

1990

by AkiNatsu

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Division, **English** Category, **One-Act Play***

SYNOPSIS

Mike left Philippines in 1990 weeks after that fateful day of the 16th of July when a 7.8 in magnitude earthquake struck Luzon. He returns home; to Baguio after 26 years. The ruins of the city are long gone but he now needs to rely on his memories to guide him back to the Baguio he once knew.

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CHARACTERS

An ensemble of four actors will portray all characters.

They will each act as a stood out character at times whilst most of the time they will act as an ensemble. They will take equal parts.

They are in plain black or gray loose pants and shirts typical of theatre actors during rehearsals or workshops.

SETTING

The existing condition of the theatre stage where the performance will be held. No scenic decor; it will remain as it is---bare; in skeletal form.

Projection of images or videos will assist in establishing locales when necessary. These images or videos will be projected not as a panoramic backdrop but rendered creatively in unexpected places such as the body of an actor, in a luggage prop, on the floor, etc.

I. AN ORDINARY DAY

Whilst the audience enter the theatre, recorded interviews of people who experienced the 1990 earthquake will overlap each other--an orchestra of voices. They speak of mundane things they were doing prior to the earthquake like changing the bedsheets, purchasing groceries at a local supermarket, praying at a church, etc. These interviews are layered with a soft music that befits remembrance.

Dim white lights washes the stage.

There are scattered props/objects everywhere---an open umbrella, a Philippine flag, a

transistor radio, a rifle, a luggage, a bed, etc.

II. THINGS WE LEFT BEHIND

Lights fade out and an SFX of an airport can be heard---boarding announcements, people chattering, etc.

A spotlight slowly lights up ACTOR 1 who is wearing a trench coat with a luggage.

MIKE/ACTOR 1

Nanay Iding is now 88 years old. When I was growing up in Aritao, Nueva Vizcaya, I'd always go to the *palengke* to ask for *baon* before I head to school. She never fails to amaze me how she smokes her Ilokano brown cigarette the other way around---the lit part, inside her mouth whilst the bud is where the smoke goes out. I don't know why she does it that way. I never asked. I always suspected this is the reason why she is so thin as a skeleton. All her *suki* knows her by this peculiar way of smoking. They argue the freshness of her vegetables and haggle for discounts without minding how she smoke as if it is the most natural thing. She'd momentarily take the cigarette out when she retorts back that her vegetables are fresh because they come all the way from Baguio and discounts can only be made if they can smoke a full cigarette the way she does! They don't bargain after that.

She raised me on her own. She works hard in the *palengke* to the point that I don't see her for a full week at the *kubo*. My mother died giving birth to me and my father left when I was 6 or 7. Nanay Iding never told me the reason why. Whenever I try to talk to her about him, she'd always find a way to talk about something else until I get tired of trying.

She pushed me to study hard and find a better life for myself outside of our small town Aritao. She sent me to Baguio to study at St. Louis University because it's the only best school she knew or heard from her *suki*. I would only go home during summer breaks during my first two years. When I got myself a girlfriend on my 3rd year, I stopped completely going home. I found myself a job as a cook in a restaurant in Trinidad but I didn't care. Life was hard but I was happy living with her.

When Nanay Iding found out about her, she was furious. She said she didn't break her back for me to end up as a husband at a young age. We had fights. One day she showed up....and weeks later she took me to Olongapo to apply at the American base. She said all young men in our town were starting to leave for America. I should too.

On the day I boarded the ship, she told me not to look back. I didn't want to leave. I didn't want to leave her....I didn't know where she was....If she was still alive....

Nanay Iding is dying. I did not go home for 26 years. I was angry at her. She told me not to look back and so I did.

I did not notice that 26 years already passed. Time is sometimes a perpetually flat line that you think will not end until something disrupts it. You only recognise it when it gets punctuated by an unexpected moment such as death knocking at your doorstep. Only then you realise how actually fleeting it is.

It was 1990 when I left. We make choices in life that we only realise the weight later. If the choices I made were different in 1990, today would have been different. How different would it be I wonder.

