

## **The Bakunawa**

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## CHARACTERS

**Alton**, 20s-30s, mixed Filipino American. A teacher prone to soliloquizing.

**Lester**, 20s-30s, Filipino American, queer. A recruiter; that is, he finds people employment and vice versa. Andrew's boyfriend, at least for a while.

**Andrew**, 20s-30s, white American, queer. An entomologist; that is, he studies insects. Lester's boyfriend, at least for a while.

**Carol**, 20s-30s, any ethnicity. A teacher prone to frequenting wine bars.

**Ina**, 40s-60s, Filipina. A nurse. Lester's mother.

**Charice**, 20s-30s, Filipina American. An administrative assistant, though not by choice.

**Guillaume**, 20s-30s, French with an Accent (at least a slight one.) A traveler.

**Charlie**, 20s-30s, any ethnicity. Runs a computer lab at an elementary school.

## THE SETTING

We spend time in:

Cupertino and Daly City, California, USA

San Jose del Monte, Bulacan, Philippines

## THE SET

The set should be moveable, modular, and minimal: expressionistic and evocative rather than detailed and quotidian. You know the saying, "I don't want realism, I want magic!"

## THE MAGIC

For all of these events, I defer to Tony Kushner: "The moments of magic ... are to be fully imagined and realized, as wonderful *theatrical* illusions—which means it's OK if the wires show, and maybe it's good that they do, but the magic should at the same time be thoroughly thrilling, fantastical, amazing."

It doesn't need to be fancy and shouldn't be expensive. It could look like butterflies crafted of feathers, wired to a chopstick for easy puppeteering.

## THE HISTORY

*The Bakunawa* (original title: *Butter Knife*) was originally commissioned by Alton Albuero as part of Concrete Temple Theater's lab in the fall of 2014. It was further developed by Crashbox Theater Company as part of their Read. Play. Write series in the fall of 2016, and at Indiana University in the fall of 2017. *Butter Knife* was the recipient of 3 awards from the Kennedy Center in 2016: the Mark Twain Comic Playwriting Prize, the second place Paul Stephen Lim Playwriting Award, and a distinguished achievement Paula Vogel Playwriting Award. *Butter Knife* was developed with support from Montana Repertory Theatre's new play development lab in the spring of 2019.

Alton, alone.

ALTON

I want to tell you something-- just one thing-- but I'm not sure how to go about it. *Without context, your story is nothing*, they say.

If I was telling this story to my students, I might start with this:

Once upon a time there was the Bakunawa, an ocean god, a sea serpent. At the time there were seven moons in the sky. He so envied their beauty that one night he arose from the sea to swallow those moons. But the Bakunawa couldn't eat the last and largest moon. You can still see his teeth marks on it if you look. Every so often he tries again, biting the moon, causing darkness on earth. To stop him, people bang on pots and pans until he regurgitates it, ending the eclipse.

This seems like the wrong beginning. Agh. Maybe I should start with me.

I was born in San Jose, California. My parents come from two different places. They're still very much in love. And I'm a teacher, you know, I teach fourth grade.

I don't think that's it either. You see, it's all in the framing. I need to start somewhere else.

How about this:

Once upon a time there was a couple. This is a harder start for me, but maybe it'll pay off. Once upon a time there was a couple. They lived in the land where well-funded dreams die in squalor: Silicon Valley. The couple was content, by most standards of contentedness. Their village was called Cupertino and they themselves were called Andrew and Lester.

Andrew and Lester enter.

ALTON [CONT'D]

Their story starts in the middle of the end, with a phone call.

Lester pours them each a glass of wine.

LESTER

My mom called today. Something weird happened at home.

ANDREW

Up in Daly City?

LESTER

In San Jose del Monte. Bulacan.

ANDREW

Oh, like *motherland* home.

LESTER

Um. My tita Pauline-- they found her in her garage.

ANDREW

Oh my God. I'm so sorry.  
Are they having a service?

LESTER

Yeah. My mom and my cousin Charice are flying back tonight.

ANDREW

I'm glad she'll have someone with her. When's good for us? When do you want to go back?

LESTER

I think I want to go alone, Andy.

ANDREW

Oh.

LESTER

If I bring you it's gonna be different, you know? My mom's different around you.  
I was gonna drive her to the airport then go next week.

ANDREW

Can't she call a car?

LESTER

You think my mom knows how to use an app like that.

ANDREW

She left a review for that Korean barbecue place last month.

LESTER

Yeah well that place was really bad and she likes to express herself, what can I say.  
You were saying you wanted to see your family, right?

ANDREW

No, no, yeah. They haven't seen me in a million years, I'll book a flight back to Saint Paul for the holidays.

LESTER

Okay.

Thank you.

They eat their salad.

LESTER

I think I might go for longer than just the holidays.

ANDREW

How much longer?

LESTER

I want to see how long my family needs me. I'll book my ticket back as soon as I talk to them.

ANDREW

And you're just gonna leave me here in the states to ride out a Minnesotan winter alone.

LESTER

I'm helping my family.

ANDREW

Are you breaking up with me?

LESTER

No! No.

Listen to me.

I'm -- I think I'm grieving.

I want to spend time with my mom and Charice without a deadline to haul back.

ANDREW

I wish I could come.

LESTER

You can if you want. I just-- it'll be way hard for you. And frankly hard for me.

ANDREW

Okay.

LESTER

Okay?

ANDREW

Okay. You'd let me know if you need anything, right? Like, we're okay?

LESTER

We're good. This is what I need, Andy.

ANDREW

Then you should do it. I'll look up plane tickets after dinner.

LESTER

I think I -- well, I'm going out on Tuesday after that presentation at the firm.

ANDREW

You bought a ticket already.

LESTER

It was an impulse thing.

ANDREW

You bought a single, one-way ticket.

LESTER

My aunt just died.

ANDREW

Whom I've never met, just like most of your family.

LESTER

You're making this about you right now.

ANDREW

I'm sorry, I know. I just-- I feel left out. There's this whole other you I never get to meet.

LESTER

That other me is like not worth meeting. Repression's a bitch, honey.

ANDREW

You've met every member of my family. You've met my sister's dogs.

LESTER

And they were very cute!

ANDREW

Why do you hide me away?

LESTER

I don't want you getting hurt.

ANDREW

My family's conservative too. My dad voted for--

LESTER

I know who your dad voted for. It's not about being conservative. You have to trust me on this.

ANDREW

I trust you. I do.

And I'm sorry about your aunt.

LESTER

Thank you.

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ANDREW

What was she like?

LESTER

Um

Oh boy

She was a really great cook, you know? I know that's hackneyed, everyone's tita is a great cook, but she really, like, you taste her late night tortas and you feel loved.

Um

She had this really dry sense of humor, like, it was so cutting and she would make everyone in the family feel bad. Especially Charice, sometimes.

My grandma moved to San Jose del Monte before she got married. She came from the Visayas area, from the Isla del Fuego. It's home to a lot of mananambal, a lot of shamans, a lot of healers.

When my lola got sick, tita Pauline went back to take care of the family home in San Jose del Monte. And she stayed there for years and years, looking after it, cooking her love into her meals.

So yeah.

ANDREW

She sounds perfect.

LESTER

She really was.

I love you.

ANDREW

Eat your salad. I love you too.

They exit.

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ALTON

They were silent for the rest of their dinner, and they talked cordially the next day. And nothing changed right then-- nothing that can be defined, that is. Isn't that funny? But maybe we need to see them earlier than this to note the difference.

The past. Andrew and Lester's house.

CAROL

This house looks so much better with you in it, Lester.

LESTER

Glad you like it.

ANDREW

We've been working soyyyy hard.

CAROL

Curtains?! Luxe. Andrew doesn't know how to decorate.

ANDREW

I watch those house shows all the time!

CAROL

And getting that recruiter money in here? Crucial.

ANDREW

I make money!

CAROL

As an entomologist? No one cares about science.

LESTER

Well at least you both are doing something important. Being a glorified head hunter has its drawbacks.

CAROL

Like what? The six figures?

LESTER

Like the soul-sucking drudgery. Like the hours.

ANDREW

Starring Nicole Kidman.

CAROL

Starring Julianne Moore.

LESTER

Starring-- who was the third one?



CAROL / ANDREW  
MERYL!

LESTER  
Right.  
I haven't been home by seven in months.

CAROL  
Well, I bet no children have puked on you either. You win some, you lose some.

ANDREW  
You got puked on?

CAROL  
Projectile. Parents gotta stop sending their kids to school when they're sick.

ANDREW  
What, and stay home with them? I don't have enough sick days for my pinkie toe, let alone another human being.

CAROL  
I like the curtains.

ANDREW  
Lester picked them out.

CAROL  
Good taste.

LESTER  
Tarjay.

ANDREW  
And. Well I think the big news is:  
We deleted our apps.

LESTER  
Yeah. At his insistence.

CAROL  
OoOoOoh, you deleted your apps!?

ANDREW  
When we-- yeah, when we moved in here.

CAROL  
That's major.

LESTER  
Yeah.

CAROL  
Is monogamy everything you thought it'd be?

