

**THE ECHOIST**  
A Full-Length Play

2024

## **The Echoist**

A Play in Five Parts

### SYNOPSIS

**The Echoist** follows Dom, a male dominatrix, as he reckons with the role that his upbringing and the choices he made as a result of it played into how he became a maledom. Dom dives into his troubled past looking for answers, beginning with his encounter with The Echoist, a figure from his childhood whose ability to withstand violence and repair himself had a considerable influence on Dom. In the wake of a violent assault, Dom studies his relationship with violence, from his childhood at the mercy of his family's clash of personalities, to a brush with doomed teenage romance, to his eventual discovery of BDSM and ascent into maledom. As he untangles his history of abuse and transition from victim to perpetrator in real time, Dom asks both himself and his captive audience: What narratives do we build for ourselves from within inescapable cycles of violence?

“I am the wound and the blade, both the torturer and he who is flayed.”

Charles Baudelaire, *The Self-Tormenter*

**Characters:**

**Dom** – Ages from around 7 to 37 throughout the play. A maledom.

**Ate** – Ages from around 18 to 44. Dom’s Sister. Also plays:

**The Dealer** - An art dealer who is also Dom’s madam.

**Mom** – Ages from her late 30s to 60s. Dom’s Mother. Also plays:

**The Misis** - A woman who confronts Dom about her husband.

**Tay** – Ages from his late 30s to 50s. Dom’s Father. Also plays:

**The Sensei** - A man who teaches Dom about BDSM

**Andrew** - Dom’s on-again, off-again lover. Also plays:

**Male Ensemble** - Plays: The Echoist, Doggy, etc.

**Anna** - Dom’s best friend. Also plays:

**Female Ensemble** - Plays: The Other Echoist, Oreo, etc.

**Time** – 1980-something - 2019

**Stage** – A space that is part-modern S&M dungeon and part-family home from the 90s, that can quickly switch between the two, among other locales.

## **Part 1: The Gag**

*Lights fade in on DOM, bloodied and beaten, lying unconscious centerstage. He slowly returns to consciousness, picking himself up gradually, almost limb by limb. He sits up for a moment, assessing what's happened to him.*

*A slide that reads “2019” is projected onstage. (The slides projected throughout the play are in the style of slides you would see in a Viewmaster, or an old projection machine.)*

*He staggers over to a piece of furniture, and leans over it as if it were a bathroom sink with a mirror in front of him. He looks at himself, then wipes the blood off his face. He checks the time.*

**DOM**

Shit.

*In a sudden rush, he procures a piece of rope from a box onstage, sits down, and begins to knot the rope. He slows down, and looks at the audience.*

Hi. One moment.

*He continues to manipulate the rope, tying it into a noose. He holds it up in front of him, then climbs onto a piece of furniture & fixes the noose onto the ceiling. He stares through the noose for a moment, then returns to the floor.*

*A slide that reads “**The Gag:** An orally-fixed device that can come in different forms such as the ball gag or dental gag. Its primary function is to mute its wearer or restrict their ability to speak.” is projected onstage.*

Whenever I begin with a new client, I say this:

- 1) My name is Dom, and that’s also what I will be to you. I am not a submissive, and no amount of cash you’re willing to pay will change that.
- 2) Please tell me what you prefer to do before we begin, and if you don’t know, we can figure it out as we go.
- 3) If you want to stop or if you feel you’re at very real risk, use the safe word, which for you, is... whatever flavor of ice cream that client reminds me of. If you’re unable to speak, we can assign a gesture.

But I’m not working right now, and you aren’t a client.

I make it a point to go through this every year. To keep track of my *progress*. Every year it becomes easier to think about and harder to remember, some of the parts I’m about to tell you.

It’s 2019. I work as a professional dominatrix. Yes, professional. Yes, dominatrix. Oo, sex work siya, pero kalma lang- Nobody- well- nobody forced me into this. I had choices, as many, many people have reminded me, but I chose this. And it’s almost never really sexual nowadays. People

pay me to feel owned, to be hurt, if only for a few hours. They pay *well*. And that takes experience, knowing how to hurt, own people correctly. It takes research.

I'm not the best person to tell you this story, but I'm also the only person who knows this story, it being mine. Memories aren't reliable, and the way I used to feel about this one, more so. But I think the only way you really overcome something is to stop feeling like it's a tragedy and start treating it like history. Like facts, things that are, were, controlled.

*A slide that reads "1998" is projected onstage. Dom's family begins to enter one by one, TAY first, then MOM, then ATE. They sit around & across from each other onstage, as if at a dinner table.*

It's always best to show rather than tell, and if I were to tell you about my family... I think it's better to show you what an average night at home during those crucial teenage years was like. To be objective, if that's even possible.

## **MOM**

DOM! Baba ka na!

*Dom sighs, then joins the rest of his family for dinner.*

Bakit late ka umuwi kanina?

**DOM**

Si Anna kasi. Na-sanction, so I had to wait, kasi di pa tapos yung group work namin.

*(to the audience, as his adult self)*

The truth is, I think I was sucking someone's dick that afternoon. Yeah.

*DOM smirks.*

*Yeah I was.* More on that later.

**MOM**

Sabi ko na nga ba. 'Yang Anna na iyan ha. I've been telling you since you were in Grade 7, madadala ka lang sa kalat ng batang iyan, at mahina na nga ang hawak mo sa schoolwork as it is. Huwag na.

*(To Ate)*

Ikaw, how was your day?

**ATE**

Good. I had coffee with Michelle. Carlo picked me up. I just found out na my first onsite study is next week Wednesday. Family Court sa Pasig.

**'TAY**

Ano naman yung kaso?

**ATE**

Boring stuff. Another annulment.

*Silence.*

Di ako masyadong invested sa family proceedings kasi... you know, sobrang gulo ng proseso whenever there's family involved, for whatever reason. Depressing.

**DOM**

*(to the audience)*

Fun fact: In 2014, Ate was cited in a magazine nobody reads as the 13<sup>th</sup> best family lawyer in the Philippines. By Family Law, they meant mostly annulments. She was a natural at dismantling marriages. One thing we have in common.

**ATE**

But I have to go, anyway. Graded pa rin yung attendance and everything, and kailangang naka-full regalia kaming lahat.

*A beat.*

Which is why I need a new suit.



*Silence.*

**‘TAY**

You have a new suit. Binili mo lang nung isang linggo.

**ATE**

I have a new *blazer*. I need a suit. May kasamang top & pants.

**‘TAY**

*Kailangan talaga?*

**ATE**

Studies say that female lawyers are better respected when they wear pants. Pag nagpapaka-butch kami. So really, ayoko talagang mag-suit-

**‘TAY**

Ayan pala eh.

**ATE**

But I *need* one.

**‘TAY**

SUS.

**MOM**

She needs to look her best for this. Hindi lang naman vanity. Sabi nga sa mga *studies* diba, they grade women for appearance. It's not something you'd understand.

**'TAY**

Yung hindi ko lang naman maintindihan yung bakit naging problema ko 'to. Kasi alam mo, noong college ako-

*A collective sigh from everyone else at the table.*

**DOM**

*(to the audience)*

'Tay's favorite story. The boulder on his shoulder. Ang malagim na sanhi ng kanyang pagdusa. Ngayong gabi, sa MMK.

**'TAY**

-isa lang yung pares ng sapatos na ginagamit ko.

*While 'Tay continues his story, in the living room, THE ECHOIST enters, and stands at the side of the room.*

Isa lang. ‘Noong nasira na yung goma sa isang paa, alam mo yung ginawa ko? *Hindi* ako bumalik sa Pampanga para magmakaawa sa Lolo niyo dahil nasira ko yung binili niya para sa akin, *hindi* ako nanglimos sa harap niya para bilhin niya ako ng *bagong* sapatos, *hindi* ako humingi ng awa, pera, tulong kahit saan. Nagtiis ako. Do *you* know how to do that?

**MOM**

Tama na ‘yan.

**‘TAY**

Tapos nagbenta pa nga ako ng mga dati kong matchbox car, mga dati kong textbook- Basta. Gumawa ako ng paraan.

**MOM**

‘TAY.

**‘TAY**

Ikaw, kaya mo bang humiwalay sa mga punyetang *Beanie Babies* mo? 22 years old ka na. Kaya mo bang mag*trabaho*? Kasi alam mo, yung ibang Law Student na alam ko, hindi lang pumapasok, nag-aaral, kaya rin nilang mag-

**MOM**

TAMA-

**DOM**

*(to the audience)*

I don't have to explain my family, everything you've seen is self-explanatory. What I do have to explain is him. *(looks towards The Echoist)* An Echoist. We don't have those anymore, in the enlightened time of 2019. But for a time, as simple as some people would a driver, or a yaya, you could pay someone to hurt for you. To take everything you're feeling directly from your knuckles, or otherwise. Nowadays, you have to get creative.

*ANNA, as her 30-year old self, enters.*

We have the time to be technical. What is an Echoist? I think Anna, my best friend & recently tenured sociology professor, said it best during a 2012 lecture-

**ANNA**

The practice of Echoism is representative of the intrinsically Filipino need for more than a simple cathartic release, but one that is hierarchical in nature - that of a boss over an employee, an older relative to a younger, parent to child. Echoism commodifies acts of physical catharsis.

This practice can be dated back to the early 1800s, where rich-

**DOM**

Academics can be boring, I know. Says the Lit Major. We can skip ahead.

**ANNA**

...the case of Ella Samira. Ms. Samira worked as an Echoist for 35 years, at least 10 of them for the same family. Every other night, she would be beaten to near-death & put herself back together before breakfast the next morning. By the time she had died, her family couldn't file the proper papers to claim compensation they would have received from the 2005 Domestic Reparations Act because of Echoism's no-name policy, and previously, during the Hearings on Echoism in 2001, she couldn't testify either, because of the practice's mutism policy. She had been one nobody among many, in the eyes of the law, despite-

**DOM**

Then I started falling asleep. And as someone who's sat through 25 years of Anna's speeches, I think I'd like to save another person from that kind of labor.

*ANNA exits. The scene at dinner resumes.*

**MOM**

-NA!

**'TAY**

Anong tama na?

