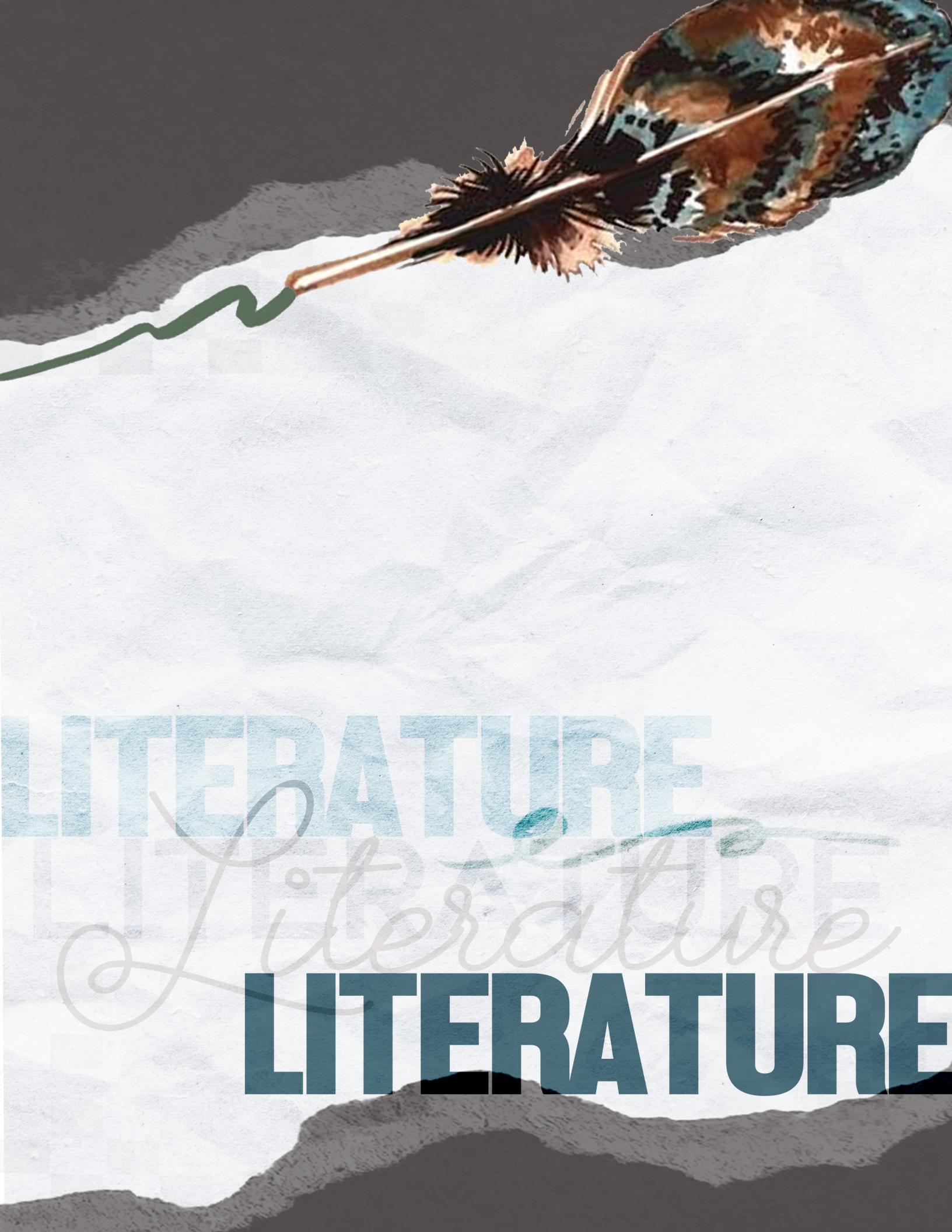
The price that I could never pay was paid at  
Calvary

So, instead of trying to repay You  
I'm learning to simply obey You  
By giving up my life to you  
For all that You've given to me

All my recovery, healing, and strengthening have been made easier at home. I had peace of mind because I was with my family. But above all of this, is the peace and contentment of our hearts and minds with the Lord. I feel God's love for me and my family. No one and nothing can exceed the favor which HE has given. Everything I experienced in almost a month can be considered an opportunity to learn lessons and be an inspiration to others. I didn't expect that the story of my life will be an instrument for people who have fallen ill, suffered, weakened, and been hurt, hospitalized, and lost hope. I still can't believe I managed and overcame everything. I'm only sure of one thing. God heard my plea. So no matter how difficult my next experiences may be, I am confident that there is a God who will listen to my prayers and support me in everything I go through.