ANDREW  
Everything and more. Speaking of, where's Charlie??

CAROL  
Still at work. He's bringing Alton with him!

LESTER  
Right. Alton. Is that your coworker?

CAROL  
I-- what? I mean yes. Alton is my coworker.

LESTER  
What?

CAROL  
What?

LESTER  
You're acting weird.

ANDREW  
I didn't tell Lester. I mean we have a no ex talk policy.

LESTER  
Wait

ANDREW  
It was your rule.

LESTER  
Wait

CAROL  
Okay, yeah. Okay. Um.

LESTER  
Alton's your ex?

CAROL  
Hm?

ANDREW  
Well Alton is someone from the app days.

LESTER  
Oh. Is that all?

ANDREW  
God, you're so chill about this.

LESTER  
You want a little jealousy? I can provide.

CAROL  
It was the old days when we first moved to the Bay. We were wild and free then.

ANDREW  
I should have told you.

LESTER  
It's fine, it's fine. I said no ex talk.

ANDREW  
I feel terrible.

LESTER  
Don't. I mean I have like a thousand exes running around Fremont that you know nothing about.  
So. Drinks? I can get them.

ANDREW  
No, let me.

CAROL  
Yeah, he's the fuckup, let him.

ANDREW  
Vodka?

CAROL

Of course. Soda?

ANDREW  
Of course.

CAROL  
Grazie, bello.

ANDREW  
De nada, guapa.

Andrew exits.

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LESTER  
The other guests should be here soon, I think? The other people.

CAROL  
I'm not worried.

LESTER  
That makes one of us. Every time I host a party I'm convinced no one will show.

CAROL  
I'm sure you throw great parties.

LESTER  
Andrew throws great parties. I throw trashy parties. But thank you.

Andrew enters with drinks.

ANDREW  
It's go time.

CAROL  
Thank God. Here-- to your new home. May it always be full of love, light, and other bullshit.

ANDREW  
And to family-- to our little found family. I'm so grateful for the two of you bozos.

CAROL  
Aw, that's so sweet.

LESTER  
Amen.

They drink their vodka. The doorbell rings. Lester goes to get it.

CAROL  
Who is it?

LESTER [OFFSTAGE]  
Uhhhhhhhhh

ANDREW  
Are you okay?

Lester enters with a gift wrapped box.

LESTER  
We got a pressie! Wanna see?

CAROL  
A pressie! Who's it from?

LESTER  
Should I open it?

CAROL  
Yes, yes, please open it!

Lester opens the box. Inside is a caterpillar.

ANDREW  
Is that a real -- yeah, that's real, huh! That's a real live *Danaus plexippus* in our living room!

CAROL  
A what?

LESTER  
I think he means monarch butterfly. Or, it will be one day.

ANDREW  
Time to grow.

LESTER

Is it going to fly away?

CAROL

It's literally still a caterpillar.

LESTER

I don't know how long these things take!

ANDREW

Oh, come on.

Andrew takes the box from Lester. There's a note.

ANDREW [CONT'D]

It just says "happy migration."

LESTER

A whole box for two words?

CAROL

Wasteful.

LESTER

Climate change. Carol, you take it, I don't think it likes me.

ANDREW

*He* is a male. You can tell by the testes here in the sixth abdominal segment, see? They're red.

Carol takes the caterpillar.

CAROL

Oh, he's cute. He's gonna be a cute butterfly.

LESTER

Who leaves a caterpillar without a little bug food? Bug seed? What do bugs eat?

ANDREW

How long have we been dating.

LESTER

Not long enough for me to pay attention to *Danaus Plexippus*, apparently.

Andrew takes the bug from Carol.

ANDREW

I'll bring him into the lab. He'll have plenty of food.

LESTER

He didn't sign up for that!!

CAROL

He's literally gonna be a different animal soon.

LESTER

What?

CAROL

He'll sprout wings. He'll be able to fly away.

ANDREW

I'm gonna give him a home here for now.

A knock on the door.

CAROL

Oh. It's probably Charlie. Let me get it.

Carol crosses to the door.

LESTER

Oh um did you send me your rent money yet?

ANDREW

Jeez! I'm so sorry. They paid me late. Can I send it on Monday?

LESTER

Of course, of course. No worries.

Andrew picks up the caterpillar box and examines it.

ANDREW

Carol does love a party prank. One time she covered my whole pillow with shaving cream when I was asleep.

LESTER

You think she did this?

ANDREW

Of course. There's not a doubt in my mind.

LESTER

How do you think she pulled it off? There was a knock.

ANDREW

She probably made Charlie do it.

Charlie enters with Alton.

CHARLIE

Howdy, partiers.

Andrew and Alton lock eyes.

The room spins around them, spitting Alton out alone.

ALTON

The last time I had been here things looked different. We shared the place, once. There were shitty curtains on the windows, almost see through. Anyone can see us if they're looking, I said, anyone can see right through these curtains. I always wanted us to change those but he didn't care. He'll do it when he's ready, I thought. And he did.

Let's take a look into a car ride, maybe. On the way to the San Francisco Airport:

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INA

Do you have one of these underwear things?

LESTER

What are you talking about.

INA

These underwear things.

Ina pulls out a passport and money pouch from her pants.

LESTER

What!?! Where was that hiding?

INA

I told you, it's an underwear thing. No one will want to steal from you if it's in your underwear.

LESTER

I don't know about that, Mom.

INA



This is the safest way to carry your things when you travel. I should have gotten you one before I left.

LESTER  
It's okay, I'll survive.

INA  
Just put your wallet in your underwear.

LESTER  
Fine.

INA  
I want to see you do it.

LESTER  
No, Mom, no.

INA  
Put your wallet in your underwear.

LESTER  
I'm driving!

INA  
Right now.

Lester puts his wallet in his underwear.

LESTER  
Happy?

INA  
I've been worse. How is Andrew? Is he making any more money now?

LESTER  
He's fine.

INA  
And he's been sending you his rent money?

LESTER  
Yeah, we're good.

INA

Because at barbecue the other day it seemed like --

LESTER

Don't worry about us, Ma. I'll let you know if there's something to worry about.

INA

Okay.

I still worry though.

LESTER

I know.

INA

Are you happy?

LESTER

I've been worse.

INA

Hey. I want to see you happy. I don't think it's right that you should pay so much rent.

LESTER

It's not a money thing, Mom, truly.

INA

Is it because he's kano?

LESTER

Mooom.

INA

You love dating kanos. Has he ever dated a Pinoy before, Andrew?

LESTER

I don't know. We don't talk about that stuff.

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INA

She loved turtles, your tita.

LESTER

Sorry?

INA

Pauline. She loved turtles. She tried to keep one as a pet until it bit her.

LESTER

Ouch.

INA

She only bled a little bit. But I laughed at her a lot.

And then she left the turtle in my bed and I bled a medium amount. Punishment.

You were so lucky to know her, anak. We were so lucky to know someone like that.

LESTER

Yeah.

INA

I think some of the family from the old island will be coming in.

LESTER

From the Isla del Fuego?

INA

We call it Siquijor. Isla del Fuego is a name other people gave to it.

LESTER

Call me when you get in, okay?

INA

If you're lucky. See you when I see you.

LESTER

I'll see you on Tuesday.

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ALTON

The Philippines:

Ina and Charice sit surrounded by an array of flowers, trays of food.

Ina is on the phone.

INA

Okay. Okay. I'll see you when you get here. Lab kita!

She hangs up.

CHARICE  
Was that Lester?

INA  
Yes, Tuesday can't come soon enough.  
Shall we continue?

CHARICE  
Yeah, sure. These are from the Albueros.

INA  
That was nice of them. They barely know us.

CHARICE  
My whole life they've known me.

INA  
Not very well. Next!

CHARICE  
These are from the Boado family.

INA  
Which? Mahalia or Jaslene?

CHARICE  
I don't know, it just says the Boados.

INA  
Let me see.

She takes the bouquet.

CHARICE  
I'm telling you, there's nothing on there.

INA  
These are from Mahalia. Jaslene would never give this arrangement.

CHARICE  
I don't want to thank the wrong family.

INA  
Don't worry about it, I'm right. Next!

CHARICE

This one's from your, uh.  
It's from Tito Angelo.  
The note's for you, tita.

INA  
Oo?

CHARICE

See for yourself.

Ina reads the note, throws it in the trash.

INA  
Basura.

CHARICE

Should I tell him not to come to the service?

INA

No, no, let him come. He can watch our grief like a TV show.

CHARICE

I love to disinvite people, it would be my honor.

INA

He's the father of my child. I can't erase him like you can erase your boyfriends. Have you built a life with someone, anak?

CHARICE

Okay wow, tita. It's not for lack of trying, okay? It's hard out there.

INA

It can't be that bad. Marlene Montalban got married two weeks ago.

CHARICE

Marlene Montalban settled and we both know it.

INA

Now who's being mean?

Charice checks her phone.

INA

Lester told me that you were --Hey! Texting, texting, texting.

CHARICE  
Sori po, Tita.

INA  
Text your cousin while you're at it.

CHARICE  
I don't have any service here.

