

Killing the Issue: Synopsis

Young Arthur Reyes has just returned home from Davao to the province of Bajada, where his family the Reyes clan has dominated politics for generations. He chats with his older brother Reymond, the provincial SK Federation chairman and provincial board member. During the chat he learns that the acclaimed journalist Celestino Fernandez, a noted critic of the Reyes clan, will be coming to the province to hold a symposium with fellow journalists. When his parents, Governor Manny Reyes Jr. and Mayor Ruth Cipriano Reyes, join in the conversation, he gets the foreboding that the family is planning something in response to Fernandez' arrival. He excuses himself and leaves. When he departs, his grandfather, Congressman Manny Reyes Sr. enters, and the three generations of Reyeses begin discussing Fernandez. In recent press conferences and public statements, the journalist has dropped hints that he has uncovered some anomaly by the Reyeses, most importantly the family secret about a crime Manny Sr. once committed. The family agrees to a plan to kill Fernandez that morning and massacre the whole convoy of journalists and guests with him. The plot will involve the Provincial police, and blame will be thrown both on a possible private initiative or the NPA active in the area of the massacre. Shortly after they discuss the plan and in spite of Reymond's protestations when they find out the convoy has children, it is executed. Ruth then excuses herself to unpack Arthur's things. The Governor and the Congressman send Reymond to the site to report on the progress and to strengthen his tolerance for gore. Reymond makes a report via phone to his father, but all of a sudden he drops the phone, apparently in fury. The Governor thinks his son found an acquaintance in the massacre, and laughs this off, remarking his son's need to learn how to deal with these things. While the Governor peruses papers, Ruth re-enters, livid with fury and holding some papers and Arthur's attaché case. The Governor reads these papers and finds out the cause of this wrath: Arthur was the journalist the old Congressman was cursing a while back. He looks at the other contents of the attaché case and discovers an anomalous intimacy between Arthur and Fernandez. In one of the letters, Fernandez reminds Arthur to follow the convoy on time. Before it could sink in for the Governor, Reymond arrives, and his voice, screaming Arthur's name, could be heard before the curtains fall.

Killing the Issue

A Play in One Act

The Characters of the Play

Hon. Emmanuel “Manny ” Reyes Sr.. (80’s): Congressman of the 2nd District in the Province of Bajada

Hon. Emmanuel “Manny ” Reyes Jr. (60’s): Governor of the Province of Bajada, Manny Sr.’s son.

Hon. Ruth Cipriano – Reyes (60’s): Daughter of Mayor of Municipality of Bacudo and sister of Mayor of the Municipality of Sto. Tomas, Manny Jr’s wife.

Hon. Raymond Paul Cipriano – Reyes (20’s): Chair of the League of Barangays, Bajada Chapter and ex officio member of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan

Arthur James Cipriano – Reyes (20’s, about two years younger than Raymond): younger son of Manny Jr. and Raymond

Insp. John Paul Aladin (44): Provincial Chief of Police

Props used in the Play

Tables, overly expensive looking furniture, a TV, some food, maids and henchmen

General Setting: In the Province of Bajada, somewhere in Christian Mindanao, Philippines, the present time and consciousness, noon up to afternoon

The action of the play is completed within twenty-four hours.

Mise en scene: In the **Living Room of the Reyes Mansion**, Municipality of Sto. Tomas, Province of Bajada. There are expensive looking chairs and a coffee table at center with a Flat screen TV of the most expensive kind nearby. A door leading outside is to the left, while one leading to the rest of the house is to the right. There is a desk upstage and a radio to the right near the door. A white carpet dominates the floor. The room is furnished with luxury. Maids are constantly sweeping the floor or dusting the tops of shelves and tables.

(ARTHUR REYES is sitting on one of the chairs in front, texting. He has a beautiful face, with shoulder length brown hair tied neatly in a pony tail. He has an elegant slenderness that goes well with the long sleeved polo shirt he is wearing. He moves with some degree of femininity. He speaks articulately with an indifferent nonchalance)

(Enter RAYMOND REYES, with a number of maids bringing some papers and food. Raymond is taller than Arthur. The two bear some resemblance, but Arthur has smoother skin and Raymond a more tanned complexion. Raymond's hair is in a short barber's cut parted to the left. He is also more muscular than Arthur. The maids bring the food to the coffee table and the papers on the desk.)

Raymond: *(to a maid)* Turn on the TV. *(to Arthur)* You're going somewhere already, Arthur? Why you just arrived from Davao.

Arthur: Kuya Raymond! I have a date. It's not my fault I'm popular.

Raymond: But it will be your fault if something happens to you because of that popularity, so be careful.

Arthur: True. In every crime, the victim's stupidity is the lead culprit. But by the way-

Raymond: - wait. *(points to the flat screen TV)*

TV: *Journalist and public intellectual Celestino Fernandez is expected to arrive today in the Municipality of Sto. Tomas in the Province of Bajada to begin his nation-wide intellectual symposium tour entitled "Violence in the Mind: Human Rights Violations on the Level of Thought." Fernandez' decision to begin the tour in the province, stronghold of the Reyes Clan, was not without controversy. Not a year has passed since the acclaimed political theorist first criticized the family, which has been in power in the province for five generations, and includes current Governor Emmanuel Jr. Aside from fears for Fernandez' safety, low participation in the symposium, in the face of high public approval for the Reyes Clan is also feared.*

And to bring us the showbiz news – (Raymond turns the radio off)

Raymond: Our *tiktik* was right, it was aired nationally...

