

**Rite of Passage**  
**Glenn Sevilla Mas**

An Adaptation of Ma. Milagros Geremia-Lachica's  
"Sa Pagtubu kang Tahud"

Third Prize, English Full-Length Play  
2004 Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature

*for Tatay, Matias Jr.*  
*whose absence, now and even when he was still alive,*  
*helped me create Tiyoy Berning*

*and for Toto, Matias III*  
*because I could not be the father figure that he needed me to be*  
*when Tatay died*

*Rite of Passage* had a workshop production at the Callan Theatre of the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC on May 5, 2004. It was directed by Lara Haberberger with the following cast:

Isoy	Matt Dunphy
Manding Susing	Elise Dubois
Tiyoy Berning/Kardo	Ed Xavier
Pila/Mina	Katherine Hill
Other Men in the Barrio	Glenn Sevilla Mas

The play was also performed by Tanghalang Pilipino at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in June 2005 as part of Virgin Labfest 1. A year later, it was again performed by the same company also at the same venue, this time as part of "Best of Virgin Labfest 1". Herbie Go, Tanghalang Pilipino Artistic Director at that time, directed both productions.

### **The Play**

#### **Characters**

*Isoy – 15 years old*  
*Manding Susing – his aunt, a spinster, 45 years old*  
*Tiyoy Berning – the husband of another aunt, 50 years old*  
*Pila – a neighbor, 15 years old*  
*Mina – another neighbor, 18 years old*  
*Kardo – another neighbor, a widower, 40 years old*  
*The other men and boys in the barrio*

#### **Setting**

*The play takes place in a quiet barrio in central Philippines. At center stage is the back of a typical Filipino house made of wood, nipa and bamboo. Like most Filipino houses, this simple dwelling is raised several feet from the ground. The space under it is fenced and turned into an improvised chicken coop. Characters go up and down the house using the bamboo ladder found on the left side. Portions of the fourth wall have been removed to reveal two important rooms. To the left is the kitchen. Here, a table and two chairs, all plain and made of inexpensive wood, are found. A transistor radio is placed on the table. The sink is in one corner. On it is placed an earthen jar filled with potable water. Beside the jar are several plates, glasses and cooking and eating utensils. Next to the sink is the dapog (cooking area made of wood and earth). To the right is Manding Susing's bedroom. Here, a makeshift altar is found with its requisite images, framed and carved, of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. Fenced under the house are five chickens, four of them hens. Banana stalks abound near the side of the*

kitchen. Here, an old fence separates Manding Susing's lot from her neighbor's. A makeshift bathroom with nipa and bamboo walls is found on the other side of the fence. Like most bathrooms in rural Philippine areas, this one also doesn't have a roof. A portion of the bathroom's fourth wall is open. An improvised clothesline made of thin, inexpensive wire extends from the fence to the left wing of the stage.

### **Time and Place**

The early '80s. Municipality of Sibalom, province of Antique, Philippines. A barrio called Catungan IV.

## **ACT ONE**

### **Prologue**

*(At the foreground of the stage, a number of men – some of them smoking, some carrying wild cocks – are huddled around an old man. A few meters away are several boys, aged 11 to 14, all of them carrying guava leaves. Everyone's attention is focused on the old man as he silently sharpens a knife. In a while, the old man orders the boys to start chewing the guava leaves. The boys, all trying to look brave, dutifully do as they are told while the men, most of them the boys' fathers, look at them with amusement. In a while, the old man finishes his task and calls on the first boy. The scene suddenly becomes noisy as no one wants to go first. The old man becomes impatient so the boys are forced to quickly decide on someone. They collectively choose Isoy and push him in front of the old man, all the while shouting, "Sige run, Isoy! So that you will no longer be a pungyus (an uncircumcised man), indi b'la?" The men laugh and agree. Isoy looks at Tiyoy Berning apprehensively. Sensing the boy's uncertainty, Tiyoy Berning hands over his wild cock to a friend and joins Isoy in the center. The old man tells Isoy to chew more leaves and instructs him to immediately jump into the river after the procedure is over. Isoy nods and soon positions himself in front of the old man. He unbuttons his short pants and apprehensively waits for the quick blow. Tiyoy Berning covers Isoy's eyes while the old man delivers the quick cut. Isoy lets out a muffled scream and then runs to one side of the stage. All the men laugh and applaud. Lights out as a loud splash is heard.)*

### **Scene 1**

*(It is almost dawn. Mina is taking a bath. Clad in her white kamison (native chemise), she sits on a wooden stool and carefully uses a lugod (stone used to remove dirt) on her arms and legs. She scoops water out of a big container and pours some on herself. In a while, she senses something so she stops and glances around. She adjusts her kamison in an effort to cover herself up.)*

*(Soon, Mina pours water on herself again. At some point, however, she again stops and nervously glances around. She stands up and looks outside the bathroom. She sees nothing so she goes back inside and hurriedly finishes her bath. In a while, she grabs a towel from the clothesline and dries her hair with it. She wraps the towel around herself and moves out of the bathroom.)*

*(Lights out on this scene as another dim light reveals the rest of the stage. Isoy is seen getting down from the dapog and tiptoeing toward his sleeping space inside the house.)*

*(The crowing of roosters is heard. Soon, Manding Susing gets up and sleepily looks out of her bedroom window. She yawns, goes to the kitchen and prepares a glass of instant coffee.)*

*(She turns on the transistor radio so the air is suddenly filled with the crackling sound of "Ang Gugma sang mga Tigulang" (The Love of Old People). Other Hiligaynon and*

*Kinaray-a folk songs are played after it.)*

*(She sits on the doorstep and starts sipping the hot drink.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

Isoy! Isoy! *Ay sus nga bata dya ay!* (*Ay sus*, this child!) Don't tell me you're still sleeping e the sun is already up! *Abi* wake up *run* and start doing your chores!

Isoy! *Ay nga linti*. This is what you get for staying up late again last night listening to "Flora del Cielo!" *Sus*, and you tell me you are not affected by it but when I tell you to go and buy something in Milay's *t'yangge*, you always tell me, "Tomorrow *rulang*, Manding, *ay*. It is dark outside *run kabay!*" *Sus!* You are already fifteen but you are still afraid of the *murto* (ghost) and the *aswang* (witch)? *Maan!*

*Hoy*, Isoy! *Linti nga bata dya ay!* (You infuriating child!) Wake up *run!*

*(Isoy emerges sleepily from inside the house.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

*Ay ti?* The sun is already up but you are still on the floor dreaming and snoring! *Ay sus!*

*O hala!* What are you waiting for? Go to your hens *run* and collect their eggs!

*(She goes inside while Isoy goes down and opens the makeshift door under the house. He crouches as he enters the cramped space. The crowing of roosters is again heard. Isoy goes to the hens and collects the eggs. He gathers three. He smiles and lays them gently on one side. Then, he gathers the chickens and scatters ground corn and finely-milled rice on the ground. He scoops water out of a covered pail and pours some on a halved plastic container. He watches as the chickens eagerly peck at their feed. In a while, Manding Susing hollers from her bedroom window.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

Isoy! Are you still down there? *Ay sus, Ginuo!* Have you not finished collecting the eggs and feeding the chickens? *Abi* hurry up *man* because I still have to go to the market! *Pila* will soon be here and I'm not ready yet!