INA  
Have some lumpia, that'll improve the service.

CHARICE  
Nice try.

INA  
Well. I think it's so great you decided to move here. Because you can always move away. But moving back is the important thing.

CHARICE  
You're one to talk.

INA  
San Francisco is my home now.

CHARICE  
Daly City.

INA  
All of the bay is San Francisco now, it's expensive enough. I have my work, I have my friends. I have Lester nearby.

CHARICE  
You see him a lot?

INA  
All the time. And his kano boyfriend.

CHARICE  
I'm pretty sure he and Andrew are serious, tita. They like live together don't they?

INA  
I don't hate Andrew. I just think he's untrustworthy. Talk to Lester while he's here, okay?

CHARICE

About Andrew?

INA

It's not healthy to date kanos. Makes you question things about how you live your life.

CHARICE

Lester can make his own decisions.

INA

And I can disagree with them. He's good about everything else. He drove me to the airport. He's a good son.

CHARICE

I get it, I was a horrible daughter.

INA

No, no, that's not what I meant. I think you were a wonderful daughter. And your mother loved you very much.

CHARICE

Can you just lay off me for one minute? Please?

INA

Your mother would never let you talk to me like this.

CHARICE

That's because she would never let me talk.

INA

It's complicated. She was a complicated person.

CHARICE

She was a fucking terror.

INA

Charice. May God rest her soul.  
Your mother made a lot of sacrifices for you.

CHARICE

A lot of sacrifices, sure. But for me? I don't think so.

INA

You sound hungry. You're not paying attention to your body, anak.

CHARICE  
I said I'm not hungry.

INA  
Okay, okay.

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CHARICE  
What are you doing?

INA  
I'm standing here waiting for you to eat some of my food.

CHARICE  
Tita, I love you, but I really can't eat anything right now.

INA  
This is your mother's favorite.

CHARICE  
Oh my god.

INA  
She wants you to eat! She's in my heart, screaming *don't let my child starve, Ina! Feed her!*

CHARICE  
Can't you drop it? Jesus!

INA  
If your mother was here she would smack you for talking like that.

Charice topples the tray to the ground with purpose.

INA  
Charice!!

CHARICE  
I'm so clumsy.

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ALTON



Cupertino, moving day:

Lester and Andrew enter with boxes.

ANDREW

Where do you want me to put this?

LESTER

Those are my books, I guess they can go in here. Everything else is closet stuff.

ANDREW

Um

LESTER

What.

ANDREW

*Everything* else is clothes?

LESTER

I can reduce.

ANDREW

I can use the closet in the study.

LESTER

Thank you.

ANDREW

Too bad I have to share this house with a high maintenance boyfriend.

LESTER

A real bougie bitch.

ANDREW

I just like to complain about him. He's actually kind of amazing and I'm crazy about him.

Kiss.

LESTER

Ew we're gross.

ANDREW

Yeah, we're gross.

Lester leaps across the room.

LESTER

And we have this *whole house* to fill with how *putrid* we are.

Andrew leaps across the room.

ANDREW

This whole house! To fill with our decrepitude!

LESTER

We can make out in every room!

ANDREW

Yeah!

LESTER

We can buy stuff to make the house look as good as we do!

ANDREW

But it won't! We're too handsome!

LESTER

We gotta change these curtains.

ANDREW

Oh come on now, they're cute.

LESTER

The sunlight's too harsh in here. Human beings are meant to have opaque window treatments.

ANDREW

You're opaque.

LESTER

You're opaque.

ANDREW

We're gross.

Lester hands Andrew a book.

LESTER

I found your book at my apartment while I was packing.

ANDREW

I must have left it behind.

LESTER

He's my favorite poet. I bought it for you to read and savor.

ANDREW

I've savored some of it! It's just, I mean, it's so dense. I don't know how you have time to read all that Auden with your schedule.

LESTER

It's pooping. I read while I poop.

ANDREW

Very into that.

Well. I think it's time for the ceremonial deleting of the apps.

LESTER

Oh, we were gonna do that as like as like as like a thing?

ANDREW

Yeah I think it's a thing, don't you?

LESTER

Oh for sure. Yeah for sure.

They get out their phones.

ANDREW

Okay. Here we go.

LESTER

Yep. Here we go.

They delete their apps in tandem.

LESTER

My home screen has never looked this empty.

ANDREW

It doesn't look empty. It looks clean.

LESTER

Hey Andrew?

ANDREW  
Hey what.

LESTER  
I love you.

ANDREW  
Gross.

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I guess we can hang some curtains?

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ALTON:  
San Jose del Monte, Bulacan:

Lester has newly arrived. Butterflies around him.

INA  
Anak. Sa wakas bumalik ka. Puputok ang aking puso sa labis na katuwaan.  
*My son, you are finally home. I feel like my heart will burst with excitement.*

LESTER  
Don't be so dramatic, Ma. Your heart won't burst.

INA  
From happiness, from happiness! Anak, halika, kumain ka.  
*Come in and eat something.*

LESTER  
I'm not hungry.

INA  
Come in and eat, okay? And don't slouch. You look like a brown Cheeto.

LESTER  
It's good to see you, Ma.

INA  
Of course it is. I'm glad you're here. I think I saw a ghost today.

LESTER  
What? Who did you see?

INA

Who do you think? I took out a necklace that I borrowed from your tita a long time ago, years ago maybe. She never asked about it so I never gave it back, and I wanted to wear it to her novena. I was about to put it on when I looked down. There was a turtle by my feet. And the turtle was the ghost.

LESTER

Okayyyyyy.

INA

It was Pauline, I know it was. As I was about to put on her necklace! She was chastising me.

LESTER

Like, "You are not about to wear that stolen ass necklace to my novena, biiiitch!"

INA

Lester!! You call your mother that!?

LESTER

NO! No, no. It was a joke, Ma. A joke, like... a gay joke.

INA

Oh.

LESTER

I didn't mean it like--

Sorry, Ma.

I know this isn't easy for you.

INA

Pauline would have liked that joke. She was always mean to me, if I wasn't mean first.

LESTER

Sisterhood.

INA

I miss her like I'm missing-- I don't know. My ring finger. My nose.

LESTER

I'm sorry, Ma.

INA

These things happen. My sister, my brother. My parents. Soon I won't know anyone living.

LESTER  
I'll be here.

INA  
You better be.

LESTER  
I'm nervous. I haven't seen some of your family in twenty years.

INA  
Hwag kang matakot. Kasama mo ako.  
*Don't be scared. I'm here with you.*

+++

ALTON:  
Cupertino.

Carol enters with wine.

ANDREW  
You know  
I've been thinking about this for a while now.  
You could've admitted it. You left that caterpillar and you've always denied it.

CAROL  
I swear I didn't leave that caterpillar. Why would I spend my time doing that.

ANDREW  
You love party pranks.

CAROL  
Well that's a lame fucking party prank.

ANDREW  
I thought it was cute. Just say you did it.

CAROL  
I can't because I didn't do it.

ANDREW  
You don't have to be so stubborn.

CAROL

I swear upon everything-- you know what? You don't have to believe me. What's up with Lester? It sounds like he's trying to break up with you. Are you sure there's nothing going on with him?

ANDREW

No, there's nothing.

I was mean about Lester's mom, maybe? I don't get their relationship.

CAROL

Well it's not exactly a dynamic you have in your life. Your mom is Ice Queen USA and your dad voted for--

ANDREW

I know who he voted for.

It's just a minor familial slash cultural difference.

I just-- I always feel at a disadvantage. I always feel clingy.

CAROL

Discussing feelings?

ANDREW

I always feel like he's got something going for him that I don't. If I think something, he knows about it before the thought enters my head. He knows I'm not happy. Ball's in his court.

CAROL

If you say so.

Andrew swigs.

ANDREW

This wine is really bad.

CAROL

I can't spend more than six dollars on a bottle of wine without regretting it. But then I always regret spending less than six dollars. So.

ANDREW

I really wanted to go to the airport with him.

CAROL

Then you should have gone. Don't take an answer you don't like. Watch, like this: is Charlie a huge huge asshole?

ANDREW

Charlie? Your boyfriend Charlie?

CAROL  
Ex-boyfriend.

ANDREW  
Oh, baby.

CAROL  
Answer the question. Is Charlie a huge huge asshole.

ANDREW  
I always liked Charlie. I wanted you two to work it out.

CAROL  
And now my response: Thank you but I respectfully reject your opinion. And then you go about your day.  
For what it's worth, I think you could stand some time alone. You don't always have to be with somebody else.

ANDREW  
Thank you but I respectfully reject your opinion.

CAROL  
We have a fast learner on our hands! Round of applause for the man with the wine.

ANDREW  
That's me, that's me! Rah rah rah.

CAROL  
I still never loved him.

ANDREW  
I did. I do. I miss him like a part of me is gone. But like an extremity. It's like my nose and ring finger are gone.

CAROL  
Lester's convenient, honey. And you aren't exactly  
I mean

ANDREW  
What

CAROL  
You aren't exactly like Saint Andrew, like I mean



I just think you're not being honest with yourself. This time without Lester might be good for you.