Lights slowly dim to low. Francis Magallona's "Mga Kababayan Ko" song will fade soft to full.

III. THE RETURN

ACTOR 1 will take off his trenchcoat. He is inside wearing a loose t-shirt with a big peace sign on the centre and a "hip-hop pants" typical in early 1990s. He opens his luggage and takes his Chicago bulls cap. We see him transform from a man in his 40s to a young man on his early 20s.

The other actors will slowly enter the stage.

Text of years '2015', '2002', '1997', '1995', etc. will be projected in different parts of the stage or actors. After indicating the year, images or videos of significant events will be projected.

The actors will act, with the aid of props, as if they were actively part of those events.

The audio of the videos will intermittently overpower the Francis Magalona song to highlight speeches.

The entire scene is quick vignettes; sequences of movement aided by montage of images.

- **2015**
The SAF Mamasapano Clash
We see the actors in military coats and rifles fighting for their lives
- **2013**
Janet Napoles surrenders to President Aquino
We see the actors amongst those people in the anti-corruption rally in Luneta.
- **2011**
Botched Rizal Grandstand Hostage Rescue.
We see the actors with white banners written with Chinese characters amongst the HongKong protesters
- **2010**
President Aquino's "Kayo ang boss ko" Inauguration Ceremony
We see the actors holding small Philippine flags amongst the crowd.
- **2009**
Ondoy
We see the actors recreating that powerful clip of people on top of a house roof floating in a raging river
- **2008**
Charice Pempengco singing with Celine Dion overlapped with MV Princess of the Stars Sinking
We see the actors as part of the bereaved families.

- **2005**
Hello Garci Scandal overlapped with FPJ burial procession
We see the actors amongst those throwing white flowers in the funeral procession
- **2003**
Manny Pacquiao Boxing Win overlapped with the Oakwood Mutiny
We see 2 actors waving the Philippine flag amongst those who watched the match whilst the other 2 actors in military rifle.
- **2002**
Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's "I will not run for election" speech
We see the actors walking away from where the video is projected as if they do not believe the speech.
- **2001**
Edsa 2, Edsa 3
We see the 2 actors amongst the protesters in front of the Mother Mary sculpture in EDSA whilst the other actor is dressed up like the pro-Erap protesters hurling stones at police officers.
- **1999**
Miriam Quiambao's Miss Universe win
- **1998**
Joseph Estrada's "Huwag ninyo akong subukan" speech
We see the actors rejoicing amongst the crowd during the inauguration.
- **1995**
Peace Agreement with MNLF-Nur Misuari
We see the actors in MILF uniform raising their rifles in celebration
- **1994**
Miss Universe in the Philippines
- **1993**
Pagoda Tragedy
We see the actors holding lit candles

- **1992**
Lea Salonga's Miss Saigon
- **1991**
Mount Pinatubo eruption overlapped with US Base's closing
We see the actors in umbrella and masks. Ashes raining on stage.

Music slowly fades out as the text '1990' is projected. Lights to black out with only the text visible.

IV. 1990

Lights fade in with a double-size bed at the centre. A transistor radio is on top of the side table. The song, "Can this be love?," by Smokey Mountain can be heard coming from the transistor radio.

We can see ACTOR 1 and ACTOR 2 lying on the bed against each other's back. From the audience's seats, their faces are not visible.

A live video camera situated on the ceiling pointed down to the bed will capture and project their faces/movements to the stage walls so the audience can see.

ACTOR 2 turns the transistor radio off.

ACTOR 2

Have you decided, Mike?

MIKE/ACTOR 1

I want to stay. You know that.

ACTOR 2

I was scared of Nanay Iding this morning. You did not defend me. You did not defend us.

MIKE/ACTOR 1

I cannot disobey her. She raised me. I cannot say anything contrary. I cannot disrespect her.

Silence

She said after she've bought all the *gulays*, she will be back tomorrow to get me...I don't know what to do.

ACTOR 2

What's going to happen to us?

MIKE/ACTOR 1

Don't you sometimes think that we rushed everything?