*(Isoy reluctantly picks up the eggs and leaves the chicken coop. He goes to the kitchen.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

*O hala.* Put them away *run* and start cooking the rice. I'll just take a quick bath and start dressing up. You wait for *Pila*, Isoy, *ha?* If she arrives, tell her I won't take long.

**ISOY**

Yes, Manding.

*(Manding Susing hurriedly goes inside while Isoy prepares the rice. He has just started the fire when Pila's voice is heard.)*

**PILA**

*(From offstage)* 'Ding Susing! Manding! I'm here now! Manding?

**MANDING SUSING**

*(From offstage)* *Pila*, is that you *run?* *Ay sus*, I'm still in the bathroom! Isoy, are you playing deaf again? *Pila* is here *run!* *Abi* attend to her *anay!*

**ISOY**

*Dali lang, Manding! Pila, I'm in the kitchen! Join me rulang here ay!*

*(Pila makes her way to the back of the house.)*

**ISOY**

*Abu, you're a little too early, Pila, ba. Dali lang. I'll just finish this and then I'll join you there, ha?*

*(He hurriedly finishes his task and then joins Pila in the yard.)*

**ISOY**

*O? I haven't seen you lately a! What have you been up to, Pila, ha? Been busy with the boys in school, 'no?*

**PILA**

*Heh! What boys are you talking about, Isoy, e I am always busy with more serious things, 'no? Like now! I have periodic exams daad this week but I have to wake up early and help Manding buy vegetables to sell tomorrow. So I will be late again today. Tomorrow tana, I will be absent!*

*Hay maan, Isoy. Ano abi ay we really need the money mong. Sometimes I envy you gani. At least, you no longer worry about school. I don't know gani how I can possibly get good grades pa e I barely have time to study. Tapos Nanay is pregnant again so I am sure I will have more responsibilities at home pa gid!*

**ISOY**

*Your Nanay is pregnant again? Ginuo ko, Pila, but your Tatay is very industrious gid ba! (Laughs) Indi b'la nga you have five younger siblings already?*

**PILA**

*Hay, you tell me! That's why when I get married someday, I will make sure that I will only have three children, Isoy! Nothing more!*

**ISOY**

*Asus! And how will you do that, aber? You see, Pila, men cannot control themselves, 'no? Sige. I will share with you a secret, ha? Come here b'la. (Motions Pila to come near him) Nearer, Pila! Ay sus, being near a man will not make you pregnant, 'no? (Laughs)*

**PILA**

*Heh! A man ... You're also only fifteen, indi b'la? And you always make fun of me, Isoy, ha? Siguro, deep in your heart, you really like me!*

**ISOY**

*Ay sus, Pila! If you like me so much, just tell Manding. That will surely make her very happy because she always reminds me what a good wife you will become someday! (Laughs)*

**PILA**

*Buangit! (Laughs while playfully pinching Isoy's sides) O ti, what's that secret run? Abi tell me, Isoy!*

**ISOY**

*Hmmm ... very eager, aren't we, Pila? (Laughs) O sige. You see, at four or five o'clock in the morning, all men – if they wake up, ha? – discover that their ... you know ... their ... pitoy-pitoy (the male organ of copulation) ... is standing at attention! (Laughs) And they cannot do anything about it. Because the thing has a mind of its own! And no amount of control can control it, Pila! So they do something about it.*

*(Chuckles)* And if they are married ...

*(Pila gasps and pinches Isoy's sides even more.)*

**PILA**

*Ay abaw, Ginuo!* The things that you tell me, Isoy! If your Manding Susing hears you, *maan rulang!*

**ISOY**

Pila, *araguy! Araguy!* Stop that, Pila. Stop that! *(Laughs)* But of course, you won't tell Manding Susing, *indi b'la*, Pila? Because if you do, I will also tell your Tatay and Nanay that you've been watching them do it every night because you are curious and you want to get high grades in your Science class! *(Laughs)*

*(Pila once again pinches Isoy but the latter playfully runs away from her. At this point, Manding Susing looks out of her bedroom window.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

*Uy*, Pila! You're here early *a*. And *hoy*, Isoy! You might forget that you have something cooking in the kitchen, *ha?* I don't want to eat burned rice again!

**ISOY**

*Ay*. I almost forgot, Manding. *Si Pila abi mong.* (It's Pila's fault.)

*(He hurries up to the kitchen and inspects the pot of rice.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

Asus and he puts the blame on Pila. *Hala*, Isoy. I cannot wait for your rice anymore. Pila and I will go now. I will just have breakfast in the market. What about you, Pila? Have you had breakfast *run?*

**PILA**

Yes, Manding.

**MANDING SUSING**

*O hala*. Let's go now. We're late *run*. And Isoy, don't listen to the radio too much, *ha?* Batteries are very expensive.

**ISOY**

Yes, Manding.

*(Manding Susing goes down the house and exits with Pila. Isoy spends the next moments attending to the rice that he is cooking. Then, he goes to Manding Susing's room. He goes to her bed and pulls out a box from under it. He opens the box and rummages through a pile of old newspapers and magazines. He finds what he is looking for and takes it out. It is an old liquor calendar featuring women in their bathing suits. These do not actually reveal much but Isoy doesn't seem to mind. He looks at the calendar closely. He flips over its pages until he finds the picture that he likes best. He squirms while staring at it longingly. He is about to unbutton his short pants when he hears someone calling from the front yard.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

*(From offstage)* Susing! Susing, are you there? Isoy! Susing!

**ISOY**

*Dali lang!*

*(He returns the calendar to the box and hurriedly pushes it under Manding Susing's bed.)*

**ISOY**

T'yoy Berning, is that you?

*(Tiyoy Berning makes his way to the back of the house. He has with him a fighting cock.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Yes! Is your Manding here, Isoy?

*(Isoy adjusts himself and looks out of Manding Susing's window.)*

**ISOY**

Ay. She has left for the market *run*, T'yoy. It's Monday *kabay* so she went there with Pila to buy vegetables. It's market day *abi* tomorrow *mong*. Is she expecting you, T'yoy?

**TIYOY BERNING**

Not really, Isoy. I came here to borrow money *daad*. *Ano abi ay* there's a derby again tomorrow *mong*. *Ti* you know *man kabay* that my cocks have been winning lately. *Ti kundi* I thought of joining again *e*.

**ISOY**

Ay *sus*. *Sabagay*, Manding will be home for lunch *man siguro*, T'yoy.

**TIYOY BERNING**

Okay *a*. Do you have coffee there *gali*, Isoy? *Abi* offer me a glass *man ay*.

**ISOY**

Ay, yes, T'yoy. *Dali lang gid*.

*(He hurriedly goes to the kitchen and prepares coffee. Tiyoy Berning peers inside the chicken coop.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Your rooster, Isoy. You don't want to enter this in a cockfight?

**ISOY**

Ay *sus*, T'yoy, you know *man kabay* Manding. She will not allow that for sure!

**TIYOY BERNING**

Ay *sus ta!* Don't tell her *e!* Who knows? You might win in your first *saltada* (bout)! Beginner's luck *kabay!* And there's big money in cockfighting, Isoy! Two weeks ago *kabay gani* I won? Remember? Ay *sus*, *kundi* all the men in the barrio went home drunk *ay* we finished drinking all the Ginebra and the San Miguel in Milay's *t'yangge* (small store)! But if you don't try your luck, Isoy, *ay ti kundi* you will not win *gid e*. It's a game *kabay*. If you don't take a risk, you will not win anything! And if you win, Isoy ... and give a big portion of your winnings to your Manding ... *tabi lang takun* if she will not start pestering you to raise fighting cocks from now on!