*Silence. ATE is completely still and blank-faced, but seething. She stands up, picks up her glass, and walks to the side of the stage close to where THE ECHOIST is. She picks up a pitcher of water and fills her glass. She drinks. Silence.*

*She smashes the glass over THE ECHOIST's head. He falls over, unconscious. A beat.*

**ATE**

Excuse me. I have readings. To read.

*ATE exits. THE ECHOIST picks himself up.*

*A beat. The family resumes dinner. They hold a cautious silence for a few seconds before-*

**'TAY**

*(to MOM)*

Yung pagka-entitled ng dalawa na 'to, nagtataka talaga ako minsan, kung saan iyan galing.

**MOM**

Alam mo, I want a good life for my children. The best, even. Some parents don't.

**'TAY**

May pinagkaiba ang "good" sa "nalulunod sa dami ng stuffed toys ko". Ang tawag diyan spoiled.

**MOM**

I have a better word. *Damot.*

*'TAY slams his hands on the table and stands up. He unbuckles his belt, grabs THE ECHOIST by the collar, and drags him offstage. Loud slaps and strikes are heard, as well as grunts of rage. No sounds of pain are audible.*

*'TAY re-enters, disheveled. He drinks his glass of water, then exits. MOM follows, begrudgingly.*

**MOM**

You know, baka tawagin ko nga yung nanay ng Anna na iyan sometime soon. I think it's for the best. Excuse me, anak.

*She exits. A moment passes. DOM walks offstage, then re-enters, dragging THE ECHOIST's body in. DOM pulls up a chair to watch him as he lies unconscious, recovering.*

**DOM**

This was my favorite part, watching him put himself back together.

*THE ECHOIST* recovers, the sound of bones snapping back into place accompanying his process. (The process is similar to how DOM picks himself up at the beginning of the play.)

*(to the audience)*

I was always curious about how Echoists were able to do that. Mom said it wasn't our place to bother with how Echoists did their job. "They do what they're paid to do, we don't have to force them to do anything else for us." is what she'd say. I understood. At the time. Ngayon, di ko alam kung paano ko siya nakilala for almost 4 years without ever learning his name.

*THE ECHOIST* exits.

That was any day in that house for almost 10 years. All that was normal, to me.

*A slide that reads "1994" is projected onstage. ANNA, as her 12-year old self, enters, eyes glued to a gameboy. She sits next to DOM on the floor.*

We first hired an Echoist when I was 12, and I would talk to Anna about him all the time. She lived two streets away, in the same village. Two things you need to know about our friendship in those days: My family was much better off than hers money-wise, and since we were kids, even until now, she was... always just better than me, at everything. What a bitch.

*(to ANNA)*



I always feel guilty. That it's him they're hitting and not me.

**ANNA**

I'm sure na that's what they want. Ya, that's the point.

**DOM**

Then why not just hit me? Or Ate. Her nalang dapat.

**ANNA**

Because. Parents. Grownups. They wanna think they're better than us, and each other, and our lolas & lolos. So they don't hit us like they got hit by them, so that they seem nicer, and we're more thankful. Di ko alam how to explain. Basta. Just be happy they don't hit us anymore.

UNGH. Don't distract me kasi, ayan, Mario died. I have one more life nalang.

**DOM**

Did your parents ever-

**ANNA**

Yeah. Before, when I was small small. Pinalo nila ako so hard this one time, nasira yung walis.

**DOM**

Ouch. Was it a Tingting?

**ANNA**

Tambo. The handle.

**DOM**

OUCH. Did they at least say sorry?

*ANNA stops playing, looks at DOM, and laughs in his face.*

**ANNA**

Grownups don't say sorry, bobo. I think it's a rule. When you turn 35, you're allowed to never say sorry ever again.

**DOM**

Is that real?

**ANNA**

NO! He's dead. Now you have to restart.

**DOM**

It's my gameboy.

*ANNA glares at DOM, gives the gameboy back, and exits. 'TAY, MOM, & ATE re-enter, each holding one chair in each hand. They claim a place onstage, place their pair of chairs side by side, and sit on one.*

Maybe it was unfair of me to show my family altogether. That's when all of us are at our worst. Together. So... etc. I've had to think of simpler ways to talk about them once I aged out of whining. Whenever somebody would ask about a member of my family in particular, I would always tell them about that one time in a car, and all of them gave me some kind of time in a car:

*DOM walks over to 'TAY's open chair and sits. A slide that reads "1995" is projected onstage.*

I was 13. 'Tay picked me up from soccer almost every day that summer. Yes, they made me do *sports*.

(to 'Tay)

Can we stop for McDonald's?

**'TAY**

Ano? Diba kumain ka na bago mag-practice?

**DOM**

I got hungry from all of the kicking.

**'TAY**

(to himself)

You didn't even get one goal.

**DOM**

What?

**'TAY**

If we get McDo, your Ate will be mad that we didn't get her anything.

**DOM**

She likes cheeseburgers.

*'TAY sighs.*

**'TAY**

That's already so much food for one drive-thru.

**DOM**

*(to the audience)*

This was 1995; a cheeseburger cost what? 50 pesos?

*(to 'TAY)*

There's a jollibee near here.

*(to the audience)*

Everything was 10 pesos cheaper there.

*(to 'TAY)*

I'll finish my food before we get home.

*A beat.*

**'TAY**

Sige na nga.

*'TAY motions to make a turn, then starts honking his horn.*

PUUUUCHA! ANAK NG- This fucking guy.

*(to DOM)*

Sana naman masarap iyang Jollibee mo, ha?

*DOM walks over to MOM's open chair & sits. A slide that reads "1999" is projected onstage.*

**DOM**

I was 17. Mom picked me up from school, a week after I- after I did something.

*(to MOM)*

Can we get McDonald's?

**MOM**

Maybe, if there's one near here.

**DOM**

There's one after the next turn.

*A moment passes.*

You missed it, Mom.

*She makes a motion to abruptly stop the car.*

**MOM**

What did I do? Huh?

**DOM**

What?

**MOM**

Where did I go wrong? What did I do that made you so... That joke you made the other night.

**DOM**

It wasn't a joke.

**MOM**

Yes, we know that now. God. God! People keep disrespecting me. It just never, never- Walang- I need them, I need you to stop, please.

*The sound of a car passing by them honking at their car. MOM rolls her window down and yells out of it as she resumes driving the car.*

Ano ba. Oo! Sige! OO. OO NA. JUSKO. GOD. Jesus.

**DOM**

*(to the audience)*

I think she was having trouble at work at the time. She was working in PR, I think, back then, back when-

**MOM**

Hello? May tumatalab ba sayo? Asan ka?

*DOM looks at the audience with genuine concern, as if he'd never been interrupted before.*

**DOM**

Yes! Can we- can we please talk about this at home nalang, please?

*A short silence. MOM rolls her window back up.*

**MOM**

You need a haircut. And your nails need trimming. God, it's really like gusto mo talagang mabulok. You know, other boys your age, they try. They try! But you- It's like people always have to take care of you for you.

*A beat.*

We're here.

**DOM**

What?

**MOM**



Akala ko, you wanted to drive-thru McDonald's.

**DOM**

But I thought-

**MOM**

What do you want? Gusto ko yung may happy meal toy. I need something happy.

**DOM**

...a cheeseburger.

**MOM**

Roll down your window.

*Dom does so.*

*(suddenly cordial)*

Hello, dear! Dalawang happy meal.

*DOM walks over to ATE's open chair and sits. A slide that reads "2006" is projected onstage.*

**DOM**

I was 24. This was after... after the will reading.

**ATE**

I'm mad. I'm so fucking mad. Ater everything, he really just- Tangina. Talaga. You know how I always used to tell you, if Mom or 'Tay does something stupid, the best way to make them pay for it is to make them *pay* for it? With clothes, or books, or something, anything?!

**DOM**

Mhm.

**ATE**

That's what he was thinking when he signed those papers. Just how we're a bunch of fucking brats who've done nothing but suck the capital out of his miserable fucking life. God! We get the house. A fucking one-story piece of shit in Pasig, and that's it. *That's it?* That's it, attorney! And all our fucking titos & titas sitting on their bloated fucking asses get the money. Fuck! You know, I bet we can contest that fucking will, and say that bastard wasn't of sound mind. Obviously! Obviously, he wasn't.

**DOM**

Can we get McDonald's?

*Silence.*

**ATE**

I need a fucking Mcflurry.

*She makes a sudden swerve, as if a car almost grazed hers.*

FUCK! WHAT THE FUCK! Student driver my ass, punyeta-

*ATE rolls down the window and screams. She rolls it back down, and continues to drive.*

*A moment passes.*

Do you know what you want?

**DOM**

Yes.

**ATE**

Ok. Roll down your window.

*DOM does so.*

*(suddenly polite)*

Hello, good afternoon po! May we please get a-

## DOM

There's a pattern here. Papa bear's anger was too hot, Mama bear's anger was too cold. Ate bear's anger was... understandable, in hindsight.

That ride with Mom needs context. Might as well talk about it now. It was... 3 days before that, I think.

*A slide that reads "1999" is projected onstage.*

It's unfair to pinpoint one instance in your life that explains everything that's wrong with it, but until 10 years ago, I would've said that night was it. The night I came out. How do I start?

You know, I won't. I don't have to. It's what? Just 2 words, at least? *I'm gay. I'm a lesbian. I no longer believe in the Christian God whose wrath you invoke.* Coming out is simple. It's barely a sentence, and usually whispered. What really speaks volumes, is the aftermath. How everyone reacts.

*A beat. 'TAY, MOM, & ATE break out into laughter, and the sound of a live studio audience's laughter accompanies them. A moment passes. They all stare at Dom blankly. They look away, almost in unison, processing. '*

*TAY puts his paper down and stands up. The sound of a live studio audience gasping & reacting in shock. 'TAY storms offstage. The sound of a beating, this time more brutal than the previous offstage one, accompanied by studio audience laughter. A short silence.*

### **MOM**

This is a joke, right? You know, don't answer. We all know it is, anak. There's no- We can talk about this later.

*She exits, and the sound of beating offstage grows louder. The invisible audience's laughter increases in volume.*

### **ATE**

I want to say "good for you", but we both know it's gonna be hard. I know you at least know that.