ACTOR 2

Why are you doubting now?

MIKE/ACTOR 1

I don't know what is right anymore. She may be right... how can I give you a better life?

ACTOR 2

We don't need anything....

MIKE/ACTOR 1

Will that be enough? Can we endure it all?

ACTOR 2

Remember when we moved into this apartment? We did not have anything..

The live video being projected to the stage wall will be seamlessly replaced with a recorded video of the actors in previous tender caring moments in different configurations (contrary to the present).

We locked ourselves for three days. We just made love. We played the scrabbles and who ever gets defeated will do something he or she has never done before....like you sucking my breast...We discovered together what our bodies can do. How far we can take them. You run your fingers along the curves of my body.

Silence

The room was bare. We owned nothing. We only had this bed but we said we will make it work. We will find ways to live...to live together...See we now have a radio...Slowly we are building ourselves a place...

Silence

Remember...we would talk all night--talk of what we want for the future... Maybe after we've saved enough.... we'll go to Manila and find better work or you'll come with me to Abra and help Nanang and Tatang grow the farm.

We are not sure of anything but we were not doubting. We were not questioning the future. We are shaping it...

Whilst Actor 2 continues to speak Actor 1 slowly slides in the middle of the bed that have a hidden opening. He will slowly slide and sink in the bed. He will disappear. Actor 2 will continue without noticing this.

We said we will make it work. We will find ways to live...to live together.

I went to the barangay clinic this morning...I'm pregnant... I'm scared...

Lights slowly fade out. The recorded video will continue playing.

Music plays. Lights fade out..

V. THE EARTHQUAKE

A video of murmuration---flocks of birds flying in patterns will be projected in the entire stage

MIKE/ACTOR 1

I actually remember the attempt to go back.

I stopped the *jeepney* and jumped out.

I did not think how painful it must have been for Nanay Iding to see me walk away. All I was thinking was how coward I was for leaving her.

I immediately crossed the road and stopped a Victory liner bus. Inside the bus, I could see in the distance flocks of birds flying in mesmerising patterns...

The ensemble actors will enter the stage one by one and will help in reenacting the below but in complete silence.

It was so beautiful to watch...until the pattern was suddenly shattered, the bus abruptly stopped, and we felt the ground shaking. Everyone inside the bus were screaming. Kids crying....Lovers embracing each other.... I didn't know what was happening...

We all rushed to get out of the bus. All cars, trucks, jeepneys, and buses stopped. People

were all standing out in the open... disoriented and trying to make sense of what just happened. I thought of Nanay Iding where could she possibly be...If she is safe...

When the tremors stopped, I looked for a bus that could take me back to the other direction. I was anxious to look for Nanay Iding....There were landslides everywhere....fallen Meracllo posts....uprooted trees.... I found her.....We had to walk for hours....Stop for the strong aftershocks....It took us two days to get back to Aritao...My feet was swollen...I had to carry Nanay Iding at my back when she can no longer walk... There were some kind people who'd let us ride at the back of their trucks until where the road permits.... During the entire journey, everywhere you look are collapsed houses.... people in shocked...people crying for loss houses....or maybe loss loved ones....

After we reached Aritao...I left Nanay Iding... Though she was furious....I left for Baguio.....It was impossible to go back to Baguio....The roads were blocked.It took me four days...There was chaos everywhere...People slept in the streets...I didn't know where to start looking for her.... I went to our flat and saw it in ruins...I went to all the hospitals....I didn't find her....I only saw death and destruction..... I went home to Aritao with no information of her whereabouts....I keep on going back to Baguio for months without seeing here....until the day came I had to board the ship without know she was still alive or not...

The actors slowly takes different areas on the stage.

Complete silence.

Images of the 1990 Luzon earthquake will be projected. Lights shift.

ACTOR 3

“In Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, the tallest building in the city, a six-story concrete school building housing the Christian College of the Philippines, collapsed during the earthquake, which occurred during school hours. Around 154 people were killed at the

CCP building.