*(He chuckles. Isoy soon joins him and gives him his glass of coffee.)*

**ISOY**

But if I lose, T'yoy, Manding will surely beat me again! And I don't want that to happen!

*(Tiyoy Berning laughs while sipping coffee.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

*Hay*, that Manding of yours, Isoy! No wonder she became a spinster. You know, during our time, all of us young men were afraid of her! Or to be more specific, all of us young men were afraid of her mouth. She talks non-stop *abi! Sabagay*, your Manding Bidak also talks a lot but she is nothing compared to Susing! *(Chuckles)* And she is very strict *pa! Ti kundi* she never experienced the mouth-watering benefits of married life! *(Laughs)*

*(Isoy laughs along.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

*Ti?* How about you *tana*, Isoy? Don't tell me you also plan to become single all your life?

*(Isoy chuckles politely.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

I hear your Manding is eyeing Pila to be your wife, Isoy. *Sabagay*, Pila is a hardworking young woman. She looks a little plain but ... when you're doing it in the dark, Isoy, you won't care what your partner looks like!

*(The two laugh out loud.)*

**ISOY**

That may be true, T'yoy, but I still cannot imagine doing it with Pila. *(Smiles)* Pila is just a neighbor ... a classmate when I still went to school. I cannot imagine courting her *gani mong*.

**TIYOY BERNING**

But you need a girl, Isoy. Right now! A young man like you. How old are you now, fifteen?

**ISOY**

Yes, T'yoy.

**TIYOY BERNING**

*Sus*, Isoy, when I was your age, my friends and I spent all our time courting all the girls in the barrio! Except your Manding Susing, of course. Because of her mouth! And ... your Nanay, too. Because ... she's your mother. And children shouldn't know what their parents were like when they were young. Otherwise, they won't listen to them anymore!

*(The two again laugh.)*

**ISOY**

*Siguro* if Manding has an idea of the things that we talk about, T'yoy, I'm sure she will also order me to stop talking to you.

**TIYOY BERNING**

*Abu* ... Don't tell me Susing still doesn't allow you to go out with your friends?

**ISOY**

*Sabagay*, I don't have many friends, T'yoy. Only Pila. And a few others. But then again, they're not really my friends. I don't get to spend time with them *abi mong*. So I don't know them very well. Manding doesn't want me to spend too much time with other young people *abi*. She just wants me to stay in the house. That's probably the real reason why she made me stop going to school. She fears *siguro* that I will get ideas and end up leaving Catungan like my mother.

**TIYOY BERNING**

But that was a long time ago *run*, Isoy! You barely know her *gani, indi bala?*

**ISOY**

But Manding says it's in my blood. So I guess she'll do everything to make my life different.

**TIYOY BERNING**

*Araw-araw ta kara.* So that's why she keeps you in the coop like one of her chickens?

*(Isoy sighs.)*

**ISOY**

I don't think Manding understands that I'm a young man already. She still treats me like a child. She still even beats me *gani* with her *tsinelas* (slipper) each time I don't do as she pleases. But I'm fifteen *run*, T'yoy! And there are things that I'd like to do *daad* ... things that have nothing to do with cleaning and cooking and washing and feeding the chickens. But she doesn't understand that. She cannot understand that.

**TIYOY BERNING**

*Ay*, if only your mother were here, Isoy.

*(Isoy sadly smiles.)*

**ISOY**

Have you heard anything about her lately, T'yoy?

**TIYOY BERNING**

If I have, Isoy, *ti kundi* I would have told you about it already *e*.

**ISOY**

Manding doesn't talk to me about her *abi mong*. I'd like to know *daad* where she is so I can get in touch with her. But Manding doesn't tell me anything. And there's nothing in the house. No letter, no picture, nothing.

Do you think she is still in Olongapo, T'yoy?

*(It is Tiyoy Berning's turn to smile sadly.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Maybe.

But knowing your mother, Isoy, I'm sure she has outgrown Olongapo years ago. Citas is a restless soul *abi*. *Ay sus*, I'm telling you. She is one person who cannot stay put in one place. *Ano abi ay* she has a mole on her right foot. *Ti kundi* she is doomed to wander forever.

**ISOY**

Do you think the G.I. who took her to Olongapo married her, T'yoy?

**TIYOY BERNING**

I hope he did.

*Ay*, I really hope he did, Isoy. Citas gave up a lot when she left Catungan for Olongapo. *Ano abi ay* her pregnancy caused such a big scandal here so she was forced to leave the barrio weeks after giving birth to you.

*Pero abi mo* ... even if that G.I. didn't marry her ... she still would have found a way to get by, Isoy. She's like that, your mother. *Maabilidad kabay!*

*(He takes another sip of his coffee.)*

**ISOY**

What about my father *tana*, T'yoy? Do you have any idea who he is?

**TIYOY BERNING**

Your mother never told anyone about him, Isoy. She left Catungan without saying anything about his identity.

*(He finishes his coffee.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

*O ta, sig!* Thank you *gid* for the coffee, Isoy! *(Hands over the empty glass to Isoy)* I will go *anay a*. I still have a *ganta* of rice and some dried fish to buy in the market *mong*. Otherwise, your Manding Bidak will give me a long sermon again! You know how she is.

I keep thinking *gani*. It cannot be denied that Susing, Bidak and Citas are sisters. They talk too much! *(Laughs)* That's why if I were you, Isoy, be wise and marry someone mute! Your ears will thank you for it!

**ISOY**

*Sige*, T'yoy, *a*. I will keep that in mind. *(Chuckles)* *Ti* good luck *gid!* If you don't meet Manding in the market, I will just tell her *rulang* later that you dropped by the house.

*(Tiyoy Berning exits. Isoy peers inside the chicken coop. In a while, he goes up to the house, leaves on the sink the glass that Tiyoy Berning used and carefully removes the pot from the fire. He gets a generous portion of rice, slices some tomatoes, gets some leftover dried fish and starts eating.)*

*(Lights out.)*

**Scene 2**

*(It is late evening of the same day. The house is lit by gas lamps. The radio, which has been blaring the whole day, is already turned off. In the bedroom, Isoy and Manding Susing are praying the last "Maghimaya ikaw, Mariya" of the novena.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

*Maghimaya ikaw, Mariya  
magkalipay ikaw  
buta ikaw ti grasya  
ang Ginuong D'yos rugyan kanimo.  
Nahamut-an ikaw labaw sa tanan nga mga babayi  
kag nahamut-an man ang bunga  
kang imo busong nga si Hisus.*

*(Hail Mary  
full of grace  
the Lord is with you.  
Blessed are you among women  
and blessed is the fruit  
of your womb Jesus.)*

**ISOY**

*Santa Mariya, nanay kang Dyos  
ipangamuyo mo kami nga mga makasasala*

*kadya kag sa tion kang amun kamatayun.*

(Holy Mary, mother of God  
pray for us, sinners  
now and at the hour of our death.)

**MANDING SUSING and ISOY**

*Sa ngaran kang Amay  
kag kang Anak  
kag kang Ispiritu Santo.*

(In the name of the Father  
and of the Son  
and of the Holy Spirit.)

**ISOY**

*'Bisa 'ko (Bless me), Manding.*

*(He kisses the right hand of Manding Susing.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

God bless you.