Arthur: So *kuya* Raymond? What will the family do?

Raymond: I can't tell you. Have you unpacked? (*As they converse he is signing papers*)

Arthur: No I haven't yet. I'll do it when I get back.

Raymond: Oh nonsense. (*to maid*) Beng, you can unpack Arthur's things now.

Maid: Yes, *kuya* (*about to leave*)

Arthur: No wait Beng, stop. I'll do it *na lang lagi*, you can go.

Maid: Yes, *kuya* (*exits to the right*)

Reymond: What's in your bags anyway that you don't want the maids to unpack it for you?

Arthur: Nothing dangerous, I just don't like the idea of having people do things for me. But come on, tell me. What are you going to talk about with *lolo* today?

Raymond: Now how did you know I and papa are going to tell him something? I told you, you can't know. It's for officials only.

Arthur: (*scowling*) Really now, you politicians just can't be reached anymore. Whatever happened to transparency.

Raymond: I owe you no transparency, you're not a registered voter. I wouldn't owe you any transparency if you were.

Arthur: Oh come on *kuya*, spill. For affection's sake, if not for an FOI law.

Raymond: No.

Arthur: Even if I say lease? (*walks slowly to position himself behind Raymond*)

Raymond: I said no. If you want to be in the know, enter politics. And besides, you're *tabian*, if you know something everybody ends up knowing about it.

Arthur: Ah yes, having the knack for talking is one of my more flattering defects.

Raymond: How lovably vain you are. (*laughs. rolls eyes. scowls at paper he is holding*) Domestic violence in Bacudo is up again. When will this end..? (*realizes Arthur is peeking at his papers*) Oh you're as nosy as a journalist, will you stop it!

Arthur: (*laughs*) I like being curious, it dispels the boredom.

Raymond: You wouldn't be so bored if you weren't wasting your time being idle, you know. And be careful with that curiosity of yours, curiosity kills the journalist (*laughs at his own joke with a sinister air*).

Arthur: (*distractedly*) Yes, it can be quite dangerous... (*snaps back to attention*) Well, about that domestic violence problem of yours.

Raymond: (*exasperated*) It never ends, really. And there's barely anything we could do to solve it, taking the men into custody could only do so much.

Arthur: *(after a moment of contemplation)* What if you provide livelihood seminars to the poorer areas?

Raymond: What does that have to do with domestic violence?

Arthur: *(distractedly gets some papers from Raymond's pile)* I'm guessing the main cause of instances of fighting is livelihood related?

Raymond: Yes, apparently, husbands beat their wives when wives begin nagging about their husbands' not working.

Arthur: And I'm guessing husbands always say as an excuse that working is difficult and pointless because you can never be rich with the menial sources of income available to you?

Raymond: Now how did you know that? Board member Balasabas did say that.

Arthur: If you start livelihood seminars, that will help change their mind sets about small-time businesses. And you can include seminars on sensible saving practices as well as counselling for unhappy marriages in that budget. *(seems happy with himself)*

Raymond: *(sees the merit of the idea but is sceptical)* Hm... I'll think about it.

Arthur: *(laughs, returns to his seat)* What a typically politician response. By the way *kuya* - don't you have classes? We have a saint's feast day in the Ateneo de Davao, but aren't you from a State University?

Raymond: *Asus*, I have much more important things to worry about. Well, Education is still important of course, but my duties as a Baranggay Captain come first.

Arthur: Captain of the whole province, you never mentioned. When mama arranged it with the COMELEC to let you run for SK even though you were over-aged, I thought that would be the end of it. But to reach the provincial level!

Raymond: *(with affected vanity)* It helps, I guess, that I look youthful.

Arthur: And you say I'm vain *(laughs)*. But in any case, you never mentioned this to me when I arrived. Imagine how I felt when I was told that my *kuya* had become the chairman of the Baranggay Federation for the whole province. *(theatrically)* How poorly, I thought, do people regard their familial relations.

Raymond: Oh don't tell me *nangluod ka*. *(laughs)* Well, I figured you'd know about it anyway.

Arthur: Still, when first meeting someone after a period of time, it is only proper courtesy to mention a fact that has not yet been established between the two of you, regardless of whether both of you are aware of it or not. You didn't even mention it when I came home last night. *(feigns luod)*

Raymond: Ah well, I'll be leaving the courtesy to you, that would be your department. But point is I have the SK and the board to think about now

– though admittedly there’s nothing much to think about with the SK–
so going to class wouldn’t be that important. And besides, what’s the use
of having *tita* Jane as our Dean? If I’m right, she’s even *ninang* to our
PolSci Chairperson’s wedding. So heck. I’ll still have high grades.

Arthur: *(laughs resignedly)* The youth is the future of the Fatherland!

(Enter Gov. Manny Jr. and Mayor Ruth with another entourage of maids and with some henchmen. Manny Jr. is shorter than Arthur. His big stomach is bulging out from behind his Barong Tagalog. His wavy hair is in an army cut. In general he looks like a bulldog. Ruth is around the same height, and she looks like a ripe rambutan. Her curly hair, as brown as Arthur’s, is shoulder length. Her clothes and makeup look expensive and churchy. If Manny Jr. is a bulldog, she looks like a Chow-Chow.)