A 20-year old high school student, Robin Garcia, was later credited with rescuing at least eight students and teachers by twice returning under the rubble to retrieve survivors. Garcia was killed by an aftershock hours after the quake while trying to rescue more survivors, and he received several posthumous tributes, including medals of honor.

The city suffered about 363 casualties, (including 274 who were trapped), with 154 of them dead.”

ACTOR 4

“In Dagupan City, about 90 buildings in the city were damaged, and about 20 collapsed. The city sank..Buildings sank as much as 1 metre. The earthquake caused a decrease in the elevation of the city and made several areas flooded. The city suffered 64 casualties of which 47 survived and 17 died. Most injuries were sustained during stampedes at a university building and a theater. 100,000 families were displaced when two coastal villages sank.”

ACTOR 2

“Baguio City was among the areas hardest hit by the Luzon earthquake. The earthquake caused collapsed buildings, including private homes, establishments, hotels, factories, university, and government buildings. The quake destroyed electric, water and communication lines in the city. Kennon Road, as well as other access routes to the

mountain city, were shut down due to landslides and it took three days before enough landslide debris was cleared to allow access by road to the stricken city.

Baguio City was isolated from the rest of the Philippines for the first 48 hours after the quake. Damage at Loakan Airport rendered access to the city by air limited through helicopters.

One of the more prominent buildings destroyed was the Hyatt Terraces Hotel where at least eighty hotel employees and guests were killed. However, three hotel employees were pulled out alive after having been buried under the rubble for nearly two weeks, and after international rescue teams had abandoned the site convinced there were no more survivors.

Luisa Mallorca and Arnel Calabria were extricated from the rubble 11 days after the quake, while hotel cook Pedrito Dy was recovered alive 14 days following the earthquake. All three survived in part by drinking their own urine and in Dy's case, rainwater.”

The actors will exit the stage.

Complete silence.

Lights slowly fade out with a low light remaining.

VI. DEATHBED

NANAY IDING/ACTOR 3

I'm glad you came home.

MIKE/ACTOR 1

Sorry *Nanay*. It took me this long.

NANAY IDING/ACTOR 3

It did not feel it that long.

Smiles

You are physically not here but you are always in my thoughts...I'm always trying to imagine you and your life in America. I try to put you inside the American movies I've seen. You are walking in the streets of New York, playing with snow, in a dinner table abundant with food...How are you?

MIKE/ACTOR 1

I'm also old now *Nanay*...Look at me...

NANAY IDING/ACTOR 3

You are still young...

MIKE/ACTOR 1

I was married but it didn't work out. We didn't have any kids. I left the service long time ago. I now work in a restaurant...goes home to a small flat. I sometimes ask myself why am I staying in America. I keep on thinking of leaving; of returning home but never found the will...

NANAY IDING/ACTOR 3

You are now home...

MIKE/ACTOR 1

You know *Nanay*...Life is overwhelming, isn't it? Sometimes you just don't decide...You just want to float...to drift....because that way things are somehow steady...I don't want things to tremble...because I don't know how everything I've been containing inside me will move....I'm sorry *Nanay* if I failed you...I'm not living the great life that you imagined for me...

NANAY IDING/ACTOR 3

Stop it Mike...Your life is still ahead of you...I'm sorry if I pushed you so hard...if I pushed you away....

Picks up a cigarette and will attempt to light a cigarette

MIKE/ACTOR 1

Nanay, why are still smoking?

NANAY IDING/ACTOR 3

I'm already dying...I already made it this far smoking..Another cigarette will not make a difference...

She smokes

You never told me...Did you see her when you went back to Baguio? You went there several times before you boarded the ship...

MIKE/ACTOR 1

I never did *Nanay*..Until now, I wonder whatever happened to her...

NANAY IDING/ACTOR 3

Open that cabinet and take out the can of biscuits... When you started sending money, I kept them all. I saved them all. Use it...The rubbles are no longer there....

Lights slowly fade out.

A vintage TV news report on the earthquake will be projected on stage.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Yu3b8lGxxwI

Music

-END-