ANDREW

Has it been good for you? Your time without Charlie?

CAROL

You know what? It has. I'm

I loved Charlie but I feel better now.

Is this because of Christmas? I know how you hate going home for Christmas.

ANDREW

I love Christmas. I just don't love my family's politics.

CAROL

Who does?

When you go home don't tell anyone that I say hi.

ANDREW

I won't even mention you.

CAROL

No you should definitely mention me just like don't tell them I say hi. I'm doing very well Out West.

ANDREW

You're thriving and you've left the past behind.

CAROL

What do they say? Leave behind what no longer serves you. That's what I did with Minnesota. This isn't to say I like Lester.

ANDREW

Of course not.

CAROL

But is he It, you know? The One?

ANDREW

I don't know.

CAROL

Okay. I would posit that if you Don't Know, he Wasn't It.

ANDREW

That feels wrong.

CAROL  
Does it?

ANDREW  
When you said that right now, it felt wrong.

CAROL  
A minute ago you couldn't say he was the one.

ANDREW  
That doesn't mean I'm ready to let go.

CAROL  
Okay.

ANDREW  
I think I should go to the Philippines.

CAROL  
What?

ANDREW  
I think I should go get him.

CAROL  
If you think that's a good idea, honey, go for it. But you're reeling. You're not in a great space, and he didn't want you to join him.

ANDREW  
What happened with Charlie?

CAROL  
Excuse me?

ANDREW  
What went down with your breakup. Because it kind of seems like you're projecting.

CAROL  
That's completely unfair. I'm trying to be the voice of reason. Not everything is about me. But do what you want, Andrew. Go get him if you need to. Everyone should be a fool for love at least once.

+++

ALTON

Why don't we go back a little bit. Before Andrew and Lester moved in together:

A moonlit field.

LESTER

The moon's so bright tonight

ANDREW

Did you ever hear about the bakunawa?

LESTER

What?

ANDREW

The bakunawa

LESTER

NoOoOo

ANDREW

You don't have to say it like that.

LESTER

Like what

ANDREW

"NoOoOo"

LESTER

Okay I won't say it like that.

What the hell is a bakunawa?

ANDREW

You're doing it again.

LESTER

I can't help it, you're cute when you get mad.

ANDREW

Everyone says that and I hate it. It's like the worst line ever

LESTER

Yeah but it's true with you, lines are lines because they're true. So what's a bakunawa?

ANDREW

It's a kind of mythical sea serpent in the Philippines, from Visayas.

LESTER

Why am i supposed to know that, just because it came from the Philippines or something?

ANDREW

I didn't mean it / like that

LESTER

Kidding. Does it have powers?

ANDREW

I don't know.

LESTER

Does it like shoot sunbeams??

ANDREW

It swallows the moon. The seven moons.

LESTER

Ew why are there seven moons?

ANDREW

The bakunawa is jealous of the moons' beauty and eats them.

LESTER

Cool. Love a jealousy narrative.

A shadow passes over them.

ANDREW

Holy shit.

LESTER

What was that?

ANDREW

I don't know. I don't know what we're doing.

LESTER

We're enjoying the natures.

ANDREW

No like with us I don't know what we're doing

LESTER

Oh do we need to talk about this now

ANDREW

Like I'm totally fine with it and i'm having a good time doing whatever with you

LESTER

Yeah totally

ANDREW

but like my history-- do you know about my history?

LESTER

I have a strict no-ex-talk policy with people I'm seeing

ANDREW

Is that all we're doing? Just seeing each other?

A shadow passes over them again.

LESTER

Holy shit.

ANDREW

I told you! What do you think it was?

LESTER

No clue, it didn't even look real.

ANDREW

Right? and like in Cupertino!

LESTER

Yeah like in Cupertino.

ANDREW

Is there supposed to be an eclipse tonight?

LESTER

Hell if I know.

I'm sorry, what were you saying?

ANDREW

Ugh whatever it doesn't-- I'm insecure. I always feel like when you leave the room you're not coming back.

LESTER

Uh

ANDREW

Like you're going to realize that i'm not worth it and you'll come back and be like, I'm in love with this guy ilmet at the farmer's market over the weekend, he's a self-made entrepreneur, well actually he sells baubles on etsy, well actually it's not you it's me, well actually it's over. This is probably pathetic

A shadow blacks out the moonlight.

LESTER

If you want it to be different than "seeing each other" you could just say that. I don't think you're pathetic

ANDREW

I'm botching this

LESTER

Botching what?

ANDREW

I'm into you, okay? I'm into this.

Kiss.  
Darkness  
And then:  
Illumination.

LESTER

Do you want to move in together?

+++

ALTON

I was out at a bar that night during the eclipse, out somewhere in Cupertino. I had just gotten a new place, after Andrew. I stood outside and stared at the sky, wishing I would get some kind of sign.

And then

Darkness

And then

Illumination.  
San Francisco Airport:

Everything is coated in smoke.  
Carol and Andrew wear pollution face masks.

CAROL  
Driver's license?

ANDREW  
Check.

CAROL  
Ticket?

ANDREW  
Check.

CAROL  
Common sense?

ANDREW  
It's flown away. I'm going to Manila.

CAROL  
How's the smoke prognosis?

ANDREW  
The fires were supposed to have died down by now. My airline hasn't said anything.

CAROL  
You know, the foothills may be burning, but fire can make way for new growth.  
Here.

She fishes around in her purse and pulls out a carved wooden bird.

CAROL  
It's for good luck.

ANDREW  
Uh, thanks.

CAROL  
Oh, come on, it's magic, just take it. Magic doesn't come cheap.

Andrew takes the bird.

ANDREW

It's warm.

CAROL

I told you, it's magic. Plus it's been in my purse rattling around. Now if you ever feel lost, you can just put that in your pocket and whistle, and I'll be there whatever way I can. Maybe just in spirit, I don't know, I've never tried this before.

ANDREW

Can't I just text you?

CAROL

Sure, but cell phones break, batteries die, you know the drill. This is more fun.

ANDREW

Cool.

I should go through security.

CAROL

Where's your layover?

ANDREW

I don't have one.

CAROL

A straight shot? Luxurious.

ANDREW

Upper class.

CAROL

Call me when you get in.

ANDREW

Wish me luck.

CAROL

I already gave it to you.

+++

ALTON

San Jose del Monte:



Lester makes a call.  
From the other side of the world, the phone rings and rings in California.

ANDREW'S VOICE [recorded]

Hey, you've reached Andrew

LESTER'S VOICE [recorded]

And Lester!

ANDREW'S VOICE [recorded]

We're not here right now, so please leave a message and have a wild day.

LESTER

Ugh, who are we.

I um. I'm doing good here. I'm doing really good here.

I hope you're doing good too. I just wanted to say that I think it's good we have this time apart.

We can clear our heads and stuff. So yeah. And I think

Oh here comes my mom. Kay bye.

Ina enters with a bucket of corn and a bag to shuck into.

Ina hands him some ears of corn. They shuck.

INA

He should pick up for you.

LESTER

I'm sure he's just busy.

INA

Doing what?

LESTER

I don't know. There's a time difference.

INA

Okay.

LESTER

Don't do that, Ma.

INA

What? I'm doing nothing.

LESTER

That! You're doing that!

INA

I don't know what you're talking about.

LESTER

You're being weird about Andrew, like always.

INA

Then Andrew should not be so difficult to you. *Ikaw ay kayamanan.*

*You are a treasure.*

LESTER

Oh my god. He's the treasure. I'm just like... I'm fine.

INA

Was everything okay when you left?

LESTER

As good as it ever is.

INA

That doesn't mean anything.

Papunta na si Charice dito. *Mahuhuli lang siya ng kaunti.*

*Charice is on her way over here right now. She was running late.*

LESTER

Of course Charice is running late.

INA

Kailangan mabait ka sa iyong pinsan.

*Be nice to your cousin.*

LESTER

Why don't you try being nice to her yourself?

INA

Anak! What's that supposed to mean?

LESTER

She hasn't been over yet, I can put two and two together. What did you do?

Ina whaps Lester with an ear of corn.

LESTER [CONT'D]  
Ow, Ma!

INA  
Psh, that didn't even hurt.

Ina whaps Lester again.

LESTER  
Jesus, I'm going to have to call child protective services.

INA  
Don't be silly, you're a man now. You have to let your mother beat you.

LESTER  
Aw, come on, Ma.

INA  
There's an eclipse coming soon. That means you better behave.

LESTER  
That's not a thing.

INA  
It's a thing if I say it's a thing!

Ina whaps Lester as Charice enters. Lester and Charice hug.

CHARICE  
You old bag of bones.

LESTER  
Whippersnapper.

CHARICE  
I missed you, you little shit.

INA  
Hey!

Ina shakes her head as she exits with the corn.

LESTER  
How are you? How are things here? I didn't get to talk to you at the novena, really.

CHARICE

I'm sorry, I kind of ran away. I couldn't take it. There was so much family.

LESTER

What's up with you and my mom? Did she do something momlike?

CHARICE

No, no, we're fine.