*ATE exits the opposite side of the stage from where MOM & 'TAY did. Aggressive grunts and sounds of violence from their side grow in volume once again, accompanied by increasing studio audience laughter.*

### **DOM**

Later that night, I saw The Echoist was still completely malformed in the kitchen. I thought he was dead. But it's impossible to kill an Echoist while they're on the job. What you can do, is beat them in a way that lasts. That takes longer to heal than reasonable. He stayed twisted up like that

for 2 days. He began to smell, but nobody seemed to mind, besides me. When he was all fixed up, he quit the next day. I didn't get it. They beat him for years. But never as bad as that night. It's those big bad instances that stick. My parents got a new Echoist the next month, this time a girl.

*THE OTHER ECHOIST enters, and stands where THE ECHOIST had previously.*

They never beat her as hard as her predecessor. I don't know if it was because she was a girl or because the worst of it was over. But I'm not done with that night. She wasn't, either.

*MOM re-enters, and sits across from DOM. She's wiping blood from her knuckles.*

## **MOM**

You know what I think your problem is? You don't understand yet what things mean for other people. Things about you. No man is an island, Dom. What you do, it echoes. The things you do, the things you are, people will think come from us. As a family. It's selfish, to do something, to choose to be something that puts the people around you at risk. And you know, if you're that selfish, maybe you don't care about that. Maybe you only care about what people will think of you. And it's the same. They'll never see you as a good, normal person when you tell jokes like the one you just did. You'll never get to live normally, anak. You won't get to have a proper job, a proper family, the right kind of love. From anyone. Think about that, if you don't care to think about anyone else.

*She stands up.*

What you said... was a joke, as far as anyone outside this house knows. Good night.

*MOM moves to the back of the stage. DOM is shaken for a moment, then addresses the audience.*

**DOM**

Maybe I'm being unfair. All I've been showing you are bad times. With them. But there were good times too. Of course there were. Sadly. For me.

*'TAY & ATE re-enter, and MOM & DOM join them in sitting on a piece of furniture, cramped next to each other on what seems like a couch (similar to The Simpsons during the show's opening credits.) They sit in silence. The sounds of beating & studio audience laughter from earlier play softly in the background.*

Moments like this. Moments of silence. Doing nothing. Being nothing to one another. Those were the good times. That being far away from everyone even if you're all in the same room. When the way you live with someone is all pain, almost all the time, the only real gifts they can give you are their silence, and their distance. But even then, everything they've done to you... it echoes. Especially when it's silent, and you can think to yourself. Because they aren't with you. For now, they aren't.

*The sounds of beating and laughter continue to increase, then abruptly cut off when the lights do.*

## **Part 2: The Wartenberg Wheel**

*A slide that reads: “**The Wartenberg Wheel**: A device, composed of a handle attached to a wheel radiating with sharp pins. Initially used to testing nerve sensitivity, the device is now a popular tool in the practice of BDSM. To elicit the proper response, an exact, controlled amount of force is to be used.” is projected onstage. The lights fade back in. A slide that reads “**2008**” is projected onstage.*

### **DOM**

I used to work a respectable job in Publishing for most of my 20s. I would wake up at 6 AM, try to look alive, coffee, traffic, meeting, edit grammar, make suggestions, edit *Tagalog* grammar, break, edit grammar, submit (if I was productive that day), meet a friend, think about how the grammar could've been better, maybe have sex, think about the grammar again during that, sleep, wake up, try to look alive, grammar, coffee, grammar traffic grammar grammar - now you see kung ba't ako naging puta. *Sex worker*. Not that there's a difference to most people. I used to think that way too.

*ANNA enters and sits on the chair next to DOM's, a table with rope in front of them.*

### **DOM**



Anna was dating a slightly older, *artistic* man, as always, and, as always, he cancelled on some fun thing she planned for them to do together.

*(to Anna)*

So what is it this time, a client of his, or a family on the side?

**ANNA**

Kung may nasa side, ako yun. And client.

**DOM**

As far as you know.

**ANNA**

Shut up. Nilibre na nga kita ng dinner.

**DOM**

Buying my silence? That's very like you, mom.

*THE SENSEI enters, rope in hand, followed by MALE ENSEMBLE (as Rope Bunny), who is dressed in nothing but black underwear.*

**ANNA**

Shut up, nandito na siya.

**DOM**

Tangina, ano 'to?

**ANNA**

Shush muna. Watch.

**THE SENSEI**

Good evening. Thank you all for being here.

*As DOM speaks the following lines, SENSEI ties MALE ENSEMBLE up using a series of basic Shibari knots until he's in a hog-tied position.*

**DOM**

That was how I first met him, the man I call The Sensei. That's what I call him, in my head. Mainly because I couldn't tell what ethnicity he was. He was teaching Shibari, looked Korean, and spoke English like he usually spoke Mandarin.

*As THE SENSEI speaks the following monologue, FEMALE ENSEMBLE and MALE ENSEMBLE perform a Japanese kabuki dance that corresponds to his lines.*

**SENSEI**

The first thing you must remember: This is not punishment, this is not about pain. This is a performance. A private one, between you and the one you're to bind.

Many of the knots I'm about to teach you were invented for violent, practical purposes. To bind was to kidnap, to restrict, to constrict, to cause pain. They were used against one's will. What we will be doing is different for this reason: Consent. Many of you have probably never considered what that really means. Do I have your permission to bind you?

*MALE ENSEMBLE nods. THE SENSEI mimes tying him up with a series of knots.*

What the bound finds is pleasure in the knots, and what you will find is an art to them. These knots were made to subjugate, and now, we make them to give one the satisfaction of a paradox - they find control of their subjugation in feeling they have no control of it.

The art is something you won't find until you've seen all you've knotted for yourself. The patterns you've worked onto the bound, how you've framed them as beautiful rather than restricted, the satisfaction of knowing you've both made a cage into a portrait... that is the beauty of this act, whether you're doing or being done unto. That is what you get out of Kinbaku.

*As THE SENSEI finishes his last sentence, FEMALE ENSEMBLE and MALE ENSEMBLE break away from their performance, returning to their former positions. ANNA is attempting to do a small knot around DOM's arms.*

**DOM**

It felt like I'd been prepared to listen to everything he had to say. Like he was some wizard giving me a destiny to fulfill in a movie. Cheesy, oo. But that's what it was, in the moment.

**ANNA**

Tangina. Di ko magawa.

**DOM**

Ako. I'll try.

*Eyes still fixed on Sensei, Dom quickly does a similar knot on Anna's hands. He fastens it tightly.*

**ANNA**

Aray.

**DOM**

Good.

**THE SENSEI**

Thank you, everyone, for your time. And good night.

*The sound of a crowd dissipating. ANNA tries to unbind herself.*

**DOM**

That was... not bad.

**ANNA**

At least one of us had a good time. Tara.

**DOM**

Go ahead. Kuha lang ako ng flyer.

*ANNA exits, still tied up. MALE ENSEMBLE hands him a flyer.*

It came naturally to me. I didn't know why, at first. At first, nahiya nga ako eh. I didn't go to another workshop for 3 weeks. The second time, I still didn't know what it was that brought me back. The third time too. I guess na-realize ko lang a few years ago, where it came from... my fascination with this.

*A slide that reads "1980-something" is projected onstage. Dom is carried off by Male & Female Ensemble, like a political prisoner being dragged by the arms, and seated into a chair. Mom and 'Tay stand parallel to one another behind him. The following scene is lit & staged like an interrogation, but Mom and 'Tay speak as if talking to a 6 to 8-year old Dom.*

**MOM**

You know we could hit you. But we won't.

**'TAY**

We could, but we choose not to.

**MOM**

Because we're trying to be better than your lolos & lolas.

**'TAY**

Alam mo, noong bata ako, pinaluhod ako sa asin. Isang punso kada-tuhod.

**MOM**

Your lolo, oh my god, the bruises, the bruises sa mga braso ko. Magang-maga ako for days!

**'TAY**

Kasi nahuli nila akong nagbebenta ng komiks ko para makabili ng bagong komiks.

**MOM**

All because I dropped a glass of water on one of my tito's feet!

*She laughs.*

**‘TAY**

Parents could do whatever they wanted. Discipline! Discipline however they wanted their children.

**MOM**

And it only got worse as I grew older. Kasi naman, pasaway ako dati.

**‘TAY**

But we’re not going to do any of that, Dom. Even if you make it so we very very very very very much should.

**MOM**

Because we love you, Dom. And you should be grateful that we choose not to.

**DOM**

*(mocking his 6 to 8-year old self)*

...choose not to love me?

**MOM**

Choose not to hit you!

*(under her breath)*

But God, is it tempting...

**‘TAY**

Ssshhh. Alalahanin mo ‘yan. Now, good night, anak.

**MOM**

Yes. Sweet dreams.

*MOM and ‘TAY exit, and the lights on where they were disappear. DOM sits alone onstage, surrounded by darkness.*

**DOM**

All that because I blew my nose on my polo in public.

*MALE ENSEMBLE enters, tossing around a koosh ball.*

This was the same family that hired a human punching bag around 6 years later. It made me think: what was so bad about getting hit? I was such a clumsy toddler that my parents kept me in a playpen 6 hours a day until I was 5, but I didn’t know what it meant to be hit on purpose. Until I was... 8? It was in a playground. Some boy I argued over a koosh ball with. Punched me.

*MALE ENSEMBLE throws the koosh ball at DOM, causing DOM to fall to the ground.*

*He looks at DOM, then grabs the ball and exits discreetly over the following lines.*



He knocked me OUT. And I remember thinking, “That wasn’t so bad”. What was it that they always tell girls?

*ATE peeks her head out from backstage.*

**ATE**

If a boy is being mean to you, then that means he likes you. That’s what Mom always told me.

*She exits. The lights begin to isolate DOM in darkness again, similar to after MOM and TAY left the stage.*

**DOM**

I wasn’t gay yet, but that thought crossed my mind. And at the time, it’s not like I did anything wrong. I think as young as I was then, I knew being hit had less to do with me and more to do with the person throwing the punch. So I guess all this is my fucking fault, huh?

*The lights come back on.*

Anyway- The Kinbaku workshops. I kept coming back. I had the money - I’d saved some from my publishing job because I always thought I’d be trying to get out of the house, but the house and getting out of it took care of itself after- I had the money to sustain a hobby.