Gov. Manny Jr: *(obviously not hearing the preceding conversation)* If you know that why don’t you make something out of your own future, you *buang!*
(Arthur makes obeisance. He kisses the boy on the forehead) You know that your *kuya* is now the Provincial SK Chairman?

Arthur: *Opo, pa.* I’ve heard of it back in Davao.

Ruth: And what about you? You wouldn’t even try to be Club President! Oh you’re wasting your potential, dear! *(the couple sit down.)*

Gov Manny Jr.: *(to Ruth)* Make me a cup of coffee.

Ruth: Raymond.

(Raymond gestures to maids to make coffee. A maid obeys)

Ruth: *(to Arthur)* What time did you leave Davao yesterday?

Arthur: Around 6, ma. I had something to do before that.

Gov. Manny Jr.: Flirting with someone again? *Uwagon!* *(laughs)* I was not able to meet you last night, I had to attend an SK Federation meeting – *pastilan*, those kids were stupid. Their parents have done nothing to make them intelligent.

Arthur: They're still the first generation, pa. Give them a few more generations and they'll learn the trade.

Gov Manny Jr.: True. But you are not one to talk, you opted out of politics – you are wasting your privilege. *(theatrically)* You, *dong*, happen to be the issue of five generations of politicians! *(Gets one of the newspapers from the coffee table.)* Well, at least you are not causing trouble like those stupid *aktibistas*. *(glares at Arthur)* Are you?

Arthur: Don't worry pa. I have my convictions, but I'm not so in love with it as to be an activist.

Ruth: Now it's a good thing you only look like an activist – oh would you fix that hair of yours dear..!

Arthur: Oh no ma, activists don't wear their hair long anymore, the hippies of the 70's realized conditioner is too bourgeois. One-inch to skinhead is

the new hair range for activists. In fact they don't think much of me, I'm far too stylish to sympathize with the masses. Besides, I like this long hair, it's allowed me to experience *many things*.

Ruth: What kind of things, if I may ask?

Arthur: The kind I wouldn't tell my mother, of course (*pecks her on the cheek as she giggles*).

Gov Manny Jr.: (*laughs*) Well, it's a relief too that you are not making noise like these *pinisting* journalists. (*opens the paper he is holding*) *Mga yawa*. They don't see anything good, all they see are the mistakes.

Arthur: Ah, that's true, pa. In the Philippines, all that those in position are saying is that they've been doing everything right, while the opposition and the media say that the administration is doing everything wrong. Nobody seems to want to listen.

Gov Manny Jr.: (*laughs*) Exactly!

Ruth: Oh, would you reconsider for me, *nak*? You're far more articulate than many of the *baga 'g-nawongs* that have the gall to run. Try running for some office for me, will you?

Arthur: I dare not do so, ma. I might win.

Gov Manny Jr.: Ay you are hopeless. (*laughs. sips coffee but finds it too sweet*) *Leche*. This is too sweet. (*slams it on the table, much coffee spills. to maid*)

clean that, and make me another cup. (*The maid obeys tremblingly. he reads the papers again*) *Putang ina*, this Celestino Fernandez! All he knows is to attack LGUs. If he is not accusing them of making useless projects, he would be calling them useless themselves for not doing anything. What will you do to impress this *yawa*!? And what he said on the radio last night – oh, your *lolo* will be so angry!

Arthur: (*with some anxiety*) What he said last night, pa..?

Gov Manny Jr.: Ay, you tell him, dear. My blood pressure will go up again.

Ruth: Well he was implying something during the press con about this symposium of his here. When he was asked if he was not afraid of the family, he answered – now how did that go..? “I am afraid of neither the bolo of the Old Reyes’ past, nor the Tank of the younger Reyes’ present. I am even brave enough to uncover them.” I was at Epifania’s this morning for a meeting of the Couples for Christ wives, it’s the talk of the town.

(*Arthur is visibly aghast, but his family does not notice it*)

Gov Manny Jr.: The *putang ina* knows about the tank, but he knows something else, I tell you.

Arthur: (*after a pause. with composure*) I have to excuse myself, pa, ma. I have to meet someone. I’ll try to come home early.

Gov Manny Jr.: (*raises eyebrow*) Going off to flirt again? (*laughs*) At least you are spreading our genes. Go on, leave now. We have to talk to your *lolo* later. You'll just be distracting him again.

Ruth: Do come home early tonight, I want to take you to Salud's dinner party, her daughter Terry has just returned from Manila with her Chinese boyfriend. You remember Terry dear, don't you?

Arthur: (*in a rush*) Well, not as much as I should, perhaps.

Ruth: You were always very warm with Terry, I thought you had something going on.

Arthur: (*with sentimental amicability, still in a rush*) Well, we find new people to be warm with. (*motions to leave. With great anxiety*) Now I really must excuse myself.

Ruth: Oh wait, have you unpacked?

Arthur: (*stops on his tracks*) Not yet ma, but I'll just do it later.

Ruth: Oh let the *achays* do it, what's the use of having *achays*.

Arthur: (*almost consternated*) Oh no ma, I insist. I'll be unpacking them myself.

Ruth: (*affectionately*) Are you ordering me!?! (*giggles*) Just go, already!

Arthur: (*kisses mother and father*) Okay. *Kuya*.

Raymond: Yeah, take care.