*"I am COVID-19 Patient No. 1733 of San Jose City, and I am blessed for having Third Life that the Lord gave me..."*



LITERATURE

Literature

LITERATURE



## KATAPUSAN NG KABANATA

BY DAVE TADEO

Nalalapit nanaman ang pagtatapos,  
Nanatili parin napapagod at humahangos,  
Naghahabol ng paghinga,  
Humihingi ng pahinga.

Maari bang umupo muna  
Pagkatapos ng akademika?  
Maaring humiga muna,  
Hahabulin lang ang paghinga.

Pinahirap ng sitwasyon,  
Ang pag-aaral ngayon,  
Tutuloy pa ba  
Kung ang hinaharap ay lumalabo na?

Lalaban pa ba  
Kung parang sa dulo'y pagod na?  
Ngunit magtatapos pa rin,  
Pipilitin pa ring gawin,  
Para sa hinaharap,  
At para tuparin ang pangarap.

# SA DULO NG LAHAT

BY DAVE TADEO

Hindi lahat ng pagtatapos ay masaya,  
Dahil minsan ang resulta ay hindi maganda.  
Minsan ang inakala mong dulo ay mag iiba,  
Hindi sa lahat ng oras dapat masaya.

Lalo na kung yung dati mong saya ay naging kulungan na,  
Na kahit pa kaya mo namang lisanin ay nanatili ka pa.  
Mga kamay ngayo'y nakagapos na,  
Na alam mo naman kung paano tanggalin pero nananahimik ka.

Ito ang katapusang hindi masaya,  
Na kahit pa alam mong matatapos na,  
Pinipilit mo pa rin manatili at umasa,  
Na baka kasi sa kinabukasan,  
Matatapos ito ng masaya,  
Pero nagkamali ka,  
Dahil ang saya at pag ibig mo'y naging gapos at kulungan na.



# Mahal ko

BY CHRISTIAN MATTHEW CANERO



**Mahal ko,**

Takbo nang mabilis baka maabutan ka.

Bilis pa.

Ingat baka madapa ka.

Pagod ka na ba?

Wag mag-alala malapit na.

Kaunti na lang.

Mabuti na lang at nakarating ka nang ligtas, mahal ko.

Halika gagamutin ko ang mga sugat mo.

Masakit ba? Mahapdi.

Uminom ka ng tubig baka nauuhaw ka. May inihanda akong makakain para mabawi mo ang lakas mo.

Tara sa tuktok ng bundok, masaya ang buhay roon.

Ngunit hindi magiging madali ang pag-akyat doon.

Umpisahan na natin. Kung saan isang araw, isang hakbang.

Mga talampakang walang saplot habang naglalakbay.

Maraming sugat.

Patuloy. Patuloy na tinatahak ang masukal na kakahuyan.

Maraming balakid. Hindi madali pero kakayanin.

Hindi alam ang pasikot sikot ng kabundukan. Minsa'y naliligaw. Nakapapagod.

Isang araw, isang hakbang ang katumbas.

Patuloy. Patuloy ang buhay. Natutunghayan ang pagsikat at paglubog ng haring araw.

Kalagitnaan ng paglalakbay, napatigil. Patak ng ulan. Pag-ihip nang malakas na hangin, kasabay ng kulong at kidlat.

Nilalamig. Nanghihina. Nakamatay.

Hindi alam kung saan sisilong.

Marahil sa puno o hindi kaya'y sa loob ng kuweba.

Paano? Ano ang gagawin?

Kasabay ng malakas na ulan ay ang malakas na buhos ng aking luha. Hindi alam ang gagawin.

Biglang napatigil.

Patak ng ulan, ihip ng hangin, pagsayaw ng mga puno, lahat ay bumagal.

Biglang naalala ang nakalimutan.

Ang Ama.

Siya na magbibigay ng kapayapaan, kapahingahan at ng sapat na lakas upang makapag patuloy.

Patuloy.

Pagsikat ng haring araw.

Isang araw, isang hakbang. Mabagal ang pag-usad pero, sigurado.

Alerto sa kung sakali ay may aatakeng mga mababangis na problema, ako'y handa.

Mahal, kumusta ka?

Nag-uumpisa nang maramdaman ang sakit. Unti-unti nang nalalaman kung paano ang buhay dito sa gubat.

Isang hakbang, ramdam ang kirot. Pag-inda ng katawan dahil sa pagod. Kaya pa.

'Wag kang susuko, mahal ko. Hindi ka nakakulong.