*Abi go to sleep run, Isoy, so that you will wake up early tomorrow. Pila will be here very early to fetch me, ha?*

*Ay. Have you prepared run gali the vegetables in the kitchen, Isoy? I don't want any more delays tomorrow. Remember that the tricycle will leave here at five o'clock.*

*Abi don't rely on me all the time man, Isoy, ay. I am tired run of reminding you of these things again and again.*

Are you listening, ha, Isoy?

**ISOY**

Yes, Manding.

**MANDING SUSING**

*O ta, sige. Go now.*

*(Isoy is on his way out of the room when ...)*

**MANDING SUSING**

*Uy, Isoy. Have you locked run gali the chicken coop? Abi check it before you sleep so we can be sure. You know man nga daan that thieves normally do their business at night.*

**ISOY**

Yes, Manding.

*(He leaves the room as Manding Susing sleepily prepares for bed. He goes to the kitchen and turns on the radio. "Flora del Cielo," a serialized drama about a wronged female ghost, is heard. Isoy goes to the sink and gets the unwashed glass used earlier by Tiyoy Berning. He fills it with water and drinks it slowly. After a while, he carefully makes his way downstairs. He opens the coop's makeshift door and enters it quietly. The chickens, already used to his presence, do not make any sound. Isoy observes them for a while. Then, he carefully transfers to a strategic spot and strains his neck while looking up at Manding Susing's room. Up in her room, Manding Susing absentmindedly takes off her dress and puts on her kamison. Isoy stares at the dimly*

*lit sight silently. Soon, Manding Susing snuffs out the gas lamp in her room. She climbs tiredly into bed. Down in the coop, a dim light shines on Isoy as he tries hard to stay quiet while his trembling hands begin to explore his body.)*

*(Lights out.)*

### **Scene 3**

*(It is almost dawn of the following day. Mina is again taking a bath. As before, she stops at some point and nervously glances around. The crowing of roosters is heard. She hurriedly finishes her bath.)*

*(Lights out on this scene as another dim light shines on the house. Isoy is again seen getting down from the dapog. He turns on the radio. "Ohoy, Alibangbang" (Ohoy, Butterfly), another Hiligaynon folk song, fills the air. Other native songs are played after it.)*

*(Manding Susing sleepily gets up and goes out of her room. Isoy goes down to the chicken coop. He collects the eggs and feeds the chickens. As before, he watches them eagerly pecking at their feed. In a while, he reaches for one hen and gently holds it under his arms. He strokes the feathers around the hen's neck and thighs. Soon, his hand reaches its rear. Isoy's face looks flushed as he gently and repeatedly strokes this.)*

*(Manding Susing then goes back to her room. She has now finished her bath.)*

#### **MANDING SUSING**

Isoy! Isoy, are you still down there with your chickens? *Abu, daw* it takes you a very long time *gid* to collect three pieces of eggs *haw*? *Abi*, go up here *run* and start preparing breakfast! Isoy!

#### **ISOY**

Yes, Manding! *Dali lang gid!*

*(He puts the hen down and goes out of the coop. He goes up to the house and starts preparing the pot of rice that he will cook. While he is doing this, Manding Susing is getting dressed in her room. In a while, she goes to the kitchen and prepares coffee. She takes several sips while inspecting the vegetables that she and Pila will sell in the market.)*

#### **MANDING SUSING**

Is Pila not here yet, Isoy? It's unusual for her to be late *a*.

#### **ISOY**

She might have stayed up late last night, Manding. She told me yesterday that she has periodic exams *kuno* this week.

#### **MANDING SUSING**

Now that girl, Isoy, is very responsible for her age. Miling and Tonyo are very lucky to have her as a daughter. She is very industrious and doesn't need to be told what to do.

*(She finishes her coffee.)*

#### **MANDING SUSING**

*Abu, basi bala* we will miss the tricycle ride to the market *haw*. Estong told us *nga daan* yesterday that he will not wait for anyone this morning.

#### **PILA**

(From offstage) 'Ding Susing! Manding!

(Pila hurriedly makes her way to the back of the house.)

**MANDING SUSING**

Pila, is that you *run*? *Sus ta*, you are late *haw*?

**PILA**

*Ay maan*, Manding. I am sorry *gid* but I had to cook the rice *pa* before leaving the house. Nanay *abi* cannot get up again because she woke up with another headache. I requested Toto *man daad* but he refused *ay* cooking *kuno* is something that only girls do. And he insisted that he is not about to start doing girly chores because it might compromise his masculinity! *Maan rulang gani. Ti kundi* I was forced to do it *e*.

(*Isoy* momentarily stops what he is doing when he hears Pila's comment. Pila realizes her blunder when she notices him.)

**PILA**

*Ay!* *Isoy!* Good morning *gali!*

(*Isoy* doesn't answer.)

(The sound of an approaching tricycle is heard.)

**MANDING SUSING**

*Ay sus*, Pila! *Estong* is here *run*. *Isoy*, *abi* bring these vegetables to *Estong's* tricycle *anay*.

And you, Pila, help me carry these baskets. Remind me later that we need to return these to your *Manong Marsing*. He reminded me yesterday that he needs these *run kuno*.

**PILA**

Yes, Manding.

(The sound of the tricycle stopping in front of Manding Susing's house is heard. Pila goes up to the house and takes the baskets from Manding Susing. She smiles awkwardly at *Isoy* but the latter ignores her. *Isoy* angrily gathers the vegetables and goes down ahead of the women. When he is gone ...)

**MANDING SUSING**

*Ay abaw*, Pila, your mouth *bala nga ria!* *Baw maan!*

**PILA**

*Huud man gani*, Manding. I am very sorry *gid*. I was only trying to explain *daad* why I was late this morning. *Maan rulang a*. That was very careless of me *gid*.

(The two go down the house and soon meet *Isoy* who is back from loading the vegetables in the tricycle.)

**MANDING SUSING**

*Isoy*, you take care of everything *anay* here, *ha?* And find time to clean the backyard *abi*. Sweep it and burn the dried leaves along with the other garbage. There are so many mosquitoes *run* at night! *Abi* use your head *man* sometimes, *Isoy*, *ay* and don't always rely on me!

And the radio *gali*, *ha?* Don't listen to it too much.

*(Isoy doesn't answer and just goes on his way.)*

### **MANDING SUSING**

Isoy!

Isoy, I'm talking to you! Don't be impertinent *gani, ha? Linti nga ...* And stop frowning like your mother!

*(She has no time to berate Isoy further, however, so she just goes on her way.)*

*(Isoy goes up to the house. The sound of the tricycle moving on is heard. Isoy brusquely turns up the volume of the radio. He sits on a chair and stares at the pot of rice he is cooking. In a while, he rushes to the dapog, grabs the pot from the fire and throws it to the floor. He flinches as some of the hot water and rice grains hit his hands and legs. He goes back to the chair and stares at the mess.)*

### **TIYOY BERNING**

*(From offstage)* Isoy? Isoy! Isoy, are you there? Your radio is very loud *gid ba!* Isoy?

*(Isoy doesn't answer. Tiyoy Berning, again carrying his fighting cock, soon makes his way to the back of the house.)*

### **TIYOY BERNING**

Uy, Isoy! What happened to you? And why is your radio so loud *gid haw?* I've been calling your name several times *run* but ... *(Notices the mess on the floor)* *Ay sus ta.* What happened? *(Goes up to the house)* Did you do this?