Gov Manny Jr.: Take one of the cars (*gestures to one of the henchmen*)

Arthur: Oh no, pa, I prefer commuting. I haven't commuted here in Sto Tomas for a while, I want to reminisce. (*to the henchmen*) You can stay here, Boy. (*to the family*) I'll go ahead.

(Exeunt Arthur in a rush to the left)

Gov Manny Jr.: (*follows Arthur with his eyes. Affectionately*) Ay that boy is hopeless. (*reading the paper*) *Putang ina* this Fernandez. *Kahilas!* Listen to what he wrote on this column of his:

“the underlying elitism that manifested itself in the Magdalo-Magdiwang rivalry crippled the Revolution and it still cripples us today, because the elitists (note that I do not use here “the elite”) never consider the capabilities of those whom they perceive are below them...”

Funny, because he himself is an elitist! *Inglisero!* (*puts down the paper violently.*) I hope papa agrees to the plan!

Ruth: I've been nothing but tears and hurt feelings in front of the Couples wives and with the Gabriela people. Have you dealt with the Federation, Ray?

Raymond: Not without difficulty. Arthur's the only actor among us, you know!

Ruth: (*laughs*) What did you do, dear?

Raymond: When Fernandez was mentioned in the Federation meeting, I pretended to be unaffected. But in a few moments, I pretended to be bothered. When they fell silent, I explained to the idiots that “I was just hurt because all the family gets after five generations of service is criticism.” I also brought up the issue of extra-judicial killings, and I said if I had only known they’d suspect me and my family I should never have taken the responsibility of chairman. Finally I apologized for digressing from the Order of Business of the Federation. Basically, I just did what *tito* Edward pulled off in the *Sangguniang Panlalawigan*.

Gov Manny Jr.: (*laughs*) And what do they think of Fernandez now?

Raymond: *Hilas*, an elitist who never understood their sufferings.

Gov Manny Jr.: Good! Now we are no longer the sole suspects, the angle of a privately motivated directive could be seen. It is a good thing our appeal is populist while Fernandez is seen as being *hilas*. (*gestures to the maid to hand him another newspaper*)

Ruth: Everything seems to be in order, I think we ought to call papa. (*Rises. to Raymond*) Come, let’s get your *lolo*.

Raymond: Yes, ma (*he and Ruth exit*)

Gov Manny Jr.: (*reads papers. After a short while, he gets his cellphone*) Hello John Paul. Come over ... What, and where did Cocoy take the men? What happened..? (*listens.*)

(*Re-enter Raymond and Ruth, with **Cong. Manny Sr.** The Congressman is old, but he is just as plump as his son Manny Jr. His army cut hair is entirely white. His face is ruddy, making him look like a mastiff. His age however imposes a high amount of respect from all the other characters. They crowd around him like little children clambering up a scowling Buddha.*)

Gov Manny Jr: *(stands up to greet father)* Papa, have you had a good sleep?

Cong Manny Jr.: Yes, but *Dios mio*, I really cannot deny it anymore, I am old. Just walking is becoming tiring! *(laughs)*

Raymond: *Tito Cocoy* took some of the men with him, pa?

Gov Manny Jr: Yes. Apparently the idiot could not control his urges. He did the wife of a policeman in his city. Now the policeman found out!

Ruth: *(condescendingly)* Oh, men!

Raymond: Now where did I hear that story before..!?

Gov Manny Jr: Yes! It is familiar, isn't it?

Cong Manny Sr.: *(looks at the maids and henchmen and dismisses them to exit. They exit)*
(laughs suddenly) You young people have terrible memories! Have I not shared with you boys that the same thing happened to me when I was young? Ah, that Lucretia was one woman *(to Gov Manny Jr)* even your mother was no match for him, Jun! *(laughs)*.

Gov Manny Jr.: Do refresh our memories pa.

Cong Manny Sr.: *(with a glint of nostalgia in his eyes)* I was right around your age, Raymond , and was just a *capitan de baranggay* – yes, you have outdone me, I was not the Provincial chair of the Federation! – That Lucretia was the wife of a policeman, Collatino. When the *tonto* was out I did her. Well, she liked it *(laughs)* but she ratted to him anyway, the *puta*.

Ruth: *(the feminist in her is aghast)* Oh papa!

Cong. Manny Sr.: *(eyes her authoritatively, silencing the feminist in her. Continues as if she did not interrupt.)*The *gago* of a husband threatened to kill me, said it would be easy since I was just some kid. But the neighbourhood was for me, exactly because I was young – they could not believe a young man like me from a *buen familia* could do something like that. And to protect me, this neighbourhood thug named Dionisio – I forgot the family name – went so far as accusing the policeman of stealing his goat! And the neighbourhood’s attention was diverted to the goat! *(laughs)* One night, I drank with Dionisio and made him drunk. When the idiot was asleep, I took his bolo and went off to take care of the couple. It was his bolo, and he had a known grudge against the victims, so Dionisio was in prison until he died!

Gov Manny Jr.: Ah yes, now I recall. It’s been some time since you’ve told that story!
(He realizes. Suddenly, he looks aghast.)

Ruth: Manny?

Gov Manny Jr.: Papa! We have to kill that Fernandez! (*almost to himself*) It was just a countermeasure about the tank, but now we have to do this! We have to kill him!

Cong Manny Sr.: Wait, wait. Calm down. (*takes a deep breath*) I knew we were coming to this. But let us talk about it properly before deciding. This is a big decision. Inhale, exhale (*Manny Jr obeys*) Okay, let us decide on this properly (*to Raymond*) Ray *hijo*, could you lead us a prayer so God can enlighten us?