*THE SENSEI enters, rolling up a piece of rope. He notices DOM. A slide that reads “2009” is projected onstage.*

I don't know if hobby is the correct word. It was something else. The floor of my room was covered in different patterns of knots. I'd found a mannequin in the garbage outside an ukay-ukay one night and ended up taking it home to practice my rigging. I drew different patterns of rigging in a spare notebook during breaks at work. Addiction was the word.

**SENSEI**

You. I've noticed you coming to all my classes.

**DOM**

Yes. You're welcome, for the money.

**SENSEI**

Is this something you're doing in your own life, outside of this class? Professionally?

**DOM**

I... don't know what you mean.

**SENSEI**

“If you're good at something, never do it for free.”

**DOM**

Oh. But. I mean-

*(in a softer voice)*

That's prostitution, isn't it?

**SENSEI**

*(loudly)*

Yes. It's technically prostitution.

But you also wouldn't be the first to engage in something like it simply because you could.

**DOM**

Well... since this is where this conversation is going anyway... I was with someone one night, and I... what I learned here came into play.

**SENSEI**

An ebi pattern?

**DOM**

Ebi *knots*, Mune-ate pattern.

**SENSEI**

Creative.

**DOM**

And after, he asked me how much I wanted. I didn't know what he was talking about, until he brought his wallet out. I was offended... at first. Then I thought, "I haven't bought myself a new pair of shoes since graduating", so I might as well take the money as a congratulations on a job well done. So I did.

**SENSEI**

And how did that make you feel? Cheap?

**DOM**

No. It... it felt... well-earned, more than any paycheck from my day job ever has.

*A beat.*

Does that make me some kind of whore?

**SENSEI**

Only as much as any office worker is.

**DOM**

I've been thinking the same thing.

**SENSEI**

Do you mind walking with me? There's something I think you'd like to see, and I don't live too far from here.

**DOM**

Sure.

*DOM follows THE SENSEI as he walks around the stage.*

*(to the audience)*

I didn't know what I was in for, so I steeled myself. I'd never fucked a man this old before.

There was this one professor I had, but age doesn't matter when you're failing FIL 119.

*THE SENSEI stops, and so does DOM. THE SENSEI gestures to turn a light on. The lights brighten and shine upon the different set pieces onstage, all of which represent different BDSM equipment. DOM looks upon them in astonishment.*

**DOM**

*(to the audience)*

I didn't know what I was looking at exactly, but I knew it was a sex dungeon of some kind. I saw furniture I couldn't name at the time - A Berkley horse, stocks and pillories, an x-shaped cross, a rack of shackles, and collars, and whips, oh my! For a second I thought maybe this man had just

shown me that he was a serial killer. But then again, it's not like I'd really cared about my life like that in a long time.

**SENSEI**

It's a lot, I know. My life's work, in a way.

**DOM**

It's... very... a lot.

*A beat.*

**SENSEI**

Can I ask you something?

**DOM**

I think you've asked a lot at this point.

**SENSEI**

What brought you here?

**DOM**

My friend had an extra pass-

**SENSEI**

No, why did you keep coming back? What makes you want to keep doing this?

*A moment of silence. DOM walks around, and sits on a piece of BDSM furniture.*

**DOM**

Someone hit me once. Someone I think I loved. And he said it felt good. He didn't regret it at all. I've been looking for... a way to get back, I think.

**SENSEI**

This craft... isn't supposed to be a self-indulgent one. It's not a way of getting revenge for yourself.

**DOM**

I know, it's *a service*. But don't you get anything out of it?

**SENSEI**

The pay's good. As someone who's paid to be in all my classes, you would know.

**DOM**

Oh yes.

*A beat. DOM stands up.*

What does it take? To get started? Professionally.

*THE SENSEI smiles. The lights darken around him, leaving DOM alone onstage.*

I advertised myself through word-of-mouth. Emphasis on *mouth*. The Sensei passed a client or two onto me, and I had a sloppy start, to say the least. Had to fuck a few of them, to get them to give what I could do a chance. Then I decided to get professional.

*MALE ENSEMBLE enters, shirtless, and embraces Dom's legs.*

**MALE ENSEMBLE (as Doggy)**

Paki-tali mo na ako, master. Masyado na akong maingay para sa isang tuta. Aw! Aw! Awoooo!

*Light shines down on THE SENSEI, still onstage.*

**SENSEI**

A few suggestions, if you're looking to make this into a business for yourself.

- 1) Ask for cash upfront. Get it out of the way so the experience goes as smoothly as possible once it begins.

**DOM**



*(to MALE ENSEMBLE)*

Ok. Pero may bayad.

**MALE ENSEMBLE**

Saan ako sasahod, master? Aso lang ako.

**DOM**

For real. Bayad. Ngayon na.

**MALE ENSEMBLE**

Ah. Uh... Shet. Sige na nga. Kunin ko lang wallet ko.

**SENSEI**

2) Invest in equipment. The smaller, simpler ones are a requirement, You can work your way up to the bigger ones.

**DOM**

Wait. Sit.

*DOM takes out some rope and ties it around MALE ENSEMBLE's neck.*

Good boy. Fetch!

*DOM lets go of the rope, and MALE ENSEMBLE exits on all fours.*

Beginning with him, I found myself with regulars. I started buying the equipment and keeping them in the back of my car, in the house if they were bigger. So I began phasing out the sex.

*DOM makes a knocking motion, accompanied by the sound of it. FEMALE ENSEMBLE enters, and mimes opening a door.*

### **SENSEI**

3) Remember to distinguish between you as the person you're being paid to be and the businessman behind him. Your clients need to trust that you aren't a psychokiller.

### **FEMALE ENSEMBLE (As Oreo)**

Hi. Pasok.

### **DOM**

Ok... Nandito na ba si...

*(looks at his cellphone)*

Robert?

### **FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

Ako si Robert.

**DOM**

Oh. Sorry, I don't- I'm gay, maa'm.

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

No. I know. I don't... I'm not looking for sex from you po. Lahat ng kaya mo, hindi lang iyon.

Bayad pa rin.

**DOM**

Huh. Ok. So. How would you like to start?

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

Sabunutan mo ako.

**DOM**

Sige.

*Dom puts his bag down, and takes out then puts on a pair of leather gloves.*

**SENSEI**

- 4) Safe words. Find a system that works for you. A theme, so it's easier for you to remember who is who.

**DOM**

Your name, and safe word is going to be... 'Cookies & Cream'. Haba. 'Oreo' nalang.

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

*(getting on her knees)*

Pretend you're mad at me about something, kahit small lang. Ah, at ano pala.

**DOM**

*(putting his gloved hand on her scalp)*

Yes?

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

Call me 'Anak' while you do it.

*As Dom says the following line, FEMALE ENSEMBLE acts as if he's pulling her hair.*

**SENSEI**

5) Know when enough is enough. Have you ever made a grown man cry?

**DOM**

...I have.

**THE SENSEI**

6) And one more thing. About that last piece of advice. Control yourself. Do you remember the very first thing I say in my classes? Because you forget that. You get lost.

**DOM**

I'll remember.

**SENSEI**

Break a leg.

**DOM**

Only if they want me to. Thank you.

*THE SENSEI & FEMALE ENSEMBLE exit.*

This was the formal end of my tenure as a *sex* worker. From ropes & makeshift torture devices, I bought real, but cheap equipment. By the time those were worn down, I had enough to buy myself good equipment. I had to think of how to brand myself. You wouldn't want a man in a Bench polo & bermuda shorts commanding & degrading you, would you? That's what dads are for.

*The sound of a "Badum-tss".*

I tried out a full leather outfit thinking I would look like Keanu Reeves in The Matrix and wound up looking like Trinity instead. Anna had this to say:

*ANNA enters in a laughing fit, continues to laugh all over the stage for a protracted amount of time (bordering on a minute), then finally exits.*

So I opted for something simple. A black shirt, sometimes a flannel, sometimes a sweater over it. Always a belt, and always leather shoes. Alongside another touch of leather.

*DOM procures a pair of leather gloves.*

I looked, and look, like the kind of man Mom told me I'd be kidnapped by if I walked too far away from her. Fitting. I was my own business, and I was expanding. 10 months to the day I became a professional, I had this opportunity arrive.

*A slide that reads "2010" is projected onstage.*

I found out the address I'd been sent to was an art gallery. I asked the woman at the desk if I was at the right place.

*FEMALE ENSEMBLE enters, leading DOM around the stage the way an assistant would.*

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE (as The Dealer's Assistant)**

Sir Dom? She's ready to see you now.

*As they walk around the stage, THE DEALER enters and claims part of it and some furniture as her office. FEMALE ENSEMBLE exits once she & DOM reach this area.*

**THE DEALER**

Please. Sit. My name is-

*Her name is bleeped out by a censoring sound effect.*

**DOM**

*(to the audience)*

Let's call her *The Dealer*. Sometimes I'm afraid I might summon her just by saying her name, even if there isn't a pentagram around to invoke her with.

**DEALER**

I was the one who booked you 4-6.

*DOM sets his bag down, and begins to put the pair of leather gloves on.*

**DOM**

My name is Dom, and that is what I will be to you. I don't submit, and no amount of cash you're willing to pay will make me do so. Please tell me what you prefer to do before we begin, and if you don't know, we'll figure it out as we go. If you want to stop or if you feel you're at very real risk, use the safe word, which for you, will be-

**DEALER**

Interesting. Professional. Direct. A little too aggressive.

*A short silence.*

Sorry. Thinking out loud. I didn't book you for a session, Dom. I want to talk business.

**DOM**

Business?

**DEALER**

Yes. I heard about you from a friend. A gay one.

**DOM**

Makes sense.

**DEALER**



You need representation, business-wise. I'm afraid the damaged members of the gay community don't make for good agents.

**DOM**

There are some damaged women in there too. Just as unreliable. I'm sorry but- I don't think you know what I do. You just met me. You work *here*. I- What I'm saying is, what do you have to do with what I do?

**THE DEALER**

Did you see the painting downstairs, the large one by the stairs?

**DOM**

Which one?

**THE DEALER**

The one that looks like a big purple dick.

**DOM**

Ah.

**DEALER**

It's called *Kanyang Talong, or Provincial Phallus*. Enrique Zamora, 1979.

**DOM**

I don't know who that is.

**DEALER**

Understandable. He was a no-name alcoholic who only gained notoriety after his death for 1) being one of the first AIDS-related casualties in this country and 2) his homoerotic renderings of rural life.