*(Tiyoy Berning turns the radio off.)*

### **TIYOY BERNING**

Isoy. Whatever it is, you know you can tell me, *indi bala?*

Isoy? What's wrong, *ha?*

Isoy, did your Manding do this? I saw her and Pila on the tricycle on my way here but ... she didn't seem angry *man.* She called out my name *pa gani.*

*(Isoy slowly shakes his head.)*

### **TIYOY BERNING**

Then what's wrong? *Ha,* Isoy? Why did you do this? Isoy.

*(Isoy again slowly shakes his head.)*

### **TIYOY BERNING**

*O ta. Sige.* If you don't want to tell me anything yet, *ti* I'll just go ahead *rulang anay e. Ha?* I might be late in the cockfight *mong.* Your Manding Susing refused to lend me money yesterday but ... you know me. I'm *maabilidad man kabay.* *(Laughs)* So I borrowed *rulang* from your Manong Nilo *e.*

*O ta.* Clean this mess *rulang anay* so that when your Manding gets home, she will not get angry with you. If she sees this *nga daan ... ay sus gid!*

*Ha,* Isoy? I'll go ahead *anay.* Talk to me *rulang* when you are ready *run, ha?*

### **ISOY**

I'll go with you.

### **TIYOY BERNING**

Ha?

**ISOY**

I'll go with you, T'yoy. To the cockfight. I want to.

**TIYOY BERNING**

Are you sure? Because if your Manding finds out ...

**ISOY**

I am sure.

**TIYOY BERNING**

Well, if you say so ... *Sige*. We'll think of something *rulang* later to tell your Manding.

**ISOY**

She'll find out.

**TIYOY BERNING**

I know.

**ISOY**

I want her to find out.

*(Surprised, Tiyoy Berning just stares at Isoy.)*

*(Lights out.)*

#### **Scene 4**

*(It is mid-afternoon of the same day. Isoy, Tiyoy Berning and several other men – some with fighting cocks also – are inside a busy cockpit situated at the foreground of the stage. The loud voice of the kristo (bookie) is heard as he noisily shouts out the odds and takes bets from the equally noisy bettors around him. The actual betting, however, is conducted through a sign language which all the participants understand. Soon, the mananara fits the bladed sharp spur to Tiyoy Berning's cock. The bettors divide themselves into two groups. Tiyoy Berning's supporters, including Isoy, cluster around his cock as it is being prepared for the fight. In a while, the sentenciador (referee) announces the start of the bout. The starters hold the two fighting cocks and present them to each other. The cockpit becomes silent. The cocks are placed on the ground and the men all gather around them. The fight takes place. The men indicate its progress by their loud curses, boisterous laughter and frustrated grunts. Excitement, pity and fear can be seen in Isoy's face as he watches for the first time cocks fighting to the death. At first, he watches the bout silently. Soon, he edges closer to the center and joins the men in noisily cheering on the fighting cocks. Because of the razor-sharp steel blades that the cocks use in attacking each other, it doesn't take long and the fight is over. The sentenciador declares Tiyoy Berning's cock as the winner. A savage yell greets the announcement. The circle breaks up and the two cocks are revealed. The loser lies lifeless on the ground while Tiyoy Berning's cock, although technically the winner, is barely alive. Isoy stares at them quietly. Soon, the kristo announces the next bout. Tiyoy Berning's supporters gather around him and noisily ask for balato, the winning share which the owner gives out to those close to him.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

*(While counting his earnings) Ti?* What did I tell you *haw*, Isoy? Now, the whole town will once again talk about how great a cocker your Tiyoy Berning is! Three successive wins in a month! *Ay sus*, but is there any other man in Catungan who can boast of the same claim?

*(Tiyoy Berning's friends noisily agree.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

I am telling you, Isoy, in the cockpit, your Tiyoy Berning is the king! *(Lowers his voice)* But, of course, in the bedroom, your Manding Bidak is the queen!

**MAN 1**

Checkmate *gid e!*

*(Loud laughter greets this announcement.)*

**MAN 2**

Ti, Berning, where is the celebration *bay?*

**MAN 3**

*Amo gid!* Where are we going to celebrate your good fortune, Berning? *Abu*, my stomach is hungry for beer and Ginebra *run nga daan!*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Where else *pa bay?* *O hala!* Let us see each other *rulang* in Milay's *t'yangge* for another evening of Ginebra and San Miguel!

**MAN 4**

Ti, what are we waiting for? *Abi* let us call *run* a tricycle so that the celebration can start early!

*(Most of the men leave in groups.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Ti, what about you *tana*, Isoy? Are you going with us? If ever, your Manding Susing will not approve *gid bay!*

*(He laughs mischievously.)*

**ISOY**

Do you still need to ask that, T'yoy? *(Smiles)* I will go with you *gid lang e*. At some point, a young man like me has to drink his first bottles of Ginebra and San Miguel, *indi b'la?*

*(Tiyoy Berning and the remaining men all laugh loudly.)*

**MAN 5**

*Amo gid!*

**MAN 6**

That's the spirit, Isoy!

**TIYOY BERNING**

Are you sure?

**ISOY**

*Sus*, I have never been more sure about anything in my life, T'yoy!

**TIYOY BERNING**

*O ti*, what are we waiting for? Let us go *run* so that your stomach can start getting used to Ginebra and San Miguel!

**MAN 1**

To Isoy's coming of age!

*(Everyone laughs rowdily.)*

*(Lights out.)*

### **Scene 5**

*(It is a few hours after the victory at the cockpit. Isoy, Tiyoy Berning and several men are drinking beer and gin in a makeshift store found on the right side of the stage. The men, now drunk, are rowdily singing a naughty Kinaray-a version of the Tagalog folk song "Paru-parong Bukid.")*

#### **THE MEN**

*Paru-parong bukid  
ang buktot nagligid.  
Sa diin nagligid?  
Sa kilid kang banglid.  
Ano ang gintambal?  
Ugbos kang tarong.  
Sa kaluoy kang Diyos  
ang buktot nagtadlung.*

*(Butterfly of the hill  
the hunchback rolled down.  
Where did he roll?  
Down the hillside.  
What was used to cure him?  
Young eggplant leaves.  
With God's mercy  
the hunchback stood up straight.)*

*(Another translation, less accurate but more in keeping with the naughty undertones of the original, follows.)*

*Madame field butterfly  
the hunchback is rolling by  
And where is he rolling?  
Down the hill-a-rocking.  
What was placed on him?  
An eggplant-like thing.  
With God's mercy and grace  
what is bent became straight.*

*(While the men are singing their guts out, Isoy is also pouring his heart out to Tiyoy Berning.)*

#### **ISOY**

*Sus, T'yoy, she never listens to me. She never asks me gani what I want to do with my life mong. There are many things daad that I want to do.*

*'Dipuga but if I want to gani, I can even have my own children now, indi b'la? Indi b'la, T'yoy?*

*I may not be as tall or as big as the other young men in the barrio but ...*

*'Diputa, T'yoy ...*

#### **TIYOY BERNING**

*Isoy!*

*(Isoy takes another swig of beer.)*

**ISOY**

Nanay shouldn't have left me here, T'yoy, *mong*. She should have brought me with her to Olongapo, *indi b'la?* She should have taken responsibility for me! If I really am a mistake like what Manding always makes me feel, she should realize *man daad e* that her being stuck here with me is not my choice!

*'Dipuga*, T'yoy, I am sick and tired of my life here. Do you understand, T'yoy? There is no future for me here *mong!* *Indi b'la?* Catungan is dead. And it will remain dead long after my grandchildren have given birth to their own children.