Raymond: *Opo* (*stands up*) Let us all be reminded that we are in the presence of God (*sign of the cross*). *Father God*, Thank you for giving us a new day. Please guide us as we make this very important decision. These we ask in Jesus' name, amen

All: Amen (*sign of the cross*)

Cong Manny Sr.: Okay, now that the *Espirito Santo* has blessed us with prudence, speak.

Gov Manny Jr.: (*stands. Clears his throat*) Papa, Celestino Fernandez will come to the province today. We have devised an operation to get rid of him and his entourage.

(*Cong Manny Sr. is surprised but seems passive*)

Cong Manny Sr.: How will you pull it off? How will you hide it from the police?

Gov Manny Jr.: That is easy. (*looks at window*) Ah, John Paul's timing is admirable.

(John Paul enters with an entourage of henchmen. He is as tall as Raymond, with army cut hair and he has a well-built body. He has a stiff expression on his face. His complexion is much darker than that of the other men. At a gesture from the old man the henchmen exit.)

Gov Manny Jr: John Paul. Before all else tell us, do you promise to be loyal to the family with respect to its plan I already mentioned to you?

John Paul: *(a bit surprised)* Yes sir.

Cong Manny Sr: So you have the Provincial chief of police with you. Good. Okay, let us continue.

Gov Manny Jr: As you can see papa, the Provincial chief of Police is ours. In fact, it will be the Provincial Police who will be doing the deed.

Cong Manny Sr.: But what about the national police? How will you avoid blame? You should pass the blame on others.

Gov Manny Jr: We have thought of that, papa – yes, Edward, Celinia, and Boboy are in this as well. We have specifically chosen to do the deed in our NPA hotspots here in the Province. Edward and Raymond here too have been talking in their respective assemblies to rally sympathy for us. We have also stirred a considerably high amount of public dislike for Fernandez that the angle of private action is more than likely.

Raymond: Yes, *lolo*. Tito Edward's been the one negotiating with the NPA, and things are going well. But Tita Cely says the people in Congress still

think we have little control of them. The possibility of rash action from them to please us – and also because Fernandez has been criticizing the NPA too – will make them very convincing suspects!

Cong Manny Sr: I see. *(after a pause that makes the other characters tense)* But really, is his criticism all the reason why you want to get rid of him? What are you hiding from me?

Gov Manny Jr: *(hesitates)* Well papa, when Fernandez was speaking on a radio station last night, he was asked if he was not afraid of the family. Well... he answered “I am afraid of neither the bolo of the Old Reyes’ past, nor the Tank of the younger Reyes’ present. I am even brave enough to uncover them.” *(Cong. Manny Sr. starts up)* I only remembered about it when you retold the story a while ago!

Cong Manny Sr: So you think he knows!? How!? What is he planning to do!?

Gov Manny Jr: One of our assets speculates that Fernandez’ men might have already found your bolo. It was taken to the police for evidence was it not? It would be very easy for an inquisitive man to look it up. He might be planning to meet with the henchmen who got it when he arrives – that is why he chose to start that tour of his here!

Cong Manny Sr: *(stands up)* Kill that *putang ina* and everyone in his convoy! He dares dishonour me and this family!? Get rid of him! *(Raymond tries to calm*

him down and leads him back to his seat) How do you intend to do the deed?

(Gov Manny Jr. gestures to Ruth)

Ruth: *(wipes sweat)* This will be how things go *po*, papa: Fernandez' convoy will enter from Davao into the municipality of Bacudo. Daddy, Mayor Pablo Cipriano, gave us his policemen to act here.

Cong Manny Sr: So Cipring is in it too?

Ruth: *Opo*, papa. SPO3 Tirona of Bacudo will meet the convoy and pretend to escort them to Buduan. Here, the policemen of Buduan and Bagong Quezon will pick them up. They will ask the convoy people to give their communication devices to secure the area, they will say there is an NPA-related conflict. After these communication devices are to be taken and destroyed, they will be brought to Sto. Tomas, far from the town, and they will be disposed of there.

Cong Manny Sr: Disposed of? How?

Ruth: Shot *po*, before being chopped to make burying them convenient.

(John Paul raises hand. Ruth looks at him and nods in consent)

John Paul: Let me just add sirs, ma'am, that for the whole operation SPO3 Ervic of Sto. Tomas, my wife's cousin, will be in charge. He's a newbie, sir, but I trust his capability.

Cong Manny Sr: That bolo worries me. *(to himself)* How on earth did he find out..? Are you sure if we kill Fernandez, we will get rid of that bolo?

Gov Manny Jr: We will make the convoy stop for a few hours in Bacudo before they are picked up to let Fernandez' man come after them. That way whoever that *tiktik* of his is would be included in the shooting. Besides papa, we are still not sure if Fernandez really has found it, or even if he actually knows what happened.

Cong Manny Sr: *(breathes deeply)* Yes, I should not worry too much. But it's best to be certain. *(smiles)* It is a well made plan! Who thought of it?

Gov Manny Jr.: It was Ruth, papa.

Cong Manny Sr.: *(smiling)* You are very clever, *hija*.

Ruth: *(bashfully accepts his beso on the cheek)* I learn from the best, papa.

Cong Manny Sr.: *(laughs. notices Raymond's pale face)* What's wrong, Ray?