Kasama 'yan sa buhay. Parte ng pagkatuto.

Alam kong nasa paanan pa lamang tayo ng bundok.

Marami pa'ng pagdadaanan. Hindi ka mag-isa mahal ko.

Sabay nating tatahakin ang landas ng buhay.

'Wag susuko.

Mabuti na lang mahal ko ang sarili ko. Hindi ako napahamak.

Mabuti pa ay makapagpahinga sa kubo banda roon.

Kukuha ng kinchay panggamot sa sarili kong mga sugat.

Pagmamahal sa sarili ay hindi masama. Makainom, nakauuhaw.

Ako'y maghahanda ng makakain upang mabawi ang lakas ko.

Isang araw, isang hakbang.

Ako'y magpapatuloy, kahit ano pa ang mangyari.

Pagsikat ng araw. Patuloy.

Takbo nang mabilis, baka maabutan ka.

Bilis pa.

Kapag nadapa, tumayo ka.

Ayos lang magpahinga kapag pagod na.

'Wag mag-alala, malapit na.

Kapit lang sa Ama.

***Ang sarili ko.***



# **GAANO KADELIKADO ANG HINDI SIGURADO**

*by Christian Matthew Canero*

*Umaga na naman,  
panibagong pakikipagsapalaran.  
Imulat ang mga mata sa katotohanan  
na walang makain  
kahit isang tinapay man lang.*

*Hablot ng bag sabay takbo nang mabilis  
pasa sa katropa,  
'wag magpapahuli sa pulis.*

*Gaano kadelikado ang hindi sigurado.*

*Hablot ng bag sabay takbo  
kapag nanlaban saksakin mo.*

*Ganito ang buhay na nakasanayan  
kahit ayaw, paninindigan ko.*

*Sa kagustuhan kong lumaya sa mundong  
ito, tila nagdulot lamang ng sakal sa  
tulad kong walang lakas na kumawala sa  
kadenang nakabalot sa aking pagkatao.*

*Gaano kahirap ang walang magulang na  
nag-aaruga at nagmamalasakit sa 'yo?*

*Gaano kahirap na mamuhay sa lansangan?  
Gaano kahirap pagkaitan ni isang  
kusing na barya?*

 *Hustisya...*

*Hustisya sa mga katulad kong alipin ng  
pagmamahal.*

*Alipin ng pagmamahal.*

*Na imbis na batak na katawan ay batak  
na kawatan ang kinalalabasan  
Kahit anong gawin ay nauuwi sa  
kabaliktaran*

*Kaya noong nalimutan ang kasalanan ay  
tila nanalasak lamang sa tulad naming  
alipin ng pamahalaan.*

*Hindi birong itaya at takbuhan ang  
buhay para lamang mabuhay.  
Hindi birong takbuhan ang tama  
upang mabuhay lamang.  
Hindi birong takbuhan ang batas  
'pag may ginawang kasalanan.  
Hindi birong takbuhan ang  
katotohanan na sa pagtakbong ito ay  
hindi alam kung saan mapapadpad ang  
mga paang hindi alam kung saan  
malalaglag, sa kulungan o sa huling  
hantungan.*

*Mababakas ang bukas, sa kung paano  
ang pagbukas ng pinto para sa mga  
nagpapakabakas bakasakaling  
makaligtas sa bawat suntok, bawat  
sipa, at bawat hagupit ng buhay.  
Ngunit hindi bakas ang lakas  
sapagkat dinadaan lamang nila ito  
sa dahas na kaming mga malas ay  
walang magawa kundi mag-aklas  
nalang gamit ang mga natitirang  
alas na alam ko na makapagbubukas  
ng bukas para sa aming mga tunay na  
malalakas.*

*Pagsapit ng dilim walang  
napala...walang kinain,  
walang may pakialam sa akin.  
Pagsapit ng dilim, panahon na para  
ipahinga ang sarili.  
Ipikit ang mga mata...*

*Umaga na naman, panibagong  
pakikipagsapalaran.  
Imulat ang mga mata sa katotohanang  
alipin tayo ng pamahalaan.  
Hindi...*

*Alipin tayo ng pagmamahal ng sarili  
nating magulang  
nagkukunwaring hindi alam na wala  
tayong makain,  
kahit isang tinapay man lang.*

# LUNOD

*by Alrhizza Suiza*

*Pabalik-balik na pagbagsak  
 Kelan ba ititigil ang alak  
 Kapit, saan? Di ko malaman  
 Ako'y hinulog mula sa kawalan*