And that's not what I want.

*(He finishes his beer.)*

**ISOY**

I want out, T'yoy.

I don't know how I'm going to do it but I want out.

I cannot forever cook rice here, *indi b'la?* Or wash the dishes and clean the house and take care of the chickens!

And I don't want to marry Pila!

I will talk to Manding about it. I will make her listen to me. I will drink beer if I have to but I will force her to listen to me.

And if she won't listen to me then I don't care.

*Basta.*

I want out.

**TIYOY BERNING**

*(With genuine concern)* But where will you go *bay?* *Ha*, Isoy? We do not have relatives outside Antique and you know that, *indi bala?*

Isoy, listen to me. You've always listened to me, *indi bala?* The world out there is dangerous. Believe me, Isoy, it is. And it will not hesitate to pounce on someone so young if it sees an opportunity.

Even if that someone considers himself a young man already.

**ISOY**

*Basta.*

*(He gets another bottle of beer and forces himself to drink all of its contents in one swig. Tiyoy Berning looks at him sadly.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Isoy.

*(The other men notice Isoy.)*

**MAN 1**

*Uy*, Isoy! *Asus ta*. That will make you even more drunk. *Sige 'kaw!* If your Manding

Susing finds out ... *Asus gid!*

*(The men laugh.)*

**MAN 2**

Take it easy, Isoy! *Ay*, you will really get it from Susing if she sees you like that. *A ta!*

**MAN 3**

*Amo gid!* And I bet even your T'yoy Berning cannot come to your rescue once Susing starts beating you, Isoy!

**MAN 4**

*Si Susing pa?*

*(Loud laughter.)*

**ISOY**

*(While drinking) Basta.*

*(He soon finishes his beer. He keeps repeating "Basta" to himself. Seeing him drunk, Tiyoy Berning gets up and assists him. Isoy collapses on the old man's arms.)*

**MAN 4**

*A ta.* Isoy is very drunk *run*, Berning!

**MAN 5**

*Sus.* Now you really are obliged to bring him home ...

**MAN 6**

... where Susing is waiting for you with her *bolo!*

*(Loud laughter.)*

**MAN 1**

And speaking of that, maybe we should all go home *run gid man bay.*

**MAN 2**

*Amo gid.* The earlier we deal with our wives' *bolos nga daan*, the better our chances of using our own *bolos* on them *man!*

*(More laughter.)*

**MAN 3**

*O ta sige*, Berning! We will go ahead *run*. Thank you *gid* for your *balato!*

**TIYOY BERNING**

No problem *a!* Next time again, *ha?*

**MAN 4**

*Sige a!* Next time again, Berning!

*(And the men, all drunk, now leave. Tiyoy Berning looks after them, and then at Isoy.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Isoy. Isoy.

*(But Isoy is now a little too drunk to wake up. Tiyoy Berning gently nudges him.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Isoy. *Ay sus*, you poor child.

*(He sadly smiles while staring at Isoy's troubled face. His eyes soon well up with tears and he weeps, but quietly.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

*(Softly)* I am sorry, Isoy. I am sorry for letting you down again.

Forgive me.

Forgive me.

*(Lights out.)*

**ACT TWO**

**Scene 6**

*(It is moments after the drinking session at Milay's store. Tiyoy Berning tries his best to guide Isoy to the back of Manding Susing's darkened house.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Susing. Susing! Susing, *abi* wake up *anay ay!* This is Berning and I have Isoy here with me!

**ISOY**

She's probably pretending to be asleep, T'yoy. She does that when she's angry with me *mong*.

**TIYOY BERNING**

Susing! *Sus ta ...* Let us in *anay abi!*

*Abu ...* *Abi* stop acting like a child *man*, Susing. Your nephew is here and he needs your help!

**ISOY**

What did I tell you *haw*, T'yoy?

**TIYOY BERNING**

*Abi* be quiet *anay*, Isoy. Susing! Susing!

*Sus. Araw-araw man tana ra imo*, Susing.

*(A moment of silence.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

*O ta. Sige.* We're going up on our own *rulang e*. I want to talk to you *daad*, Susing, but ... *Sige.* Next time *rulang e*. I have to go home *man nga daan*.

*Ta*, Isoy.

*(He assists Isoy in going up to the house. Once they reach the kitchen, a loud noise is heard as they stumble on the pot still lying on the floor.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

*Asus.*

**ISOY**

The pot.

*(The two chuckle and soon start laughing.)*

*(In a while, Manding Susing gets out of bed and angrily storms to the kitchen.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Uy. Susing.

*(He gets up.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Sus ta. We thought you weren't home yet. *Ano abi ay* we called for you many times but you didn't answer *mong*. It's very dark *abi* here. We tripped.

*(And he laughs again.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Good evening, Susing, a. O, Isoy, go inside *run*.

*(Isoy gets up unsteadily and staggers inside the house.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Don't get angry with the boy, Susing. It's my fault. I brought him with me to the cockpit this afternoon *mong*. But we got lucky *man* and we won. *Ti kundi* we had some drinks *anay* with some friends *e*. I mean Isoy is fifteen *run man* so I thought it is okay *run* for him to ...

*(Midway through Tiyoy Berning's line, Manding Susing turns and goes back to her room.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Sus. *Ti abi*.

Susing. Susing! *Araw-araw man tana ra imo*, Susing! I'm still talking to you *a!*

Susing! *Abi* join me here *anay!* I'm still talking to you *pa gani!*

Let us talk *abi anay*, Susing. Do not treat me like this *man abi*. We have a lot *run* to talk about. I am part of this family *man, indi b'la?* So I thought we need to sit down and talk about Isoy and his future and ...

*(Manding Susing returns and faces Tiyoy Berning.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

And what, Berning? What do you know about planning for the future *haw?* *Abi* look at yourself. You're drunk! Again.

The way you talk, anybody would think you've done a very good job of living your life! *Hinugay takun gani d'yan*, Berning. (You cannot fool me, Berning.) We know the truth, *indi b'la?* We both know the truth! Or *basi bala* you've forgotten it already? After all, you've always been so good at doing what is most convenient for yourself, *indi b'la?*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Sus. It's been years *run*, Susing. Don't you think it is time that we lay that to rest *run?* Isoy cannot forever suffer for the mistakes of his elders.

**MANDING SUSING**

His elders? Surely you're not referring to all of his elders, Berning? I had nothing to do with this problem, *indi b'la?* I was dragged into this against my will! Or have you also conveniently forgotten about that?

*Hinugay takun gani d'yan*, Berning! Why? Where were you when Isoy was growing up *haw*? *Ha*? You were in the cockpit with your friends, *indi b'la*? And all the *t'yangge* in the barrio drinking your troubles away, *indi b'la*?

And now you want to talk about his future? *Tabi takun ...* Brings him to the cockpit ... teaches him how to drink ...

**TIYOY BERNING**

I can never do right, can I, Susing?

I can never do anything right.

To you, I will always be this good for nothing loser that the whole barrio is right for not taking seriously.

I can die trying to correct my mistakes but it won't mean anything to you, *indi b'la*?

You think you did better than I did, Susing?

*(He smiles sadly.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Why? Did you take Isoy in *haw* because you truly cared for him? Did you give him shelter, clothe him, feed him, look out for him because you really wanted to?

*Hinugay takun gani*, Susing. You said it yourself, *indi b'la*? You were dragged into this against your will.

So what makes you think you did better than I did?