**DOM**

And what does this dead gay man have to do with me?

**DEALER**

There was a time when every artist in this country was a deviant, is what I'm saying. Many of them still are. I know artists, and I know deviants. And I know that you're one of them.

**DOM**

That seems like a bit of a stretch for me.

*DOM stands to leave.*

**DEALER**

You wouldn't be the first, you know.

**DOM**

What do you mean?

**DEALER**

I currently represent a few others in your line of work. A 5-foot tall man with 10.5 inches at his disposal. A girl who's 29 but looks and act 12 if you pay her to do that. Another girl who charges by the minute to have the menstruation sucked out of her like you just cracked open balut.

**DOM**

So you collect perverts. Congrats nalang, Professor X.

**DEALER**

I collect *talents*. And I don't think of myself as a collector. Leaving a painting to sit somewhere private, waiting for the moment someone wants to exhibit for years at a time isn't the best use of art. I think of myself as... a dealer.

*DOM gives the audience a look.*

Tell me, what do your current operations look like?

**DOM**

I'm not a call center.

**DEALER**

Just tell me.

**DOM**

I get texts, and they usually say who referred them to me. We talk to agree on a date and time, they tell me a little bit about what they want and what I should bring, then we meet.

**DEALER**

Cash upfront?

**DOM**

Of course.

**DEALER**

Hotels?

**DOM**

Motels. Sometimes homes.

**DEALER**

Well. That's not entirely bad.

**DOM**

Thank you?

**DEALER**

I assume you don't have a booking fee?

**DOM**

I'm not Sarah Geronimo.

**DEALER**

What kind of equipment do you have?

**DOM**

Whips, paddles, cuffs, chains, 350 yards of rope. I recently saved up enough for a pillory. I'm working towards a swing.

**DEALER**

Decent. Maybe you are worth it.

**DOM**

I don't know if you can tell that your compliments sound terrible out loud.

**DEALER**

I think I know what you're wondering.

**DOM**

What am I-

**DEALER**

What do *you* get out of this?

**DOM**

Sure.

**DEALER**

Protection, first of all. Insurance. Legal representation, if it ever comes to that. Yours is a very dangerous line of work, you know.

**DOM**

Never really thought about it like that.

**DEALER**

It would be more dangerous if you were a submissive but you're exclusively dominant, yes?

**DOM**

Yes.

**DEALER**

Not even for a price?

**DOM**

No.

**DEALER**

Well. Aside from protection, I have a wide network, so to speak. An exponential increase in bookings for you, that means. How many regulars do you have now?

**DOM**

Six?

**DEALER**

Well, we can work our way up to the tens. Hope you have the stamina.

**DOM**

Tens.

**DEALER**

I know a lot of people who've been waiting for what someone like you can offer.

**DOM**

And what is it exactly that I offer?

**DEALER**

Pain. The kind they can control. It's in high demand, you know. Ever since Echoism was, you know.

*A moment of silence.*

**DOM**

Is that all?

**DEALER**

For now. We can talk about getting you a studio and bringing in furniture later on, but I'd like to start working with you ASAP.

**DOM**

A studio?

**DEALER**

A controlled environment for you to work out of. Much safer. And that's your goal in the long-term, isn't it?

*A beat. DOM begins to leave.*



Oh, and Dom? Please tell your clients they can begin contacting me about you. Starting the 12th. Here, you can hand these to them.

*She brings out a wad of her business cards and hands it to DOM. DOM takes it, and she grabs his hand. A beat, then she shakes it.*

Pleasure doing business with you.

**DOM**

Pleasure's a very strong word.

*THE DEALER exits.*

*(to the audience)*

I didn't know what I'd just agreed to. It all happened fast and corporate. I didn't have time to think about it until later that night. It was a drastic change, but I was already dabbling in prostitution. What was a pimp? That's what she was, at the end of the day.

So I sold the house. I considered turning a part of it into my... place of business, but even I have lines I won't cross. I was the only one who'd been living here for years. Sometimes, Mom would visit unannounced, partly out of sentimentality, mostly out of a lack of respect for boundaries. Ate would stop by before we went to visit 'Tay.

*A beat.*

I sold the damn place. Nothing but memories of passive aggression and me plotting my next rebellion as I took a shit on the same bowl for 28 years. Ate & I looked through the storage room of childhood things and after looking through the boxes we... burnt most of it. Tae ng daga. Everywhere. I managed to salvage a walkman and a viewmaster. I still have them somewhere around here. Sometimes I'd put the walkman on, listen to a Blondie, Green Day, Hole CD, and pretend I'm 15, in my room, trying to drown out the sound of someone getting beat or yelled at. Then I'd remember I live alone, and this wasn't a good look for a man pushing 40.

I bought a one-bedroom in an old Makati apartment building to live in and put a down payment on an adjoining flat to turn into my "studio". Bought it, eventually. Looking back, I had it ideal. Everything came together, like I was *born* to do this. Destined, or cursed. The clients pay well enough that I can... I'm living in Makati, aren't I? Most people in this line of work, in this city? Would be dead by now. Arrested, busted on the job. Attacked, Assaulted, and that hasn't- Well, no. There's been... that, and *her*.

*A slide that reads "2017" is projected onstage. DOM sticks his head out backstage.*

*(to offstage)*

Pasok.

*THE MISIS enters. She looks around the room in disgust.*

**THE MISIS**

My God. My God.

**DOM**

I don't think you'll find him here, but there's a church 5 minutes away if you want to.

**MISIS**

I need to sit down.

**DOM**

Sure, take a seat anywhere.

*THE MISIS moves to sit down on a piece of BDSM furniture. She takes a breath, then realizes what she's sitting on. She recoils in disgust, standing up quickly and leaning on another piece of furniture for support. She looks at what she's grabbed onto, and recoils once again, falling backwards. DOM moves to help her up.*

**MISIS**

No! No. Stay there. Don't touch me. Kadire nitong... Nitong love nest mo! I don't even want to touch your floors.

*THE MISIS stands quickly and backs against a wall. She recoils from the wall as well, and stays frozen in place.*

**DOM**

You know what you signed up for when you booked me, right?

**MISIS**

No. Clearly, no. God, is this what Ramon- God! Siraulo siya!

**DOM**

What's... Who is Ramon?

**MISIS**

*Who's Ramon?* My husband. One of your clients.

**DOM**

Oh. I see.

**MISIS**

He's told me what you do to him. The crucifixion. The martyrdom. God! He... he called what you do to him the stations of the cross. Treating him like Jesus when he's anything but. Leaving those scars on his back that he spent so much time covering up.

**DOM**

Red Velvet.

**MISIS**

Ano?

**DOM**

Nothing.

*(to the audience)*

His name & safe word. With *this* as his wife, I don't know why he needed to come to me to feel punished.

**MISIS**

I haven't made love with my husband in years, and the first time- those scars. Your dirty work.

Sabi niya galing sa kuting namin, but I had that cat declawed after it scratched our son! What *are* you? What- What kind of *pervert*?

**DOM**

I'm not a pervert. I'm a prostitute. Technically. And ma'am, I think you need to calm down.

**MISIS**

No! I refuse to calm down! I earned the right to be this mad. Galit ko 'to at ilalabas ko siya, putanginamo! What have I married- My god, my god why have you forsaken me- I- I can't breathe. I have to-

*She releases a series of guttural screams, each scream causing her to physically react more violently than the last. She collapses on the ground after the last scream, still upright.*

Look at me. I'm on your semen-stained floors and I- naubusan na ako ng pake. I'm tired. I'm so tired. God, our children. Monica. Dino. Alyssa. They don't know their father- hindi nga, matatawa lang sila. They'll laugh, then they'll be mad. We disciplined them so hard, made them attend church with us kahit- tapos ganito pala. I can see their faces now-

## **DOM**

*(to the audience)*

As she continued with her Nora Aunor moment, I realized I had absolutely no sympathy for this woman. She looked at me as if I were a typhoon. A natural disaster that came from nowhere, completely divorced from anything in her life. I wasn't a person to her. Just some problem she was convinced she could talk her way into disappearing. But I felt no guilt. She was just...sad. And angry, that was clear. But neither of it bothered me until-

## **MISIS**

Excuse me? Are you even- May tumatalab ba sa iyo? Ano? Ano? Have drugs fried your brain? O wala ka na bang pake?

**DOM**

Ma'am. I think you've gotten what you came for. I have clients later this evening and I don't think we should waste any more time on one another. I have to earn a living, you have a marriage that you clearly want to annul. We might as well get to work.

**MISIS**

Ganyan lang? I discover this, and gusto mo akong palayasin para smooth sailing ang pagputa mo? My God. And I thought the only whores in this city were in Poblacion.

**DOM**

The cheap ones, maybe.

**MISIS**

Alam mo. Maraming pulis diyan na gustong gusto mag-quota, alam mo ba? Ha? Dahil lang nandito ka sa magandang part ng siyudad na ito, di ka huhulihin? Ha. I bet you don't even think of those kinds of things. So sige, goodbye nalang, at thank you, puta ka.

*THE MISIS begins to exit. DOM moves to block the door.*

**DOM**

Shut up. My turn to speak. Gusto mo ng confrontation scene? Sige. Bigyan kita. But I'm going to say this as eloquently as I can, because apparently you think I'm an uneducated whore. One of those words is correct. So - sit down on my *semen-stained* couch, at makinig ka.

*THE MISIS backs away and sits on a piece of furniture. DOM procures a paddle and holds it as he delivers the following lines.*

I know women like you. All you care about is how put-together you appear, making as little contact with the dirty dirty poors as possible, and making sure your children grow up to be as greedy and self-conscious as you are. Don't you think he gets bored, listening to you talk about what your favorite priest said last sunday, and funding whatever charity makes you feel like you've contributed something to society?

You think you deserve things because you were born proper and lived proper and made proper choices. But all you are is lucky. That men like to hide behind women like you. Not behind like they're scared, behind like a mask. Di ka man lang trophy wife. A trophy wife would make your husband look cheap. Kailangan niya ng front na di masyadong maganda, kabog, mabihasa, yung normal na normal lang. Someone properly mediocre.