LESTER

It kind of doesn't seem like it.

CHARICE

I heard you don't have a return ticket.

LESTER

Not yet. I was gonna feel it out then book. When are you leaving?

CHARICE

Your mom didn't tell you.

LESTER

What.

CHARICE

I'm like living here now. You should totally consider it.

LESTER

You're forsaking LA for San Jose? *Del Monte?*

CHARICE

You should stay here, you and I should stay. It's kind of amazing being here. It's um it's kind of nice to be around our people, you know?

LESTER

I feel so American here though.

CHARICE

Really? I guess.

LESTER

I mean you speak better than I do. I can barely respond to my mom's Tagalog in English.

CHARICE

You'll pick it up. It's like riding a bicycle.

LESTER

I never got rid of my training wheels. So I don't think I can hack it here.

CHARICE

There's shitty parts about living each place. But I think you should stay. This is bad but I kind of like having no white people around.

LESTER

Who would you date?

CHARICE

I've dated plenty of Filipino guys!

LESTER

Have you though?

CHARICE

Have *you* though?

LESTER

There are like not that many Out Filipinos in The Community.

CHARICE

That's bullshit, I knew like twenty back in the Bay. And in LA too. Maybe you should move to LA instead. Somewhere, anywhere. Migration's good for you.

LESTER

I'll think about it.

CHARICE

Really? Really?

LESTER

I said I'll think about it.

CHARICE

Oh man. I think it'd be super great. I guess I'm a little lost. This feels like the only place that makes sense.

We weren't speaking, at the end. She could be really, like, really cruel. As a mom.

LESTER

Oh my god, I know.

CHARICE

You don't.  
It got so bad I stopped calling her back.  
She just  
I mean she  
Yeah  
I stopped calling her back.

Lester puts his arm around Charice.

Lester's phone dings.

He plays the message.

ANDREW

Hey Lester, hey Lester. I love you so much and I'm coming to the Philippines.

+++

ALTON

The San Francisco airport.

Andrew is a little drunk. Smoke outside the windows.

ANDREW

Hey Lester, hey Lester. I love you so much and I'm coming to the Philippines. That's right, you heard me, I'm making the trip. I'll see you when I get there. I can't wait. I love you. Did I say that?  
I love you. Bye.

Andrew hangs up and walks to Guillaume, sitting at a table with a large backpack.

ANDREW

Can I sit here?

GUILLAUME

Go ahead.

Andrew does.

ANDREW

These chairs have more give than you'd expect.

GUILLAUME

I was watching you across the terminal, earlier.

ANDREW  
Huh?

GUILLAUME  
You looked lost. I noticed you.

ANDREW  
I'm not lost. That's just my face.

GUILLAUME  
I'm Guillaume.

ANDREW  
Sorry?

GUILLAUME  
That's my name. Guillaume.

A ding from Andrew's phone. He checks it.

ANDREW  
Excuse me.

Andrew listens to his voicemail.

LESTER'S VOICE  
I just wanted to say that I think it's good we have this time apart. We can clear our heads and stuff. So yeah. And I think  
Oh here comes my mom. Kay bye.

Andrew takes a cup of water and pours it on his phone.

GUILLAUME  
Is everything okay?

ANDREW  
Yeah, yeah. Merci.

GUILLAUME  
You speak French?

ANDREW

Oh, I-- ! I mean I took it in college or whatever. But I don't remember anything. You French?

GUILLAUME

Yes, but I have not been home in some time.

ANDREW

You on your way there?

GUILLAUME

No, just on my way out of this.

Guillaume gestures out the window.

The smoke goes on forever.

ANDREW

Yeah. It feels like I haven't been home in forever but I mean I was there this morning. I'm Andrew. And you are?

GUILLAUME

Yes, you remember? I am Guillaume.

ANDREW

Of course, of course. Beautiful name. Guillaume.  
Je veux boire du vin avec toi, Guillaume. J'ai deja bu un, une, comment va dire, martini?

GUILLAUME

Just "martini." There's no other word for it. Your French is not so bad.

ANDREW

Yes, it is. Bien sur.

GUILLAUME

No, no, for an American you are fine. Stereotypical, perhaps, but fine.

ANDREW

I'm sure you mean that very nicely.

GUILLAUME

I mean everything nicely.

ANDREW

Oh. Oh. Uh, d'ou viens-tu? See, not so bad.



GUILLAUME

Je viens de Provence, et tu?

ANDREW

Je viens de Minnesota. Well, I grew up in Minnesota.

GUILLAUME

I was in Minnesota last summer. It's very beautiful.

ANDREW

Really? Small world. What brought you to the uh the uh the land of a thousand lakes?

GUILLAUME

I was visiting a boy.

ANDREW

A boy like a *boy* boy? Or like a boy?

.

Never mind, keep going.

GUILLAUME

Well I met him in Cairns a year before, and he invited me to stay the summer since I was going to be in America. And now it's December, I'm in California, and I'm all alone.

ANDREW

Minnesota is bad for boyfriends.

GUILLAUME

You had a bad experience there too?

ANDREW

Several. But I live here now.

GUILLAUME

The Golden State, covered in smoke.  
I've never seen anything like it.

ANDREW

Me neither. I've seen the fires in LA one or two times. Nothing like this.

GUILLAUME

No fires in Minnesota?

ANDREW

I didn't see any, did you? Just large, landlocked bodies of water.

AIRPORT ANNOUNCEMENT [ALTON]

Attention all travelers. Any flights scheduled to depart after 8am this morning are canceled due to low visibility. You can reschedule with your airline. Again, flights scheduled to depart after 8am this morning are canceled; reschedule with your airline. We will hopefully resume service tomorrow.

GUILLAUME

I should get to the ticket counter.

ANDREW

You never said where you were going.

GUILLAUME

I was going back to Minnesota.

ANDREW

For that boy? The one who let you be in a California December all alone?

GUILLAUME

Don't say it like that, I'm embarrassed enough.

ANDREW

Are you gonna reschedule your flight?

GUILLAUME

I don't know now. It seems like fate.

ANDREW

Hey. Do you wanna get a drink? Je veux boire du vin avec toi.

GUILLAUME

You said that already.

ANDREW

Well it's one of a few things I know how to say en Francais. So? Drink?

GUILLAUME

What, here at the airport? Everything is shutting down.

ANDREW

I know somewhere we can go.

GUILLAUME

Where?

ANDREW

Call a car on your phone. I can get you the address.

+++

ALTON

The Philippines:

Ina, Lester, and Charice are dressed in funeral attire.

INA

It was a nice service.

.  
.

LESTER

Yeah.

.  
.  
.

CHARICE

She would've hated it.

.

LESTER

Probably.

.  
.  
.

INA

So.

.  
.  
.

INA

Does anyone want some food.

LESTER / CHARICE

No.

INA

Okay.

LESTER

Do you, Ma? Can I get you a plate?

INA

I'm not very hungry.

.

.

.

INA

I'll get us some food.

Ina leaves the room.

CHARICE

Have you heard from Andrew? Is he still on his way?

LESTER

I don't know. I've been calling and calling but I keep getting voicemail.

.

.

.

CHARICE

God, I fucking hate her for leaving me like this.

LESTER

I'm sorry.

CHARICE

Stop saying you're sorry.

LESTER

I

Okay.

CHARICE

That's all anyone can say. *I'm sorry*. It's ridiculous. It doesn't change anything.

Lester goes to her.

CHARICE

Please just leave me a little space.

LESTER

Okay.

Ina enters with a plate of food.

INA

You don't have to eat now. I'm not eating now. It's for whenever you're ready.

CHARICE

Salamat, tita.

LESTER

Yeah. Salamat.

.  
.

INA

You know, Pauline always wanted to go to our mother's island. Siquijor. It's supposed to be a beautiful place, a place of healing. A magical place, all those mananambal. The island is supposed to glow at night.

LESTER

Sounds nice.

INA

I think we should go there. Make a pilgrimage.

LESTER

Whoa.

CHARICE

I don't know if I feel up to it, tita.

LESTER

How would we even get there?

INA

A plane then a ferry. Easy-easy.  
It's up to you, Charice.

CHARICE

What do you think, Lester?

LESTER

I don't know. I don't know if Andrew is still on his way.

INA

He hasn't called you?

LESTER

Don't start, Ma.

INA

Maybe he got delayed with those fires in Chico. Have you seen?

LESTER

What?

Ina shows Lester her phone.

INA

Fires all over Butte County. I don't know if they will let planes take off from San Francisco.

LESTER

Oh my god.

CHARICE

That's

Oh

That's awful

LESTER

I've gotta call Carol.

Lester dials. Ina and Charice leave the room.

LESTER

Hey you there? It's Lester.

CAROL

Sorry, who?

LESTER

Lester, Andrew's Lester?

CAROL

Oh my god, Lester, hi. How's Andrew?

LESTER

What do you mean? I thought he was maybe with you.

CAROL

He

Wait

He's not in the Philippines?

LESTER

I got his voicemail that he was coming here but he never showed.

CAROL

Oh my god.

LESTER

Do you think he's lost over here?