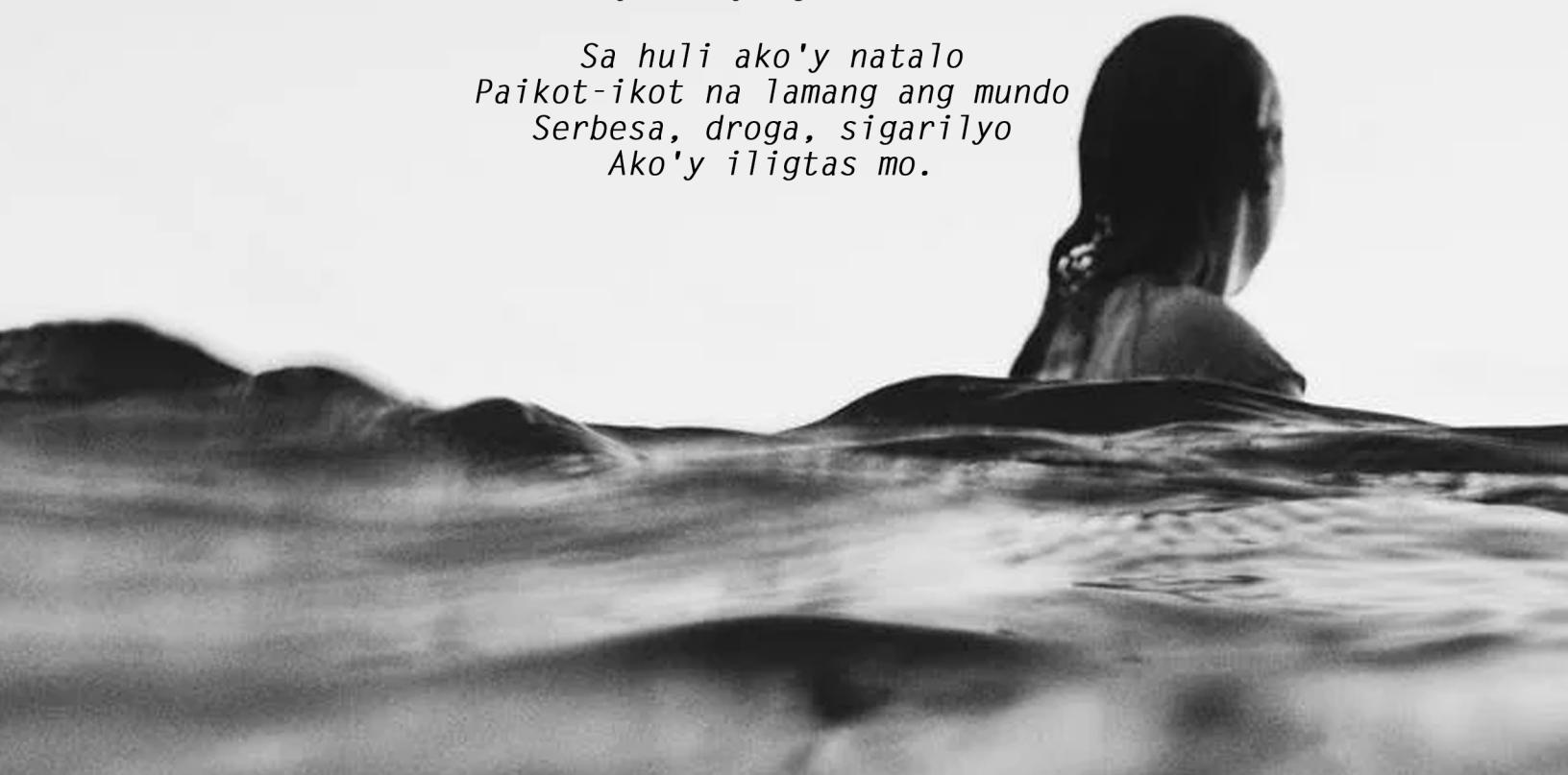
*Pag nasa ilalim saka lang mapapansin  
 Balewala lang kung palampasin  
 Kung gawin ang 'yong gusto  
 Ako ba'y magiging santo*

*Sinong nagsabi? Sinong may sala?  
 Sinong sisihin kundi ang sarili  
 Ikukulong na lang ang buhat-buhat  
 Na iniwan ng nakaraan*

*Dalawang taon na simula  
 Simula nang di lumuha  
 Lapit, kanino? Di makita  
 Ako'y tatakbo na lamang mag-isá*

*Sa sarili ko na lamang iaasa  
 Mga apoy na bumagsak ay magkakaisa  
 Kasabay ng pagkahulog  
 Ako'y tuluyang malulunod*

*Sa huli ako'y natalo  
 Paikot-ikot na lamang ang mundo  
 Serbesa, droga, sigarilyo  
 Ako'y iligtas mo.*



# KNOCK ON RAIN

by HeavenScribe

My boyfriend's 3-year-old mute sister always tells me (via American Sign Language) that nature talks to her. Children's imaginations are really something.