And you know, the two of us, pareho lang naman tayo. We both need his money. Well, 'need' is a very strong word for me- maybe I'm actually better off than you when it comes to that. My world doesn't revolve around him and his wallet. I want him, you need him. So. From one *whore* to



another, I suggest: Go to that church 5 minutes away, pray I die a horrible death, put yourself together, and go home. I couldn't give you what you're looking for even if you paid me to.

*THE MISIS takes a moment, then stands up, regains her composure, and exits, defeated.*

*(to the audience)*

Reminds you of someone, doesn't she?

### **Part 3: The Speculum**

*A slide that reads: “**The Speculum:** A tool used to dilate bodily orifices, originally for medical purposes. The device is used recreationally for erotic purposes, as well as for depraved purposes that involve forcing parts of someone open.” is projected onstage.*

### **DOM**

It's almost never about sex anymore. *Almost*. A little sex trade secret: Some clients are easier than others. Mababaw kami in that way. It's easier to be around some people, the ones who make you wonder “maybe we would've been friends if you weren't paying me to scrub your back with a toilet brush”, even if you won't admit it to yourself. Haven't had someone like that in a while. Not since high school.

I was looking for furniture (the kind to sleep on, not the kind to spank someone on) in Mandaluyong when I ran into *him*.

*A slide that reads “2012” is projected onstage. ANDY enters, looking around at the furniture, and DOM does the same. He spots DOM and crosses over to him.*

**ANDY**

Hello.

**DOM**

*(still looking at the furniture)*

‘Di po, ayoko po mag-avail ng condo ng Everland.

**ANDY**

Dominic Tristeza?

*DOM looks up and sees who it is.*

**DOM**

Andrew Joseph Chan. Junior.

*A beat.*

Hi. What have you been up to?

**DOM**

Wala, shopping for furniture, for my new pad.

*(to the audience, disgusted at himself)*

PAD?

**ANDY**

Ako couch. What are you looking for?

**DOM**

A bed. You know, To sleep on. *Not just fuck on.*

*(to the audience)*

I hate myself.

**ANDY**

Haha! Yeah. Good for you. Haven't used my bed like that in *a while*.

**DOM**

Why? Nag-pari ka ba?

**ANDY**

No. Married.

*DOM bursts into laughter. He stops laughing when he realizes ANDY isn't. ANDY points to his right hand with his left. He's wearing a ring.*

**DOM**

Oh. Wow. Congrats, ah. Married. A woman?

**ANDY**

Kids don't grow out of penises, Dom.

**DOM**

Kids. Wow. Wow. How's... fatherhood?

**ANDY**

I think of ending my life every day. The 3 of them won't stop talking.

*ANDY bursts into laughter & DOM joins him, nervously.*

**DOM**

3 kids? Wow. Wow. You're... very fertile.

**ANDY**

Maybe it's the wife.

*He leans close to DOM again.*

I'm saving up for a vasectomy.

*He bursts into laughter again. DOM joins, faintly.*

Well. Well, it was nice seeing you. Here.

*ANDY hands him a business card.*

My card. Incase you need a friend in advertising.

**ANDY**

What do you do?

**DOM**

Oh, I was an editor for a few years, but now I...

*(to the audience)*

Saklolo.

*(to ANDY)*

Work at a gallery now. Organizing exhibits. Yes. I'm in charge of the exhibitionism.

**ANDY**

Wow.

**DOM**

Yes. So. I'm going to continue looking for a bed.

**ANDY**

See you. And it was nice seeing you, Dom. Really. At ano, SpringLite mattress. Nagiging mas bouncy siya pag may kasama ka.

*ANDY exits.*

**DOM**

That was Andy. We used to fuck like rabbits, in high school, kung di mo iyon na-sense. We're... we have to talk about him.

*A slide that reads "1998" is projected onstage. Two chairs are onstage. DOM sits on one of them, popsicle in hand, holding it up to his eye. ANDY re-enters, a bandage on his cheek. He sits next to DOM. A moment of silence passes.*

**ANDY**

Anong flavor iyan?

**DOM**

Apple.

**ANDY**

Jelly tongue?

**DOM**

Mhm.

**ANDY**

Hanep naman.

**DOM**

(to the audience)

Very *hanep*.

**ANDY**

Fight?

**DOM**

Mhm.

*A beat.*

Fight?

**ANDY**

Mhm.

**DOM**

Sinong unang nanapak?

**ANDY**

Ako.

**DOM**

Good for you.

**ANDY**

Ikaw?

**DOM**

Sila. Kasi ano raw ako.

*DOM raises his hand, then goes limpwristed in a feminine manner.*



**ANDY**

Ah. Tama ba sila?

**DOM**

I'm not in the mood for another fight today. Ikaw?

**ANDY**

Just asking.

**DOM**

Same reason?

**ANDY**

Huh?

**DOM**

Do they think you're:

*He repeats the limp wrist gesture.*

**ANDY**

No. Sinabi niya na maliit daw ano ko.

**DOM**

Alam niya ba for sure? Baka cinonfirm mo lang nung binatang-

**ANDY**

Nasa CR kami.

**DOM**

Ah.

**ANDY**

But I dunno. Baka kailangan ko lang ng... second opinion.

*A beat.*

**DOM**

Maybe.

*A beat. ANDY extends his arm and rests it behind DOM's chair. He traces his finger on DOM's nape.*

Huwag dito, gago.

**ANDY**

Chapel. 5 minutes.

**DOM**

*(to the audience)*

5 minutes later.

*DOM & ANDY stand up, make their chairs face away from the audience, then sit back down. ANDY leans his head back and starts panting in a stifled manner.*

**DOM**

*(whispering)*

Whoever you hit in the CR was lying.

**ANDY**

*(whispering)*

Konti nalang. Malapit na siya. Marco. Marco. Marco. Polo!

*ANDY takes deep breaths and shakes his head. DOM wipes his hand on ANDY's back. A beat.*

**DOM**

By the way, I'm Dom.

**ANDY**

Andy.

*ANDY takes the ice cream out of DOM's hand, opens it, and puts it in his mouth.*

Pleasure doing business with you, Sir.

*ANDY stands up and exits, popsicle in mouth and fixing his pants along the way.*

**DOM**

Ours was a... friendship that lasted until we graduated high school.

When I graduated high school... it was a somber affair more than anything. I did the standard celebration with the family where they take their slice out of your “victory”, and your parents argue about whose brain cells you inherited, and someone makes an awkward mention of your sibling’s superior academic record, all of that, but the real celebration (if you can call it that), came at midnight at Anna’s.

*A slide that reads “2000” is projected onstage. ANNA & DOM sit on what to them is a couch in a dark room, the light of a TV flashing on them and a bowl of popcorn between them. They’re both wearing their graduation caps and watching mindlessly. Silence.*

**DOM**

Anna?

**ANNA**

Mm?

**DOM**

I'm gay.

**ANNA**

Yeah. Akin muna yung popcorn.

*A beat.*

Sorry, was that supposed to be news?

**DOM**

I thought it would be!

**ANNA**

Shet. But- I figured it out a few years ago.

**DOM**

What? How?

**ANNA**

We were the only boy-girl set of friends where the boy wasn't in love with the girl, so I thought...

**DOM**

You thought the only explanation for me not wanting to have sex with you was me being gay?

**ANNA**

Yeah. Labs kita, Bakla ka lang.

**DOM**

Akala ko naman ako yung mas self-absorbed sa ating dalawa.

**ANNA**

Bad influence ka kasi.

*A beat.*

WAIT. So nung sinabi mo na may "chix" ka pero ayaw mong sabihin kung sino... was that a lie?

**DOM**

Yes and no.

**ANNA**

Feel ko nga. Alam ko na di ka straight, but your eyes... they had the look of a boy who was getting laid.

**DOM**

Yung look na 'to?

*DOM puts his face an inch away from ANNA's and makes mocking orgasm noises.*

**ANNA**

Shut up! Huwag mong paikutin yung discussion! Sino boylet mo?

**DOM**

Secret pa rin.

**ANNA**

Dom. Alumnuses na tayo. Old news na lahat ng high school chismis at this point.

**DOM**

Fine. But you might not believe me.

**ANNA**

SINO, PUTA?

**DOM**

SI ANDREW CHAN, PUTO.

**ANNA**

Andy Chan? Andy Chan? No. No!

**DOM**

Sabi ko na nga ba...

**ANNA**

Nahuli siyang kasama si Nicolette Ramos sa 3rd Floor Girls CR noong Feb.

**DOM**

Kaya pala amoy siyang perfume ng puta noon.

**ANNA**

Wait. Wait. Di ko talaga ma-picture...

**DOM**

Ano kailangan mo? Polaroid ng tite naming naka-akbay sa isa't isa?



**ANNA**

Di ko lang akalain na-

**DOM**

Na may magkakagusto sakin?

**ANNA**

Na type mo pala yung Chinese.

**DOM**

Hindi nga eh. Gusto ko lang ng libreng tikoy.

**ANNA**

I bet masarap yung tikoy niya.

**DOM**

Ayoko lang yung itlog sa gitna.

**ANNA**

Bobo mo talaga, mooncake yung may itlog.

**DOM**

Oo nga 'no.

*A beat.*

**ANNA**

Do you think we wasted high school?

**DOM**

Ha?

**ANNA**

Wala. It's just... everyone around us seemed happy. Walang pake. Walang dalang bigat. Falling in love, pumupunta sa party, nakatutok sa MTV. And us? Nagbabasa ng Stephen King, nakikipagsex sa mga boys na lampake satin, whining about our parents to each other kung may extra time. Parang... ang lungkot natin. That's all.

*A beat.*

Kayo pa ba?

**DOM**

No.

**ANNA**

Touchy topic?

**DOM**

I... I wish nobody could touch me, ever again, because of him. Like I could live the rest of my life 6 feet away from everyone. Pero- At the same time, I wish everyone would fuck me until I forgot how he fucked me. Nakaka- Tangina.

*A beat.*

But I don't know, maybe- maybe I'm just unlucky.

*A short silence. DOM shakes off whatever he's fallen into.*

**ANNA**

Bad vibes.

**DOM**

Happy graduation.

**ANNA**

Congratulations, Puta.

**DOM**

Congratulations, Puto.

*ANNA exits.*

“Nobody could touch me, ever again, because of him” Kadire. Jesus. We’ll get there. Balik muna sa honeymoon.