Raymond: I don't know *lolo*, but I have a bad feeling. We're dealing with lives here, I realized.

Cong Manny Sr: *(laughs)* You have weak guts, boy. This is how you kill issues and problems: you kill the people making them.

Gov Manny Jr: Even better, reverse it: think that you are not killing a person, you are killing the issue.

Cong Manny Sr: Is that how you do it, Jun? Yes, you can do that too. But to be sure. You ought to make this boy's guts stronger. *(to Raymond)* Go to the site today after the whole thing is done, *hijo*. That will give you guts, a lot of it I can imagine! *(laughs)* Report to us if the plan was successful.

Raymond: *(loses his cool)* But, but I might throw up!

Cong Manny Sr: Oh it will be nothing! Just think they had slaughtered pigs.

Raymond: But, but *lolo*, pa – ma! I, I really don't think this is right. These, these are lives we're dealing with-

Cong Manny Sr: *(shuts him up with a gesture)* Elders say, you obey. Okay? *(Raymond nods with a mixture of continued reluctance and fear)* Good. Jun, make me a cup of coffee.

Gov Manny Jr.: *(distracted chatting with John Paul)* Oh, Ruth.

Ruth: Raymond.

Raymond: *(loudly)* Beng!

(Enter a maid. Raymond gestures to her to make coffee. The maid obeys)

(A cellphone rings. It is John Paul's. He answers it)

John Paul: Hello Vic... yes, yes- what, you've began moving!?! *(the family is startled)* It's a good thing the Congressman agreed! Wait... *(to the family)* they've started sirs. The convoy arrived early.

Ruth: Where are they now?

John Paul: Heading towards Sto. Tomas

Cong Manny Sr: Did you make them wait in Bacudo?

John Paul: Let me ask, sir (*phone*) how long did you stay in Bacudo..? (*to Manny Sr.*) just as was planned, sir: about two hours. They just started the plan early.

Gov Manny Jr: You mean to say even though the plan was out of schedule, they still went accordingly? This is a useful *bata* you found, this Ervic!

John Paul: I know, sir. He's a clever man. Oh, he was asking about the women and children.

Ruth and Raymond: Women and children!?

John Paul: Yes sir, ma'am, there are women and children in the convoy

Ruth: Violence against women!

Gov Manny Jr.: Oh drop it Ruth, women should get equality in everything, even the things men have to suffer.

(Cong Manny Sr. laughs)

Raymond: *(unable to restrain himself)* Lolo, the children, please, not the-

Cong Manny Sr: *(again shuts Raymond up with gesture)* Get rid of them too to keep things clean. That'll get rid of the NPA too. Imagine the public outcry!
(laughs)

John Paul: Okay sir. *(phone)* Include them. Call me if it's done.... okay... *(puts phone down)*

Cong Manny Sr: Brilliant! I was hesitant that a newbie is taking care of this, but now I am glad!

John Paul: We really don't have too many old timers now sir. Many of them have retired by now. In fact most of the people in this operation are newbies, sir Cocoy somehow took all the old timers with him.

(The family laughs except Raymond. Ruth observes his silence and tries to comfort him. He cheers up a bit.)

Cong Manny Sr: At any rate, we do need to secure more *bata*.

John Paul: Yes sir, I was going to suggest that.

Gov Manny Jr: John Paul. When you recruit more *bata* you should mention the tank we're about to get. That'll draw them in!

John Paul: A tank, sir!?

Gov Manny Jr: Yes! I was able to bribe this general, he even gave us some ammunition to go with it. It was a real bargain.

John Paul: This is sure to attract more men, sir!

Cong Manny Sr: *(to John Paul)* Really, boy. I am glad I took you in. The family's future depends on your able action.

John Paul: *(smiles. humbly)* I do my best to repay your kindness sir – my son is graduating thanks to your support!

Raymond: *(with hesitation)* By the way *lolo*, can-can I request something?

Cong Manny Sr: *(with pronounced gentleness this time)* Yes, Ray?

Raymond: *(encouraged by the display of gentleness)* You see *po*, baranggays don't have any budget to support domestic violence victims. Could you lead the legislation on this? *(Ruth perks up at hearing this)*

Gov Manny Jr: Why? Is not the DSWD doing anything? Stupid National Government.

Raymond: I don't know, pa. We always direct complaints to the DSWD, but they always answer that nobody is in the DSWD office. And besides, right now the DSWD is just acting like a juvenile prison. *(Manny Jr. shrugs his shoulder)*. Domestic violence is a big problem in baranggays. But the women aren't the only victims, men too are also indirectly affected. Poverty is the main cause of instances: usually when we ask, we are told that the battering begins when the wife complains too much to the husband –the image of the demure battered wife is far from true! For there really is no such thing as a demure house wife anymore. Really,

poverty is a big problem: we had this family who resorted to catching mice and lizards to eat.

Ruth: *Ugh*, why didn't they just ask from their neighbours!?

Raymond: The neighbours don't want to help, the family would just rely on them, they say. This is usually what happens

Cong Manny Sr: *(shudders)* What a relief we are in power.

Raymond: *(misinterprets what his grandfather said, face brightens with hope)*
That's why I believe if we give free vocational training it will really help. And if we incorporate counselling on anger management and marriage counselling, it will solve two problems at once. It will be a long term solution.

Cong Manny Sr: *(dismissive)* Okay, okay, draft the articles and I will pass it when I go to Manila – I have to go soon, anyway, I've been absent in the *Camara* for months already.