CAROL

I don't know. Holy shit.

LESTER

Holy shit. What do we do?

CAROL

I don't know. I'll call the airline, see if he boarded the plane.

LESTER

Maybe we can track his phone, see where he ended up?

CAROL

Do you know how to do that?

LESTER

No. Do you?

CAROL

Not for someone else's phone. But I think I know someone who does.

LESTER

Okay. You can take charge of that, yeah?

CAROL

Yeah. Yeah. I'll try to find out where he is and I'll make him call you as soon as I find him.

LESTER

What can I do? What can I do?

CAROL

Just stay put. If he's lost in the Philippines, he'll find you eventually.

LESTER

Okay.

Okay.

I'll stay put.

CAROL

Should we call his parents?

LESTER

He hates his parents

CAROL

But they

LESTER

I think it's a bad idea.

CAROL

Fine, fine.

LESTER

Let me know as soon as you hear anything.

CAROL

I will. Bye, Lester. Talk soon.

LESTER

Yeah.

CAROL

And unfurrow your brow. You're getting wrinkles. I'm thinking of you and your family.

She hangs up. Carol makes another phone call.



CAROL [CONT'D]

Charlie? Look, I need a favor.

+++

Andrew's house.

An empty bottle of wine, another half full, and two glasses.

Andrew and Guillaume are playing hangman.

GUILLAUME

R.

ANDREW

Nope. Guess again.

GUILLAUME

G.

ANDREW

You haven't guessed any vowels yet.

GUILLAUME

I said G.

ANDREW

Nope. One more before the noose!

GUILLAUME

P.

ANDREW

What would possess you to guess P?

GUILLAUME

Is there a P?

ANDREW

Fine. There is a P.

GUILLAUME

Show me.

Andrew draws in the P.

ANDREW  
Satisfied?

GUILLAUME  
Not quite.

ANDREW  
What do you want then?

GUILLAUME  
U.

Andrew leans in close to Guillaume's face.

GUILLAUME  
No! U! U! The letter U!

ANDREW  
OH. Oh gosh I'm sorry.

GUILLAUME  
Is there a letter U?

ANDREW  
Yes, there's a U. Look, Guillaume--

GUILLAUME  
After the game, after the game. Is there an A? Play with me?

ANDREW  
There's an A.

He writes it in.

GUILLAUME  
Pupa. That was very hard.

.  
. .  
.

Andrew puts his head in his hands.

GUILLAUME  
What's wrong?

ANDREW  
I'm such a stupid slut.

GUILLAUME  
You're not. And I love sluts.

ANDREW  
I didn't mean to offend you.

GUILLAUME  
You didn't. If you want me to leave, I will do that. And if you want to leave with me, I can do that too.

ANDREW  
I don't know yet.

GUILLAUME  
Well then.

ANDREW  
You still want to go back to Minnesota?

GUILLAUME  
I don't know anymore.

He takes the paper and pen, scribbles something.

ANDREW  
Four letters?

GUILLAUME  
Guess away.

Andrew draws close to Guillaume. Their faces hover inches apart.

Andrew bridges the distance between their lips.

Soft at first, then furious.

+++

A cafe. Charlie sits fiddling on his laptop. Carol enters.

CHARLIE

Hey, beautiful.

CAROL  
Sit down.

CHARLIE  
You look great.

CAROL  
Yeah.

CHARLIE  
Yep. Just need the passcodes. How are you?

CAROL  
I'm here because you wanted me to be.

CHARLIE  
Okay then. Let's get started.

Charlie opens some windows on his laptop.

CHARLIE  
You keep getting voicemail?

CAROL  
Yeah.

CHARLIE  
Well if he's screening you we can definitely track it.

CAROL  
He's not screening me. He wouldn't do that.

CHARLIE  
So then we're left with the other option.

CAROL  
His phone's dead?

CHARLIE  
Maybe.

CAROL  
So in that case?

CHARLIE

In that case I'll track it to its last location.  
Password?

CAROL

Try andrewlovesbugs.

CHARLIE

Seriously?

CAROL

Capitalize the A in Andrew.

CHARLIE

Didn't work. Any other guesses?

CAROL

Try andrewlovesmeryl.

CHARLIE

Oh my god.

CAROL

You can't talk, RaiderNation.

CHARLIE

You know who I think is underrated? June Squibb. Maybe he can make it  
andrewlovesjunesquibb.

Okay yeah andrewlovesmeryl is invalid.

CAROL

Um

CHARLIE

Let me try something.

Charlie types.

CAROL

"Andrewloveslester."

CHARLIE

We're in.

CAROL

Oh my god that's so sad.

CHARLIE

At least he actually knows Lester.

CAROL

He knows bugs too!

CHARLIE

Okay. Phone's off. Let's check out this last known location.

CAROL

This is so weird.

CHARLIE

SFO. Delta terminal.

CAROL

So.

CHARLIE

So yeah. The phone's dead, probably, and he probably hasn't replaced it. But I don't know, like, I can't say where he is.

CAROL

Okay.

CHARLIE

Anything else I can help you with?

CAROL

How's your room?

CHARLIE

What?

CAROL

Your classroom, you redecorated your classroom.

CHARLIE

It's good. You'll see. It looks festive.

CAROL

Will I see?

CHARLIE

Whenever you want to chill at recess.

CAROL

I don't. Want to chill. At recess.

CHARLIE

Got it. Sorry.

.  
.

CAROL

What happened with us?

CHARLIE

What?

CAROL

With us, what happened? I'm sitting here watching the demise of Andrew and Idiot Lester, and you're sitting here hitting on me and I hate seeing you and I can't remember what went wrong with us. Can you?

CHARLIE

Maybe it's cause you hate seeing me.

CAROL

You know I don't mean -- / oh, whatever. Whatever.

CHARLIE

You don't what, Carol, you don't mean it? Do you not mean it?

CAROL

I don't know, Charlie. Leave me alone.

CHARLIE

This is cute, this whole sour look. It's cute. You're the one who needed the favor, honeybuns, wait / okay, I'm sorry, that was out of line.

CAROL

Honeybuns? Honeybuns!? I am nothing to you! No nicknames!

CHARLIE

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, you needed a favor, I completed the favor. No hard feelings.

CAROL

Oh, yeah, no hard feelings, we can just say no hard feelings and that'll happen.

CHARLIE

You're mad. Let me drive you home.

CAROL

I'm not sleeping with you.

CHARLIE

I'm not saying that / we should--

CAROL

Maybe I will, I don't know.

CHARLIE

What?

CAROL

What?

CHARLIE

I just wanted to talk in private, okay? Not like proposition you.

CAROL

Oh.

CHARLIE

Though I'd totally-- you smothered me, is all. That's what happened. With us.

CAROL

I smothered you.

CHARLIE

I pulled away; you responded. I remember feeling unhappy, and you always being around to ask me why, and I hated it.

CAROL

I'm sorry.

CHARLIE

It actually wasn't your fault.

CAROL



I'm still sorry, about all of it.

Charlie touches her hand. A butterfly flits by, circling their heads.

+++

ALTON

The past: That Party, continued.

Andrew and Alton's eyes are locked.

The room spins around them and spits them out mid-conversation.

CAROL

Here, Alton. A pressie.

She puts the caterpillar gift box into Alton's hand.

ALTON

What is it?

CAROL

You can open it and see, when you're ready.

CHARLIE

Open it, dude.

CAROL

Save it for home.

ALTON

I'll do what I want.

I'll save it for home.

LESTER

Can I get you a drink, Alton?

ALTON

I'd love it.

LESTER

What's your poison?

ALTON

What've you got?

ANDREW

There's a whole cart here.

ALTON

I've never known true jealousy till this moment.

.

You got tequila?

ANDREW

Of course.

Lester gets Alton a drink.

ALTON

Sometimes my jokes just don't land.

CHARLIE

One time I was watching this comedy special and I was just like, this is so sad. This guy is so sad.

ALTON

You know what they say. Comedy equals tragedy plus time.

CAROL

Pain is funny, later.

LESTER

Can I get you something to eat, Alton? We've got chips, dip, cake, pancit

ALTON

You have pancit?

ANDREW

He's been cooking all day.

Alton drains his drink.

LESTER

I'll get you a refill and some pancit, okay?

ALTON

What an incredible host.

ANDREW

Isn't he?

CHARLIE

I wish I was good at entertaining.

CAROL

Oh, you're entertaining, all right.

CHARLIE

Maybe we should host a party ourselves. This is inspiring.

CAROL

At your place?

CHARLIE

It's not that bad.

CAROL

I promise you, it's That Bad.

Lester brings Alton a drink and a plate of food.

CHARLIE

She thinks I'm a slob.

CAROL

I just, I mean, he doesn't own any books.

LESTER

What kind of monster doesn't own books?

CAROL

This guy.

CHARLIE

Everything's online now. You don't need a physical copy to be able to read.

CAROL

And you're no Martha Stewart.

CHARLIE

Hey, I make a mean bean dip.

ALTON

Prove it.

CHARLIE

I'll bring it to school next week. We'll have a feast. But Carol's not invited.