*A slide that reads “1998” is projected onstage. MOM, ‘TAY, and ATE enter, and form a line upstage.*

**ATE**

A guide to teenage courtship. 9th edition, published 1998.

**‘TAY**

Ikaw laging mauna. Ladies first, oo, pero gentlemen always make the first move.

*ANDY enters, walks around inconspicuously, and whispers into DOM’s ear as he passes him by.*

**ANDY**

Meet me in the Boys’ CR at the basketball court at dismissal. May 30 minutes ako bago hanapin na ako ni coach.

*ANDY walks to the side of the stage, and DOM follows a few seconds after.*

**MOM**

Always be proper with her. Don't discuss dirty boys' talk or anything like that with her.

**DOM**

I wanna fuck you in the ass.

**ANDY**

I wanna fuck *you* in the ass.

**DOM**

Isa nalang yung condom sa wallet ko.

**ANDY**

Bato-bato pik?

**DOM**

Boring. Eto, hubad tayo, yung unang tumigas, titira.

**ANDY**

Utak mo talaga. Great lays think alike.

*The two of them exit, then enter from the other side of the stage after the following line.*

**ATE**

If she's not comfy with you, then make sure your date is somewhere public. Like mag-dinner kayo, or mag-bowling, arcade, ganun.

**ANDY**

I've always wanted to have sex in a public place.

**DOM**

Ano? Gusto mong kumantot sa harap ni Fr. Alonzo habang assembly?

**ANDY**

Hinde! Ano, sa forest, ganun.

**DOM**

Andy. Sa forest? Ano 'to? Friday The 13th?

**ANDY**

Horror movie ba 'to, o Bold?

**DOM**

I-shake, rattle, roll kita diyan eh.

**ATE**

If your friends and she trusts you, you can do something a little more private. Di sex sa kwarto niya, ah! I mean mag-hang out sa sala ng bahay niya, watch a movie sa cineplex-

*DOM & ANDY are sitting on stools. ANDY is miming giving DOM a handjob.*

**DOM**

Ang gwapo ni Pierce Brosnan.

**ANDY**

Gaano ka-gwapo?

**DOM**

Kasing- kasing-gwapo mo- o- ohfuck!

**MOM & ATE**

SSSSSHHHHHHHH!

**DOM**

*(panting)*

Sori.

**'TAY**

When you're both ready, at dapat alam mo kung ready na kayong dalawa, make it official. Sa panahon namin, ang tawag diyan 'going steady'.

**DOM**

Schedule na natin yung next?

**ANDY**

Sige. Next week, Tuesday ng 6 PM, walang tao sa bahay ko.

**DOM**

Birthday ng Mom ko yun. Di ako makakalabas, sobrang needy niya pag may special occasion.

**ANDY**

Ok. Wednesday dismissal?

**DOM**

Diba may practice ka?

**ANDY**

Gamitin kita bilang warmup.



**DOM**

Ok.

**MOM**

When it comes to it, anak, and this is very, very, very important - be the first to say "I love you."

*ANDY & DOM moan climatically and fall to the floor next to one another, having just come at the same time. MOM, TAY, and ATE exit.*

**ANDY**

Grabe. Tangina. Pucha. Fuck. Lahat ng mura.

*They both pant for a beat.*

**DOM**

I love you.

*A short silence.*

**ANDY**

I love your penis.

*A beat. ANDY exits. The lights isolate him onstage.*

Na-bad trip ako. Maybe it was shallow of me, but I was only 17, remember? I kept thinking:

Bobo ko talaga. Tanginang feelings. I was *unlucky*.

*A slide that reads “1997” is projected onstage. MOM enters, picks DOM up off the floor, and they sit like in the sequence with the car. She mimes driving.*

**DOM**

Mom? Asan tayo papunta? Mom?

*She stops the car, and parks it.*

What are we doing here?

**MOM**

Baba na muna.

*MOM walks around the stage, and DOM follows. Organ music plays, increasing in volume until they stop walking. MOM kneels, as if on a pew. DOM follows suit.*

**DOM**

*(to Mom)*

Mom, what are you doing? Is this because we haven't gone to church since-

**MOM**

Ssshhh.

*She goes into full prayer mode, head bowed and whispering her prayer under her breath.*

**DOM**

*(to the audience)*

We were at some old church in Manila. I wondered at the time if maybe she was going to have me exorcised - this was a week after I came out to the family. A week after The Echoist left us and a month before the new one came.

**MOM**

Amen.

*A beat.*

This was the church where your father and I got married.

**DOM**

*(to the audience)*

It was the most depressing gothic church I'd been to. Fitting.

## MOM

Don't tell anyone. Well, I've told your sister, but only her. Things haven't been good between me and your father. For a while now.

Your father... he's a man of his time. I had to tell him what you said the other day was just a joke, because you were mad that I told you you were acting too feminine in church the last time we went. And he made it into another reason to be mad, you know him, he's always mad. I can't... I used to understand. It used to be because of his job, and he wanted more money, for us to spend less of *his* money. But I can't understand him anymore. Every little thing, Dom. And he blames us for it. Blames me more than the two of you.

*A beat.*

Some people... they say they're unlucky in love. Sinungaling silang lahat. Those people, they're not unlucky. They're just... hard to love. They make it hard for people to love them. Because they think they should be worth it, all the trouble of loving them. But after a certain line is crossed, they aren't. Anything past that is just cruel. Some people don't know what love is.

And I hope you find that out for yourself soon. So you know just how wrong the way you think you feel is. I'm not saying you're hard, anak, but... you're trouble. It's easy to feel scared for you. You're always so lost in your own head and what you think is right because you think you deserve certain freedoms. But some things just aren't done. Just can't happen, and won't in our lifetimes.

I can only really pray. That your father, you, your sister will all change. God has to have a plan. That's why he gives you challenges and me, challenging people. Our lives have to be *good*, not perfect, maybe not right, but *good*. Some day.

*A moment of silence.*

It's getting late. May dinner pa tayo kasama ng mga tita mo.

*She stands up, walks, and returns to the position they were in in the car, DOM following accordingly.*

## **DOM**

That was the most honesty I'd ever get out of my mother. It didn't make me appreciate her the way she thought it would, but there was some understanding. I mellowed down after that, even though I didn't want to. I met Andy a few times after that, but I learned to tell better lies. At least until college.

There's not really a lot to be said of my time there. I read enough. Drank enough. More than enough. Fucked around enough. Anytime things got overwhelming I'd walk 3 streets north of campus and get ice cream, until I stopped.

*A slide that reads "2002" is projected onstage.*

They imposed legal restrictions on Echoism after these hearings, and total abolition of the practice a year after that. Congressmen have written and rewritten bills attempting to reinstate Echoism every other year since, but they've always wound up junked the year after. Most of this country had finally come to the radical, groundbreaking conclusion that maybe, *maybe* slavery is wrong. Not that it ever stopped our parents & theirs from thinking otherwise.

*DOM is at an ice cream kiosk. He mimes pushing on a bell.*

Hello? Tao po?

*THE ECHOIST enters, and points to where the slides are benign projected onscreen. A slide that says "HELLO! I AM A FORMER ECHOIST. PLEASE ALLOW ME TO ASSIST YOU EVEN THOUGH I CAN'T SPEAK." THE ECHOIST looks at DOM with recognition.*

Is that- Ikaw ba iyan?

*DOM grabs THE ECHOIST by the hand.*

Wow! Hello. Kamusta ka na?

*THE ECHOIST takes a flip notebook out of his pocket and writes on it, then shows it to DOM.*

Ok. Ok naman ako.

*THE ECHOIST writes again, then shows Dom.*

Order ko. Uh, ah, Jelly tongue nalang.

*(to the audience)*

Old habits die hard.

*THE ECHOIST exits, then comes back out with the ice cream. DOM hands him his payment.*

Alam mo, I'm trying to consume less. Not just ice cream. I'm trying to buy less books to read, go out to shop less, eat less, ganun. So that once I graduate from college I can just leave the house already. *Bahala na ako*, you know? I could live like a priest. A buddhist monk. As long as I'm away from there. That house. I'm getting sick of it. The same old. The... you know. I know you know. Mahirap lang- mahirap talagang sabihin, no? Just what's so wrong about home. It's like... I know everything around me is poison, but I don't know what kind, so nobody knows the antidote? I don't know if I'm making sense.

*DOM opens the ice cream and begins eating.*

I love this, but I can't stop. That's the problem. Two to three days after some fight, some sermon, we would always drive here and get ice cream. And then, it would be unspoken, but everything would be okay between us after. Sometimes I think, you know, maybe, maybe my parents didn't raise me? Maybe they bought me. Cones and clothes on my back and tuition. 20 pesos for a cone. Am I that cheap?

I'm graduating a year from now. Do you think that's enough time, to unlearn needing so much? Not just material things. People too. It seems like they're always trying to get me to open up for them, and maybe a normal person would, but I know, I know that they're just going to stick their fingers inside and find new ways to knot me up. Find new things to twist out of shape. And I know it's impossible to go through life invulnerable, like some stone nobody can affect, but I want to try. For my sanity. I just want to be the closest thing there is to untouchable. Do you ever-

*A beat.*

I'm sorry. Fuck. Sori na, for... unloading.

*THE ECHOIST scribbles on his notebook again.*

Thank you.



*A beat. DOM finishes his ice cream.*

Alam ko di ka na Echoist, pero- hindi ko alam... how echoists work, but... could you still put yourself back together, if you really needed to?

*THE ECHOIST shakes his head. He exits.*

*(To the audience)*

You might be wondering why I've been talking so much about some boy I used to fuck nearly 20 years ago. Well. After that meeting looking for furniture, I didn't make use of that calling card for a while. 3 years. Then I cracked, back in 2015. We met up, and started talking, meeting up every other weekend, like childhood friends who used to play badminton together, instead of with each other's cocks.

*ANDY enters, and takes a seat across from DOM. A slide that reads "2017" is projected onstage.*

**ANDY**

And she thought bringing Nica out dressed like that for Halloween was ok! I told her, if you're training her to think like that *now*, yari tayo pag teenager na siya.

**DOM**

Teenagers can do pretty much anything nowadays and get away clean. It would take a miracle, in our time.

**ANDY**

I know! That's what I'm afraid of. I'm less of a disciplinarian when it comes to the kids, but my wife, she's...