Ruth: *Oy*, my friend Bibeth is also asking about that House Resolution on allowing mining in Buduan papa. Her husband has foreign investors willing to fund operations already.

Cong Manny Sr.: *(slightly annoyed)* Yes, I'll check that, too.

Ruth: Oh and Luz wants your vote for this bill Gabriela is planning to pass next month, it's about women's health

Cong Manny Sr.: (*annoyed this time*) Okay, okay, I'll check that too. Where is that stupid secretary of mine when you need her.

Gov Manny Jr.: Remember you gave her a leave?

Cong Manny Sr.: And right before I'm to go to Manila. What a bad idea.

Gov Manny Jr.: (*mischievously, adding to the list*) Oh and papa, we seriously need to increase Bajada's IRA, we want to set up an intelligence fund

Cong Manny Sr.: (*very annoyed*) Why don't you just tell Lot-Lot at the NSO to magic the province's birth rate for the coming fiscal year! (*the family laughs, and when Manny Sr. realizes the joke he laughs too*)

Ruth: (*remembers her tasks*) Oh, I have to prepare for tonight's party, and I have to read those papers Salud sent me! But I'll go unpack Arthur's bags first. (*gestures to maid, and maid waits by the door for her. To Manny Jr.*) Update me if the plan was successful.

Gov Manny Jr.: Okay.

(exit Ruth with maid)

Cong Manny Sr.: I think that maid heard too much. (*to John Paul*) Take care of her after Ruth's done with her. Go have fun while you're at it.

John Paul: Yes sir.

(John Paul's phone rings again, and he picks it up)

John Paul: *(phone)* How did it go..? Okay... *(puts down the phone. to the family)* It's done sir.

Gov Manny Jr: It was fast! *(to Raymond)* Go *nak*, take a look and call us to confirm that Fernandez is dead.

Raymond: *(hesitantly)* Okay papa *(stands up)*

Cong Manny Sr: Wait. *(takes some money from pocket and gives to Raymond)* Here, treat the men to something!

Raymond: *Opo, lolo. (exits to the left)*

Cong Manny Sr: *(follows Raymond with eyes. To Manny Jr.)* You have a hardworking son.

Gov Manny Jr: I'm proud of both of them – even if Arthur's being a useless dandy he has remarkable insight too.

Cong Manny Sr: Yes, very good with his words that boy, hopeless case that he is. But what worries me about your *panganay* is that he does not seem to have the sense of responsibility for his “duty of privilege.”

Gov Manny Jr: Duty of privilege, papa?

Cong Manny Sr: I am certain you know what I mean, you feel it too of course. Though it is stronger with Cocoy and Edward *(laughs)*. Not only is Raymond a public servant himself, he was born into a family of public servants– that makes him doubly superior to the ordinary people. And because he is

better than them, it is his duty as it is ours to enjoy things in behalf of them. He must enjoy the privileges of power that are not given to everybody. We as leaders are obliged to be happy in behalf of the suffering masses. As Arthur would put it, *Noblesse oblige*.

Gov Manny Jr: Ah, I am still so young, papa.

Cong Mann Sr: Of course. You have a lot more rice to eat, *dong*. (*laughs. Looks around*) but *Dios mio*, how on earth can we enjoy for the masses when our house is this small? (*sighs*) you know what, in our five generations of service we have gotten very little, compared to some upstart who happens to be in Manila. We are just LGUs in faraway Mindanao, unfortunately. You are planning on becoming Congressman, right? Try to be as conspicuous as you can in the House so you can aim for Senator. The local politician's resources are really not enough to support us. (*sighs*) As for me I'm too old now, the reigns are yours, *dong*.

Gov Manny Jr: *Ginoo*, don't pressure me papa (*laughs*)

Cong Manny Sr: (*laughs along*) If I do not pressure you, what kind of a father would I be!

Gov Manny Jr: True! (*laughs.*)

(*Shouts the name of a maid, and maid enters. Gestures to the papers on the desk. The maid hands it to him. He dismisses the maid after receiving the papers*) Raymond has been bothering me to sign these ordinances for months now.

(Manny Jr. begins signing these papers while Manny Sr reads newspapers)

Cong Manny Sr.: *(after some minutes reading) Punyeta!*

Gov Manny Jr: What is it, pa?

Cong Manny Sr.: have you read this Zayd Suleiman? A new writer, it seems. Here, read this column of his on *Davao Star* *(hands the paper. maid takes it and hands it to Gov Manny Jr.)*

Gov Manny Jr.: *(reading) “The continued hegemony of the Reyeses in Bajada in spite of their decades of atrocities just goes to show that Mindanao politics is predominantly ‘makatao’ (personality based) rather than idea-based: There’s too much focus on personalities and not enough emphasis on ideas. But it must not be said that this problem is limited to Mindanao: This is a national problem. During People Power 1, for instance, the “fight” was between then president Marcos (a personality) and senator Ninoy Aquino (another personality). Was it not the case that the personality of the latter ‘party’ was transferred from Ninoy when he died to his widow Cory? It can even be said that this may very well be the reason why Mindanao Secession as a movement was unsuccessful: it was too focused on concepts. It took a P-Noy to sign the Bangsamoro deal, and a defeated villain in the person of Misuari to make it all the more a success.”*

Cong Manny Sr.: His tone infuriates me, as if he knows everything. Who is this *muklo*, writing as if he is somebody! He shouldn't be speaking, he's just a *moro*. In my time, we killed Muslims before they started bombing things. And now they're giving these cockroaches an autonomous state of their own!? Where is this country going – Ah, now I remember! Was not he that *terrorista* who criticized the SK some time ago?