**MANDING SUSING**

I did what I could to bring up Citas's child. I sacrificed whatever chance I had of happiness because I took care of somebody else's child!

I, too, wanted to escape Catungan. I, too, wanted to leave and do something with my life!

But Tatay said no. Good women do not leave their families, he said. So I stayed!

But Citas ... she became pregnant! That was very brilliant of her, *indi bala*, Berning? To bear the child of a man she couldn't marry! She was daring Tatay to banish her! *Ay*, you should have seen the look on Tatay's face the day Citas told him about her pregnancy.

The disgrace, he said. The disgrace!

And then blood rose to his head and his heart gave out.

*Ay*, indeed, the disgrace!

*(She sits on a chair.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

Do you remember how the whole barrio turned against Citas after that, Berning? And how she continued to hold her head high, defiantly facing anyone who openly talked about her and mocked her pregnancy?

I envied her, Berning!

(She finally weeps, purging herself of all the emotions that she kept bottled up for years.)

**MANDING SUSING**

Ay, I envied her. I wanted to do what she did *daad* but I couldn't. It was too late *run abi*. I was already thirty! So I didn't say anything *rulang e* when she left Isoy in my care.

And *abi mo*, Berning, I just sat there by that door ... quietly ... Isoy sleeping in my arms ... hours after the tricycle who took Citas and her G.I. away has left for the bus terminal.

I just sat there. Quietly.

And then Isoy woke up. He was probably looking for his mother so he cried. *Ay*, how he cried that day, Berning!

And that's when I realized what Citas has done to me.

I haven't forgiven her since.

**TIYOY BERNING**

Have you heard from her since then? Isoy wants to get in touch with her *daad*. He wants to know her, Susing.

**MANDING SUSING**

At first, she sent me letters. But I didn't answer them. So after a while, her letters stopped arriving.

**TIYOY BERNING**

And what did she say *bay* in her letters?

**MANDING SUSING**

I don't know. I never read them.

**TIYOY BERNING**

Do you still have them with you? *Basi bay* Isoy will want to ...

**MANDING SUSING**

No. I burned them the moment they arrived.

What can she possibly tell me in her letters *haw?* How wonderful life is outside Catungan? How exciting? How alive?

*Pati takun ...*

**TIYOY BERNING**

But Isoy has nothing to do with that, Susing.

**MANDING SUSING**

Isoy ...

What is he complaining about me again *haw?* How I can't understand him? How I'm keeping him chained here instead of letting him do as he pleases like the other young men in the barrio? *Sus*, Berning! What do the other young men in the barrio do *haw? Ha?* They drink! They gamble! They get married young! Is that what he wants?

**TIYOY BERNING**

He says he wants to go back to school.

**MANDING SUSING**

*Ay nga linti!* But didn't I explain that to him already? *Ha?* Where will I get the money *bay* to pay for everything? I barely earn enough *gani* to put food on the table *mong!* *Tapos* he throws on the floor *lang* the rice that I bought?

Go back to school ...

Isoy! Isoy! *Linti nga pangabuhi dya ay!* (What an infuriating life this is!) Isoy!

**TIYOY BERNING**

Susing!

**MANDING SUSING**

What, Berning? What? You have something to say to me? *Ha?*

*(Tiyoy Berning says nothing.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

I am tired, Berning. I am tired of taking care of responsibilities that are not mine. And I am tired of covering up for you. It's time you start setting things straight. Isoy! Isoy!

**TIYOY BERNING**

Susing!

**MANDING SUSING**

Still a weakling, aren't you, Berning? Isoy!

**TIYOY BERNING**

Susing, please ...

**MANDING SUSING**

What? Are you afraid *haw*, Berning? Are you afraid you might lose the respect of the boy who thinks highly of you, who actually wants to be you and prefers your company to that of his old, grumpy and spinster aunt? *Ha?*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Susing, no!

**MANDING SUSING**

Isoy!

*(Isoy slowly enters the dining room.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

Tell him. Tell him, Berning. Tell him and redeem yourself.

**TIYOY BERNING**

Isoy ... I am ...

I am sorry, Isoy. I am sorry.

*(Isoy just stares at Tiyoy Berning quietly. Manding Susing stares at Tiyoy Berning, then Isoy.)*

*(Lights out.)*

## Scene 7

*(It is morning of the following day. The sun is already up but Manding Susing's house is still quiet. In a while, Manding Susing, looking suddenly older than her forty-five years, gets up and sits quietly in her bed. It is obvious that she hasn't slept at all. She spends some time staring at the religious images in her altar. She gets up slowly and goes to the kitchen. She sees the pot still lying on the floor and picks it up. She returns it to the dapog. Soon, she kneels on the floor and gathers the rice grains that are scattered everywhere.)*

*(In a while, Manding Susing goes to the table and prepares coffee. She goes to the door and sits there quietly. She has started sipping her coffee when the sound of an approaching tricycle is heard. Manding Susing stops what she is doing and listens to the sound. It stops in front of her house.)*

### TRICYCLE DRIVER

*(From offstage) Sige, Isoy! I'll go ahead *anay*. I still have passengers to pick up *mong*.*

### ISOY

*(From offstage) Okay *a*. Thank you *gid*, Estong.*

### TRICYCLE DRIVER

*(From offstage) And *uy!* Take it easy *gali*, Isoy, *ha?* O *ta*, *sige*. I'll go ahead *run!**

*(And the sound of the tricycle moves on.)*

*(Isoy soon makes his way to the back of the house. He sees Manding Susing but doesn't say anything to her. The old woman looks at him but doesn't say anything, too. She just continues sipping her coffee slowly. Isoy goes up to the house and sits on a chair. He stares at Manding Susing but cannot bring himself to say anything. Soon, the old woman finishes her coffee. She goes back to the kitchen and washes her glass. She gets the pot from the dapog and washes it, too. Then, she gathers all of the cooking and eating utensils and starts washing every single item. Isoy just stares at her quietly.)*

### ISOY

What will happen to us now, Manding?

*(Manding Susing just goes on washing the utensils.)*

### ISOY

I do not know *run* what to do, Manding.

*(Manding Susing momentarily stops what she is doing.)*

### MANDING SUSING

You're of age *run*, *indi b'la?* You decide for yourself *e*.

*(She resumes washing the utensils.)*

### ISOY

It is difficult *garing*, Manding. I don't think I can do it.

*(The old woman doesn't answer. She hurriedly finishes her task and then heads to her room. When she passes by Isoy, the young man reaches for her hand.)*

### ISOY

Help me *man*, Manding, *ay*. Help me *man daad*. I do not know *run* what to do.

*(Manding Susing stops but doesn't say anything.)*

*(Isoy's eyes soon well up with tears and he weeps, but quietly. He lets go of Manding Susing's hand.)*

*(Manding Susing still doesn't say anything. She just goes to her room and sits in front of her altar. Then, she gets the framed image of the Virgin Mary and removes the back cover. She takes out three yellowed letter envelopes. She gets the other framed image and takes out three more. She goes back to the kitchen and hands over the envelopes to Isoy.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

Your Nanay's letters. I didn't burn them. I wanted to. I didn't.

*(Isoy silently accepts the envelopes.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

They're unopened. I wasn't interested in what she had to say. I still am not.