CAROL

Um

CHARLIE

No offense, honeybuns.

ANDREW

Excuse me while I vomit.

Alton finishes his drink. He gets another one.

ALTON

That pancit is amazing, Lester.

LESTER

Thank you! It's my mom's recipe.

ANDREW

If he has a day off, he's cooking.

LESTER

So I don't cook very often.

ANDREW

But when you do it's amazing.

Alton downs the rest of his drink and gets another one.

ALTON

Do you cook Filipino food a lot?

LESTER

When I can. It tastes like home. Do you?

ALTON

Do I what.

LESTER

Cook Filipino food? You're Filipino, right?

ALTON

Yeah. Yeah, I am. Some people can't tell, I guess.

LESTER

You look Filipino to me.

ALTON

I can't cook very well.

LESTER

Well then you have to come back, I'll make you whatever you want.

Alton drains his drink.

ALTON

You know I really gotta see what's in this box.

CHARLIE

Do it. Do it. Do it. Do it.

CAROL

Oh, I wish you'd wait. It'll be more special if you wait.

Alton opens the box. Caterpillar.

CHARLIE

Gnarly.

ALTON

Is this a joke?

ANDREW

Maybe it will be later.

+++

ALTON

*Without context, your story is nothing, they say.*

I hurt the day of Andrew's party. I hurt as bad as the night I moved out of his house. I finished a lot of tequila and then a bottle of wine and came home with a caterpillar. And when the caterpillar sprouted wings, I let him go in my backyard. Happy migration.

The Philippines were ruled by the Spanish, then the Americans, then the Japanese, with little stints with the British here and there. All of that history was dark and bloody and it can't be wished away or erased, but it led to autonomy..

It's taken me a long time to reckon with everything. To reckon with Andrew, with myself. With my place in the world. I'm mixed, you know. I can't date in San Jose or in San Jose del Monte

without people asking funny questions. That doesn't start or end with Andrew, but it doesn't make it easier. And it can't be wished away or erased, only lived through toward autonomy. I'm just another human being but I'm not, right?  
I'm transcendent.  
I'm luminescent.  
I'm transforming.  
Last week, I was in the grocery store:

A grocery store!  
Alton looks at produce. Carol is feeling avocados.  
They both wear pollution masks lax around their necks.

ALTON  
Hi, Carol.

CAROL  
Alton! I thought I felt someone watching me but that seems self-centered, right?

ALTON  
Rough weekend?

CAROL  
I was going to make guac tonight for the Raiders game.

ALTON  
I thought you hated football.

CAROL  
I did. Things change. How've you been?

ALTON  
Same old, same old. Drowning in grading this weekend.

CAROL  
Overwhelming.

ALTON  
Don't get me started on class size.

CAROL  
Yeah. Sorry. I'm kind of scattered at the moment, I don't know. There's a lot of weird stuff going on for me.

ALTON  
Weird stuff?

CAROL

Well there's the school year and there's other-- Andrew is missing.

ALTON

What?

CAROL

Not like *missing* missing but

Lester hasn't heard from him. I haven't heard from him. He could be anywhere right now.

ALTON

Where's Lester?

CAROL

Philippines. Death in the family.

ALTON

Fuck.

CAROL

I know. But I'm calling people, I'm figuring it out. And if the whole state's gonna take a break from this to watch the Raiders, I guess there's no harm in me doing it too.

ALTON

Yeah, yeah. That's healthy.

CAROL

That's what I was hoping, yeah.

Charlie enters.

CHARLIE

I couldn't find the tempeh. Do they even have tempeh in this place?

CAROL

Did you check by the tofu?

CHARLIE

They have tofu here?

CAROL

They have tofu everywhere, hon.

ALTON

Hi Charlie.

CHARLIE

Alton! So good to see ya! You watching the big game tonight?

ALTON

No, no, I'm not a big football fan.

CHARLIE

You should try it again sometime. Carol has made a complete 180 on it.

ALTON

Has she.

CAROL

I think it's actually kind of exciting.

ALTON

Complete 180.

CAROL

I'm being open.

ALTON

Have you checked his house.

CAROL

Sorry?

ALTON

His house, Andrew's house. Have you checked it.

CAROL

Why would I have checked the house.

ALTON

If there's one thing about Andrew, it's that when the going gets rough, the rough go home.  
And I still have a key.

+++

Andrew and Guillaume in the house, both un peu dishabille.

Empty wine glasses everywhere. A large white blanket crumpled up somewhere.  
Clothes strewn across the room



GUILLAUME

How long have you lived here?

ANDREW

A few years. A lot of years.

GUILLAUME

And you like it here?

ANDREW

It's a nice house, if you have someone to share it with.

GUILLAUME

And you do?

ANDREW

It's nice to have you here.

GUILLAUME

But you share this house when I am not around, n'est-ce pas?

ANDREW

Sorry?

Guillaume pulls the volume of poetry off the shelf and recites from memory.

GUILLAUME

About suffering they were never wrong, the old masters...

ANDREW

Sorry?

GUILLAUME

It's my favorite Auden.

ANDREW

Oh, yeah, totally. So good.

GUILLAUME

You could have told me, you know.

ANDREW

About what?

GUILLAUME

You live here with someone.

ANDREW

I

GUILLAUME

You have a lot of Auden here, but you don't know his work.

ANDREW

He wanted time apart, the guy who lives here.

GUILLAUME

I wouldn't have minded, if you'd told me.  
Does he know I'm here? Would he be angry?

ANDREW

I don't know. We have our own rules.

GUILLAUME

Which are?

ANDREW

He booked a one-way ticket without a return. He left me a voicemail. That means something.

Guillaume backs away from Andrew. He knocks over Carol's wooden bird,  
which has been sitting out.

GUILLAUME

A whistle?

ANDREW

Blow on it. It's magic.

Guillaume blows on the bird whistle. It doesn't make any sound.

ANDREW

Huh.

From outside: a knock on the door.

CAROL [offstage]

Andrew? Andrew, are you in there?

GUILLAUME [whispered]

Who is that?

CAROL [offstage]

Andrew. If you're here, open up.

ALTON [offstage]

Andrew? Are you there?

ANDREW [whispered]

*Oh my god.*

ALTON [offstage]

We're coming in.

A key in the lock.

GUILLAUME

What is going on.

Andrew scrambles for a shirt.

The lock turns. Alton, Carol, and Charlie enter.

CHARLIE

Hey Andrew.

ANDREW

Heyyyyyy

CAROL

Where the fuck have you been? Why haven't you been returning my calls?

Andrew holds up his phone in a bag of rice.

ANDREW

Our flights got stranded at the airport. He needed a place to stay.

CAROL

We're all worried sick about you.

ANDREW

I'm sorry.

ALTON

And this is?

GUILLAUME

Guillaume.

ANDREW

He's French.

ALTON

Great. He had to be something.

ANDREW

What is that supposed to mean.

ALTON

It means you're predictable.

CHARLIE

Ouch.

ALTON

No commentary, please.

ANDREW

Why are you here, Alton.

CAROL

We couldn't find you anywhere. Alton offered to help.

ANDREW

I'm sure.

ALTON

If you don't want to see me, no skin off my back. I can leave.

CHARLIE

He was just trying to find you, Andrew. We were all trying to find you.

GUILLAUME

I can go. I should go.

ALTON

I think you should stay. It'll be more fun.

GUILLAUME

For you, maybe.

Guillaume exits.

CAROL  
Seriously, Andrew?

ALTON  
And history repeats itself.

ANDREW  
We were open, back in the day. You wanted that.

ALTON  
You know, I always wondered why you were so insecure.

CHARLIE  
Oh no. Here we go.

ANDREW  
Shut up, Charlie.

ALTON  
“Whenever you leave the room, I think you’re not coming back,” you used to say.

CHARLIE  
It’s about to go down.

ANDREW  
Shut Up, Charlie!

CAROL  
Don’t tell my boyfriend to shut up!

ANDREW  
Oh he’s your boyfriend again?

ALTON  
But you?  
You were the one with the wandering eye, you were the one who wasn’t coming back. You are so afraid of your own shit, and it wrecked us. I bet you tell Lester you’re afraid he’ll leave, too. And look what you’re doing.

ANDREW  
It could be worse.

ALTON

Yeah.

You could be alone, right?

Cause that's worse for you. To have to deal with yourself, no buffer. To reckon with what it means to be alive in this world while it changes around you.

.  
. .

CAROL

You should get this place cleaned up.

ANDREW

I don't think I can.

ALTON

You can. I know you can.

But first I think you need to call Lester.

Carol hands Andrew her phone. Everyone but Andrew exits.

Andrew cocoons himself in a white blanket and huddles on the floor.

He dials.

ANDREW

Hi

Lester?

It's me.

We should talk.

+++

ALTON

The Philippines.

Ina is watching TV with a can of peanuts. Occasionally she throws one to Lester, who catches it in his mouth.

INA

You're my favorite child, you know that?

LESTER

I'm your only child.

INA

I hate this TV show. Basura.

LESTER

I think it's kind of funny.

INA

You always did have your father's taste. He used to watch the worst things, the worst programs.