Gov Manny Jr.: Yes, I recall, it was him. What a headache that was.

Cong Manny Sr.: Oh I hope he's part of Fernandez' convoy!

(a phone rings. Manny Jr. answers his own)

Gov Manny Jr.: *(phone)* Hello Ray..? I'll put you on loud speaker so your *lolo* can hear you *(presses something on the phone)*. Hello..?

Raymond (voice): *Hello, papa. I'm here in the area now. I can see it all... scattered everywhere... chopped to bits.... I feel like I'm going to throw up*

Gov Manny Jr.: *(giggles)* Wait, wait: think those are toys, just props for some *pelikula*

Raymond (phone): *Opo.... I feel better now*

(The sound of a car stopping is heard from the phone)

Gov Manny Jr.: *(laughs)* Have you arrived?

Raymond (phone): *Yes... ah, I'm starting to get sick again, it's so rancid.*

Gov Manny Jr.: *(laughs)* Then use a handkerchief, idiot!

Raymond (phone): *Opo (the sound of rustling cloth is heard. A bit less clear than before)
can you still hear me, pa?*

Gov Manny Jr: It's is a bit muffled but yes. Look for Fernandez' body. You know what he looks like?

Raymond: *Yes. Wait a moment... (momentary silence) I'm in front of his head, papa. I don't know where the rest of him is – ugh! They hit the back of the head with a bolo, and the brain's oozing out!*

Gov Manny Jr: *Kaarte! (laughs) Have Ervic wrap that up and bring it here – you do not have to touch it, have it placed at the back of the Fortuner! (laughs)*

Raymond (phone): *Opo*

Gov Manny Jr: Oh, and was anyone bringing a bolo among there?

Raymond (phone): *I'll just ask... (to Ervic) Bossing, was there anybody here who was bringing a bolo..? Okay (phone) They didn't find anything, papa. A few people followed, but they didn't find anything. They'd have noticed it immediately, because they took all the journalists' possessions.*

Gov Manny Jr: Okay... Ah! The journalists and their families will be wearing formal attire, of course. Try to look for a body with out of place attire there, Ray.

Raymond (phone): *Opo... (momentary silence) where did I see this polo... No... (breathing becomes rapid. The sound of running is heard) No! (the sound of the phone being thrown away is heard)*

Gov Manny Jr: Hello Ray? Ray, what happened?

(The continued shouts of “no” from Raymond are heard. He suddenly falls silent, with someone asking a hesitant “sir” heard. “That’s the one who followed,” the other voice can be heard saying. Violent sounds are heard and a gunshot. Raymond shouts “A sack! Putang ina give me a sack!” and the rustling of a sack is heard. The sound of running, then the loud sound of a vehicle starting up. Then the line is cut: the car has crushed the phone)

Gov Manny Jr: What happened to him? *(jokingly)* Oh, someone he knew was included! Tsk. He’ll learn, that boy. But to be sure, could you meet him, John Paul.

John Paul: Yes, sir. *(exits to the left. In a short while, the sound of a vehicle leaving is heard)*

Gov Manny Jr: What could have happened to that boy..? Oh well *(returns to signing papers)*

Cong Manny Sr.: *(after a while, stands up)* I think I will take another *siesta*. Tell me when Raymond has returned.

Gov Manny Jr.: *Opo, papa. (gestures to maids. Maids assist Manny Sr.)*

(Exeunt Manny Sr.)

(Ruth enters suddenly, holding some worn looking sheets of paper in one hand and a black attaché case in the other)

Ruth: *Punyeta!* Manny!

Gov Manny Jr: What is it?

Ruth: That Arthur! Look at this!?! *(hands the papers to Manny Jr.)*

(Manny Jr. reads, his face growing livid, while Ruth continues to curse)

Gov Manny Jr: *(furious)* Draft articles – Arthur – Arthur is that Zayd Suleiman!?! *Putang ina!* *(Tears the bits of paper to pieces, unable to speak out of anger)* He was that *warik-warik!*? He nearly cost his brother the SK post!

Ruth: *(controls Manny Jr.)* Dear, your heart! *(leads him back to the seat)*

Gov Manny Jr: That boy! We have allowed him to do what he wants, but he has gone beyond the limit, I say! What else is in that attaché case?

Ruth: I don't know. Here. *(hands him the attaché case. He takes another piece of paper inside and reads it)*. My temper rose when I saw these papers so I didn't bother looking at the rest. *(notices the gesticulation on her husband's face)* Why? What's in it?

Gov Manny Jr: It's from that Celestino Fernandez...! *(reads it silently)* *Putang ina*, how close they are, it is almost indecent...! *(reads quietly again)* ... “follow the convoy on time...”

Ruth: Follow the convoy on time...!?

(The sound of a vehicle is heard)

Gov Manny Jr: *Ginoo* Ruth! So that means..!? *(insanely)* *Ginoo!*

(The violent slam of a door and the shattering of car window glass is heard. The couple looks to the left)

Raymond (voice): *(in a lachrymose roar)* Pa! Ma! Arthur! It's Arthur..!

Curtain