"Stop that!" He yelled to her sister, who had been continuously knocking on whatever wooden furniture they had for many days already. Her knocking started last week, after a heavy rain. My boyfriend said she only does that when I'm around. I told him to let his sister be because maybe she's just playing.

"Crap," my boyfriend cursed as the rain started pouring without warning. He grabbed his things immediately and told us to come inside since we were in their garden and at risk of getting wet by the rain.

His sister came up to me and started pulling the tip of my clothes, indicating that I should follow her. We ended up sitting on their sofa bed in the living room. She then turned the TV on and switched to her favorite cartoons.

"Another victim has been found dead on---" the television flashed news, but the power got interrupted, so I failed to hear it all. "Weird," I silently whispered to myself—the electric company personnel in our town usually send an alert through a text message. "Maybe this is an emergency interruption," I brushed my worries off and comforted myself.

I snapped back to reality when I heard knocks again. I was so lost in my thoughts that I did not even notice that the kid had already managed to drag me to her room on the second floor.

"Ahh haa---" I heard the young girl trying to say something. I tried to guess what she was saying, but I ended up not figuring it out. She walked towards her room's windowpane and started pointing outside. I started doing the ASL of "Do you want to play in the rain?" She shook her head as a response.

She grabbed my hand, which surprised me because they were freezing. The power's still out, and I'm a little scared because it's already dark outside, plus this kid's acting weird. We ended up in their basement, and the only light source we had was my phone's not-so-bright flashlight feature.

She started to sign language before me, but I failed to understand it because my proficiency was still low. She kept gesturing something to me, and the more seconds passed, the more nervous her face showed. She gave up communicating with me via sign language and suddenly grabbed my phone in my hand.

She started typing something on dots and dashes, a code that I know off. I find it peculiar that she cannot fully comprehend the English alphabet but can do secret codes. She knocked again before giving my phone back to me.

I felt that my body started to lose blood when I read what she typed. I thought I was just overanalyzing things before, but her knocks seem to have a pattern...And the rain...the rain seemed unusual today...The raindrops of the rain seemed to have sound patterns.

"HELP!" a loud scream was heard all over the house, which seemed to be from a woman. My hands started shaking as I felt my heart rate go faster. Seconds have passed, and our heavy breathings are all I can hear now.

He told me that no one's in this house except for us three...  
I glanced back at my phone and stared at what the young girl typed.  
"•••••-•••."



# ANA

by Sophia Fei Corpuz

Nandito na naman ako sa silid na ito habang hawak-hawak ko ang buhok n'ya. Ihinanda ko na rin ang mga kakailanganin ko.

Sinimulan ko sa kanyang mga braso. Kinuha ko ang kutsilyo at marahan ko siyang hiniwa roon.

Sinunod ko ang kaniyang mga binti. Hinatak ito hanggang sa humiwalay sa kanyang katawan.

Hinuli ko ang kaniyang ulo. Tinusok ko ng karayom ang kaniyang mga mata, ginunting ang kaniyang buhok at pinugot ang kaniyang ulo.

Isang ngiti na naman ang sumilay sa aking labi, pero bago ko mailigpit ang kaniyang pira-pirasong katawan, biglang bumukas ang pinto ng silid. Ang aking ina!

Nanlalaki ang kaniyang mga mata at sumigaw,

"Naku Ana! Sinira mo na naman ang iyong manika!"

# Vanaarap

by Sophia Fei Corpuz

"And the Miss Universe 2022, is no other than, Miss Philippines!"

Ito ang ingay na maririnig mula sa isang barong-barong. Sa loob nito ay nakangiti si Lea sapagkat nanalo ang kaniyang pambato.

"Inay, ang ganda niya talaga, 'no? Gusto ko rin ng suot niyang pink na gown!" sambit ni Lea.

"S'yempre naman, anak. Balang araw, makapagsusuot ka rin ng ganiyang damit," tugon ng kaniyang ina habang inaayos ang antenna ng luma nilang radyo kung saan sila nakikinig.

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Hope

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