LESTER

Do you want me to turn off the TV?

INA

I like the noise. It helps.

.  
. .  
.

LESTER

What did you and Tita Pauline talk about? Lately?

INA

I don't know. I'd call, but mostly she'd call. So weird on the phone. It was always the same as usual.

LESTER

I was just, just talking to Charice. She's still pretty sad.

INA

I am pretty sad, too. I will always be pretty sad, I think. There is no happy, anak, only happier. And for me, that day will come. And for you. And for Pauline, if she is not in purgatory.

.  
. .  
.

This program is awful. All those years, I watched your father and a can of beer and this couch from the kitchen. Then we moved the couch to Daly City, but he never moved off it.

LESTER

Do you miss him, Ma?

INA

Psh. No. He's the real basura.

LESTER

Do you still see him sometimes?

INA

.

.

.

LESTER

Mom?

INA

I'm not perfect.

LESTER

You come pretty close.

INA

I wish I was better. I wish I could say I'd never see him again.

LESTER

I love you, Mom.

INA

Psh. You don't know anything.

LESTER

You're the best mom I've ever had.

INA

Maybe.

LESTER

You're the best mom! You're my favorite mom!

INA

I better be.

Has Andrew called you back?

LESTER

Yes.

I'm gonna miss him, Ma.

INA

Oh, Lester.



LESTER

My ring finger, my nose.

INA

I know.

You know, I

I don't have anything good to say.

This might not help much, and you'll never stop thinking about it.

But every day it'll hurt a little less. Time doesn't erase how you feel, just dulls it a little. Every day your grief is a knife, and one day you'll wake up and be able to cut a tomato with it but not a steak.

LESTER

I don't love tomatoes.

INA

Butter, then.

LESTER

Is that how it feels with Dad? A butter knife?

INA

Not really. Not yet.

LESTER

We can go to Siquijor now, if Charice wants to join us. If we leave tomorrow we can be there in time for the eclipse and scare away the bakunawa.

INA

How do you know about the bakunawa.

LESTER

Andrew told me. The bakunawa is the one that swallows the seven moons out of jealousy?

INA

That's what some people say. The story of the Bakunawa was first written down by a Spanish priest. In his version the seven moons are metaphors teaching people how to be Catholic.

LESTER

I didn't know that. Is there another version?

INA

My mother used to tell us that the bakunawa had a sister, a giant sea turtle, who was killed by the island villagers. Every year he comes back to swallow the moon and plunge us into darkness,

atonement for his grief. The only way to stop him from doing it again and again is to bang pots and pans and pray he doesn't grieve forever.

LESTER

Huh. That's different.

INA

Why don't you call Charice, anak. We could all use a little healing.

\*\*\*

ALTON

Back in Cupertino, at Carol's apartment:

CHARLIE

Whatcha reading?

CAROL

Andrew didn't want to look at Lester's things anymore.

CHARLIE

Poetry?

CAROL

Auden.

CHARLIE

Lester's favorite.

CAROL

Yeah.

CHARLIE

Any good?

CAROL

Some of it.

CHARLIE

I hate poetry.

CAROL

You haven't tried it.

CHARLIE

I've read plenty of poetry. I just don't like it.

CAROL

What, did you just sit and read it to yourself silently?

CHARLIE

Like you're doing now? Yeah, that's how normal people read.

CAROL

Poetry doesn't just exist on the page, doofus.

CHARLIE

Oh no?

CAROL

You're supposed to speak it aloud. It's supposed to roll off the tongue.

CHARLIE

Well then hit me.

CAROL

Really?

CHARLIE

I'm avoiding work. Let's procrastinate.

CAROL

Okay, okay. I got you.

CHARLIE

Pick a good one though.

CAROL

How about The Wild Swans At Coole?

CHARLIE

I hate swans. They're so scary.

CAROL

Weirdo.

Okay. This one.

CHARLIE

Which one?

CAROL

About suffering they were never wrong,  
The old Masters: how well they understood  
Its human position: how it takes place  
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along;

Charlie settles in next to Carol. He takes her hand.

In another part of the stage, Ina, Lester and Charice enter with duffle bags.  
Ina fusses over her family.

CAROL

How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting  
For the miraculous birth, there always must be  
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating  
On a pond at the edge of the wood

Andrew emerges, swaddled in a blanket, reading a book of poetry.

CAROL

They never forgot  
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course  
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot  
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse  
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

In Breughel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away  
Quite leisurely from the disaster;

Guillaume crosses the stage with luggage.

CAROL

the ploughman may  
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,  
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone  
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green  
Water, and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen  
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,  
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

Everyone else leaves. Charlie and Carol snuggle into each other.

CHARLIE

Huh.

CAROL

Well? What do you think?

CHARLIE

Read it to me again.

\*\*\*

ALTON

A bungalow on Siquijor:

CHARICE

This island is something else. I don't know how Lola ever left.

ALTON

I mean it's small. But God, it's beautiful.

A loud metal rustling from the bungalow.

CHARICE

Oh my god.

LESTER

There's a lunar eclipse tonight. She wants to chase away the bakunawa.

CHARICE

She's chasing away something all right.

Have you heard from Andrew?

LESTER

I think it'll be a while before we talk again.

CHARICE

That seems healthy.

LESTER

I hope so.

You know

Mom never liked him

CHARICE

She told me. Multiple times.

LESTER

Of course.

CHARICE

She said he was basically a money grubbing leech.

LESTER

Wow.

CHARICE

And the worst insult.

LESTER / CHARICE

Kano.

LESTER

When tita Pauline passed, I kind of thought, maybe this is a way I can get out without breaking his heart. But of course he broke mine first.

CHARICE

I'm so sorry.

LESTER

Me too.

Me too.

He had the smoothest shoulder blades, you know?

CHARICE

I don't.

LESTER

Man, his shoulder blades had me whipped. Every morning I would have to get out of bed for work I would kiss his shoulder blades while he was asleep. And I would come back and kiss them before leaving the house. It made me late for work but it was worth it.

I'll never kiss his shoulder blades again.

CHARICE

There will be other shoulder blades.

LESTER

I know. One day, my shoulder blades will come.

.  
. .  
.

CHARICE

Do you think she's out there? My mom?

LESTER

Yeah.

Yeah I do.

CHARICE

Because I really want to believe she's out there but like  
I kind of feel like she's gone forever.

LESTER

You'll see her again some day, Charice. You'll see her up there.

CHARICE

I don't really know about that. Her house feels so empty.  
She did sacrifice for me. Every day she was in America, and every day she was in the  
Philippines. I was everything to her.  
I'd give anything to call her back.

LESTER

Charice. There was nothing you could have done.

CHARICE

I know that.  
But I wish I could tell her  
I'm still sorry.

Ina enters, banging pots and pans.

INA

Bakunawa! Please return our moon!

LESTER

Mom, the neighbors are gonna complain. The rental people said no noise after ten.

The sound of pots and pans from houses all around the neighborhood rises.

INA

You see? It's a way to be a part of something together. The bakunawa's grief is deep, but we all  
need the moon for the tides, for its cycles, so we can change.  
Come on, join me. It's fun, I promise.

Ina holds out a pot to Lester and Charice.

LESTER

I don't know, Ma, I might be good.

INA  
Charice?

Charice takes the pot. She and Ina look at each other.

INA  
Ready?

CHARICE  
Ready.

They bang their pots slowly at first.

INA  
Bakunawa, please have pity.

CHARICE  
Bakunawa, please have pity.

INA  
Return our moon.

CHARICE  
Return our moon.

The cacophony grows. Lester grabs a pot.

INA  
Bakunawa, please have pity!

CHARICE AND LESTER  
Bakunawa, please have pity!

INA  
Return our moon!

CHARICE AND LESTER  
Return our moon!

INA  
We need the tides!

CHARICE AND LESTER



We need the tides!

INA

We need its light!

CHARICE AND LESTER

We need its light!

INA

Give us a sign!

CHARICE AND LESTER

Give us a sign!

ALL

RETURN OUR MOON!

RETURN OUR MOON!

RETURN OUR MOON!

Darkness.

And then

Illumination.

Lester reaches for Ina's hand, then Charice's.

They squeeze each other. They look up at the eclipse.

Alton enters with cupped, closed hands.

ALTON

*Without context, your story is nothing, they say.*

And I think they're right.

I haven't heard from Andrew. He's cocooning at home, maybe.

Alton spreads his cupped hands, revealing a single caterpillar crawling along his fingers.

ALTON

Lester still doesn't have a return ticket, but he will, I think. Sometime soon.

He closes his hands.

ALTON

Charlie and Carol are back in love.

He opens his hands:  
Empty. The caterpillar is gone.

ALTON

Guillaume's back in Minnesota, frigid.

He cups his hands again. He shakes them.

ALTON

And I'm moving next week. Not very far, just down the road to San Jose. I'm not moving far,  
but I'm moving on. I'm moving home.

So all this is to say to you, my dear ones:

Happy migration, be it long or short.

Context.

Alton opens his hands and releases a butterfly. He lets it go.

END OF PLAY