*(She goes back to her room. She sits quietly on her bed and stares at the images of Christ and the Blessed Virgin.)*

*(In the kitchen, Isoy opens one of his mother's letters and silently starts reading it.)*

*(Lights out.)*

**Scene 8**

*(It is almost four o'clock the following morning. A dim light reveals Isoy as he silently stands in the kitchen. He is fully dressed and is carrying a small bag. He sets the bag quietly on the table and sits on a chair. In a while, he goes to the sink and gets a glass of water. He drinks it. He goes back to the chair and looks at Manding Susing's darkened room.)*

*(Moments later, Isoy's attention is caught by the sound of two people whispering in the dark.)*

**MINA**

*(Offstage. Softly.)* Kardo, *basi bala* someone will see us *haw*. Tatay will kill me *nga daan* if he finds out about us.

**KARDO**

*(Offstage. Softly.)* No one is awake *pa man*, Mina. It is too early *pa bay* so the whole barrio is sleeping *pa*.

*(A dim light reveals Kardo and Mina making out outside the makeshift bathroom. Kardo is behind Mina and his hands are gently fondling her breasts.)*

**MINA**

*(Softly)* Are you sure, Kardo? I am afraid *nga daan*. I haven't done anything like this yet.

*(Kardo starts flicking his tongue inside Mina's right ear.)*

**KARDO**

*(Softly)* *Ako bahala*. (Leave it to me.)

**MINA**

*(Softly)* Kardo ...

## **KARDO**

*(Softly) Trust me.*

*(He turns Mina around and kisses her passionately. Mina moans softly.)*

*(Up in Manding Susing's house, Isoy slowly and silently makes his way to the dapog.)*

## **KARDO**

*(Softly) Let's go inside.*

*(He leads Mina to the bathroom. He takes his shirt off and hangs it on the clothesline. He resumes making love to her.)*

*(Up in the house, Isoy carefully removes a piece of cardboard in the dapog's wall. He sets it aside and stares at the scene below.)*

*(Kardo and Mina's lovemaking is now more intense. Soon, Kardo begins handling Mina roughly. At first, Mina doesn't seem to mind. In a while, however, she shows pain and discomfort and she pushes Kardo away. He reacts by dunking her head into the water container. Mina then does something that surprises Kardo. She suddenly becomes just as rough as he. Isoy watches as his gentle seductress reveals her fangs and turns into a ferocious lioness capable of inflicting, and also deriving pleasure from, pain.)*

*(In a while, Kardo and Mina reach climax. Kardo grabs his shirt from the clothesline and hurriedly puts it on. He is about to leave when Mina grabs him from behind.)*

## **MINA**

*(Softly) Wait.*

*(She gives Kardo a lingering kiss. Only then does she let him go.)*

*(In the bathroom, Mina touches her breasts and smiles. She takes off her already wet kamison and hangs it on the clothesline. She takes a much-needed bath.)*

*(Isoy slowly gets down from the dapog. He goes to a chair and sits on it. He stares at the dapog for a long time. Mina soon finishes her bath and she leaves the bathroom. Lights out on her scene as Isoy slowly gets up from the chair.)*

*(He goes down the house and enters the coop. A dim light shines on him as he goes to one of the hens. He places it on his lap. He strokes the feathers around its neck and then fondles its rear.)*

*(Lights slowly fade out as Isoy starts to open his trousers.)*

## **Scene 9**

*(It is late in the morning of the same day. Manding Susing sleepily gets up and slowly makes her way to the kitchen. She prepares coffee and then turns on the radio. It is silent. She turns it off and then turns it on again. It stays quiet. She takes out its batteries and realizes that they have finally given out. Manding Susing sighs. She then takes her coffee to the doorstep and sits there sipping the hot drink slowly.)*

*(The sound of an approaching tricycle is heard. Manding Susing stops what she is doing and listens to the sound. It moves on.)*

*(Soon, she finishes her coffee and she goes back to the kitchen. She washes her glass and carefully places it on the sink. She goes to the table and collects the batteries.*

*She goes down and throws them in the backyard.)*

*(Manding Susing then opens the door of the coop and enters it slowly. She goes to the hens and collects the eggs. She only collects two. She checks the hens and notices one that appears to have weakened. She reaches for it and feels its rear to check if an egg is still expected. She cringes when she looks at her hand. It has blood on it.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

*Ay, Ginuo ko! (Oh, my God!)*

*(She looks up at the bamboo floor and hurriedly leaves the coop. She goes up to the house and goes inside to check Isoy's sleeping space.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

*(Offstage) Isoy? Isoy! Isoy!*

*(In a while, she returns to the kitchen and sits on a chair. She has with her the yellowed envelopes containing her sister's letters. She stares at them for a long time. Then, she slowly takes out one letter and starts reading it.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

*I am sorry. (A beat) Olongapo is noisy gid ... life is difficult ... I miss my son. (A beat) Please write back, Manang.*

*(She takes out another and reads it, too.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

*What did you name him? (A beat) Olongapo is ugly gali ... noisy ... difficult ... Joe and I quarrel a lot. (A beat) Daad I could ... (Slowly puts the letter down) ... Daad I could go home.*

*(She hurriedly reads another letter.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

*Life ... more difficult run gid ... quarrel with Joe more ... am sick. (A beat) Please write back.*

*(She gets another letter.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

*Joe is taking me to the ... to the hospital run tomorrow, Manang. How is ...*

*Citas ...*

*(She opens the other letters hurriedly.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

*Citas ... very sick ...*

*(When she reads the last letter, Manding Susing's eyes well up with tears.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

*Citas ... Citas!*

*(She wails.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

*Ay abaw, Citas! Patawara ako! (Forgive me!) Patawara ako, Citas. I didn't know abi. I didn't know gid, Citas!*

*(And the old woman cries bitterly.)*

*(In a while, she forces herself to get up and she walks slowly to the doorstep. There, she sits and weeps quietly.)*

*(The sound of an approaching tricycle is then heard. The tricycle stops in front of Manding Susing's house, and then it moves on.)*

*(A better-dressed Tiyoy Berning makes his way to the back of the house. He sees Manding Susing.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Is Isoy ... Did he ...

*(Manding Susing just stares at Tiyoy Berning.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

He left.

**MANDING SUSING**

Yes. He left.

He also left these.

*(She hands over the letters to Tiyoy Berning.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

I gave them to him yesterday. Those are from Citas, Berning. And her G.I.

*(Tiyoy Berning slowly goes over the letters while Manding Susing stares at him quietly.)*

*(When he reaches the last letter ...)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Citas doesn't want to be ... brought home ... if you are angry ...

*(A moment of silence as Tiyoy Berning stares at Manding Susing.)*

**TIYOY BERNING**

Citas ...

*(His knees fail him.)*

**MANDING SUSING**

*Patawara ako, Berning. Patawara n'yo ako.*

*(The letters fall from Tiyoy Berning's hands.)*

*(In the doorstep, Manding Susing just weeps and repeatedly says, "Patawara n'yo ako.")*

*(Lights out.)*

**Epilogue**

*(In the dark, the sounds of the play's prologue (men's laughter ... "Sige run, Isoy! So that you will no longer be a paltak, indi b'la?" ... boys' laughter) are softly heard.)*

*(Then, a dim light reveals Isoy as he silently stands in the kitchen. Soon, he collects his bag and slowly goes down the house. Just before he makes his final exit, Isoy momentarily stops and looks back at Manding Susing's house.)*

*(In a while, the young man collects himself and goes on his way.)*

*(The distant crowing of roosters is heard. Manding Susing's rooster crows back as the lights finally fade out.)*

*(The end.)*