*Andy exhales. A beat.*

Do you ever think of having-

**DOM**

God no. It's hard enough being an uncle. I only see them three, four times a year but they cling to me. Because I'm cool Tito Dom, and I let them get away with having as many gummy bears as they want. My sister starves them of sugar.

**ANDY**

I always thought you'd be good with kids.

**DOM**

What makes you say that?

**ANDY**

I don't know. I've just been picturing it.

**DOM**

You're obsessed with me.

**ANDY**

Sure.

*The slide being projected onstage switches to "1999". DOM & ANDY recline, as if in bed together. Throughout the scene, the slides flip between 1999 and 2017 accordingly. For most of 2017, they are seated across from one another, and for most 1999, they're in bed. ANDY checks the time, and begins miming dressing up.*

**DOM**

We should talk.

**ANDY**

Bukas nalang sa grad rehearsals. May final meeting kami sa team

**DOM**

I don't think we should be doing this anymore.

**ANDY**

What?

**DOM**

Being... Fucking. Whatever we're doing.

**ANDY**

Is this because of when you said something to me and I said it about your... you know?

**DOM**

No. No.

**ANDY**

Then what is this about? Kasi you were fine the other day, the other night. 10 minutes ago.

**DOM**

Ok. Fine. It is about that. What I said.

**ANDY**

*(he sighs)*

It's not like I don't feel anything for you, Dom. It's just. You know...

**DOM**

I saw you, the other week. You made fun of me with *the team*. Yugn tanginang barkada mo. All of you pointed at me from afar and you...

*He does the limp wrist hand gesture.*

Did that.

**ANDY**

Because they were already doing it. The boys... will be boys. And you don't even have to worry about them anymore.

**2017.**

**DOM**

So your wife doesn't know about me?

**ANDY**

Mhm.

**DOM**

Now I feel like a dirty little secret. What do you tell her when we meet up?

**ANDY**

I tell her I'm out with...

*He makes a "quote unquote" gesture.*

The Boys.

**DOM**

Classic.

*A beat.*

**ANDY**

I never should have done that to you.

**DOM**

What?

**ANDY**

In high school. Treated you like that. Always dictated when we'd be together. I was a closet case.

**DOM**

We didn't know any better.

**ANDY**

We both did. We just cared about other things more than... us.

*A beat.*

**DOM**

Look at those boys you were trying so hard to be one of now. *Family men*, all out of shape but think they look like Thor. Waiting for when their daughters are teens so they can creep on their little friends from a distance to feel young again.

**ANDY**

If I gained 10 pounds I'd look like one of those men.

**DOM**

No. You're... you. And I doubt we'll ever look as bad as they-

**ANDY**

I want you.

*A beat.*

**DOM**

I'm here.

**ANDY**

No. I want you, the way I used to.

**DOM**

Andy, it's been that long. What we had when we were kids, maybe it wasn't what you think you remember.

*1999.*

**ANDY**

What do you want me to do? Mag-grand gesture? "Hola Pilipinas, I'm a big fucking faggot for this boy!"

**DOM**

Wow.

**ANDY**

I didn't mean it like that.

**DOM**

That's what you think I want from you.



**ANDY**

Ano ba yung gusto mo?

**DOM**

I- Know I don't want this. I don't want to waste any more time, feelings on someone who can't give back, even if he wanted to.

**ANDY**

But I do, Dom. That's what makes it so hard. I- I, you know.

*A beat. He sighs.*

**DOM**

You can't even...

**2017.**

**ANDY**

I want to be with you. Fuck what we were like as kids. We were kids. Iba na tayong ngayon. And I know I want you, the way you are now. The person I've gotten to know over the last two years. I want him.

*A short silence.*

**DOM**

You're married. With kids.

**ANDY**

Oo. Is that a problem?

**DOM**

No. It's what makes me want you the same way.

**ANDY**

Huh.

**DOM**

What?

**ANDY**

I... didn't expect you to say that.

**DOM**

I'm different from what you expect of me, I think.

**ANDY**

I know you are.

**DOM**

What do you mean by that?

**ANDY**

I know what you do. For a living. Yung totoo. I called the gallery last year, to see if you were there. They, well, they directed me to how I could contact you. And what you provide. And for how much.

**DOM**

I'm not ashamed of that.

**ANDY**

I hoped you wouldn't be.

**DOM**

If you're worried about safety... I don't- I don't do anything like that. Nobody even tries to touch me like that now.

**ANDY**

We can change that.

**1999.**

Dom, makinig ka nga. Don't shut me out. Stop.

*DOM begins to move away from him.*

**DOM**

Just leave me alone, Andy. Just stop trying to-

**ANDY**

DOM.

*ANDY pushes DOM back. DOM hits ANDY.*

**ANDY**

Fuck you.

*ANDY hits DOM back, and the two wind up in a violent entanglement on the ground, alternating between punching and wrestling the other down.*

**2017.**

*ANDY and DOM kiss, at first seeming to struggle with who gets to be the dominant partner, but DOM gives in. ANDY throws DOM onto a piece of furniture, and they begin miming sex.*

**ANDY**

I was right about the SpringLite, 'no?

*As he starts thrusting, DOM disconnects from him and addresses the audience.*

**DOM**

Don't look at me like that. Old habits. They come back from the dead, and live as hard as they die. Have I disappointed you? This is child's play. We're close, now. To the things I've tried to talk around. I just... I want to remember what this was like.

*ANDY finishes, then collapses on top of DOM. He kisses him.*

**ANDY**

I love you. I love you. I love you.

*A beat.*

**DOM**

I love your penis.

*They laugh, then ANDY kisses DOM, gets off of him and exits.*

I'm not a romantic. Obviously. You don't get into this line of work because you think your one true love's waiting for you somewhere down the road. This wasn't *Pretty Woman*. But for a while, I believed. Even though I hit him. And it felt good. I didn't regret it, ending it like that. And I don't think he did either. It was the right ending, even if it wasn't the happy one.

Other men do it. They always depend on some woman to be their happy ending. For him, at least. For her, that happy ending usually includes wifebeating, or divorce, or death. And death is the easy way out, hindi ba?

#### **Part 4: Kinbaku**

*A slide that reads “**Kinbaku**: The practice of erotic ropeplay, which originated in Japan. Involves the manipulation of rope via different knots and patterns in order to bind, restrict, or rig an individual for their own or their rigger's sexual pleasure.” is projected onstage. After that, a slide that reads “**2006**” is projected onstage.*

#### **DOM**

2006. I was still at that publishing job. I was suffering from that little depression everyone gets a year into a desk job. Not everyone gets it, but you should know me by now, I'm always looking for something to be depressed about. I was still living with my parents. Things hadn't been great in the house for a while. After Ate got married, Mom moved into her room. For a few nights, she

said. A few nights became 2 years. ‘Tay got fired- sorry, *redundated*, a year later. I was hungover, that morning, the day he... left.

*DOM sits, attempting to read a newspaper. ‘TAY enters, with a suitcase. He puts it down next to where DOM’s sitting, and proceeds to make a cup of coffee.*

**DOM**

Going somewhere?

**‘TAY**

To Pampanga. I’m going to visit your titas.

*A beat.*

May gusto ka bang sabihin, ipadala sa kanila?

**DOM**

‘Tay, I don’t know if you know this, but the only time I would talk to our cousins and titos & titas is if I wanted to end up drinking red horse shirtless and talk about how the meaning of life is molesting poor little probinsyanas when no one’s around.

**‘TAY**

Dom. Huwag mo naman silang bastusin. They’re family.

**DOM**

Are they?

**'TAY**

Ha?

**DOM**

Are they family? I mean, oo, genetics, sure. Magkamukha naman lahat ng mga ilong natin. Sadly. But was I raised with them? Do you think Ate ever traded napkins with- with... pinsan namin, si ano?

**'TAY**

Si Sabrina?

**DOM**

Her. The only time we ever saw them was on a holiday gathering you forced us to go to. Even Mom could barely hide how much she didn't want to be there.

**'TAY**

Eh, alam mo naman nanay mo, palagi nalang *ayoko diyang, ayoko sa kanila, ayoko na* - jusko talaga.



**DOM**

I don't blame her entirely. And that's coming from me.

**'TAY**

Anong... anong sinasabi mo?

**DOM**

Where is this coming from?

**'TAY**

Gusto ko lang naman malaman, Dom, sa tingin mo - what's so wrong about me?

*A beat.*

Wala ka namang masab-

**DOM**

You're... a man of your time.

**'TAY**

Ano bang ibig sabihin niyan-

**DOM**

You're a man of your time. And that time's not now.

*A beat.*

**'TAY**

Ano bang- Ano pa ba yung gusto niyo? Bahay ko ito. This is my house! Ha? Gusto mo bang damihan ko pa yung perang sinasayang mo sa- sa kung anong ginagawa mo sa mga salaulang bar sa gabi? Pera na lang ba ako?

**DOM**

Well, what else do you have to offer? Love? Affection? Some kind of validation? Or were we supposed to be the only ones to give that in this family?

Or was that the point of the money? Is that what you were *paying* us to do? Kasi, kung ganun, nobody ever discussed the terms, 'Tay. And you always act like you did. Pero alam mo, alam mo, tama ka. This *is* a family. But not to you. Sa tingin mo - we're just some bad investment. That's how you've always acted. That's how you've always made us feel so whatever you're feeling... lunukin mo nalang. It's what we all do.

*A short silence. 'TAY swallows his entire cup of coffee.*

**'TAY**

Mala-late na ako.

**DOM**

Ok. See you.

**'TAY**

...Sige.

**DOM**

Ingat.

*He exits. DOM folds up the newspaper and tosses it away.*

(to the audience)

*Ingat. Huh.*

The day after that, I went to a movie after work, instead of a *salaulang bar*. Dreamgirls. It was either I saw that or Shake, Rattle, Roll #69. So of course, pinili ko yung mas baklang option. I thought Beyonce might be able to pull me out of whatever I was feeling.

*The lights dim to imitate the lighting in a cinema. DOM faces the audience, as if he was watching a movie. The sound of a cellphone ringing. DOM reaches into his pocket, discreetly moves to the side of the stage, and answers.*

**ATE (V.O.)**

Dom?

**DOM**

I'm in the middle of a movie. Kakanta na si Jennifer Hudson. What's up?

**ATE (V.O.)**

I... God. I don't know how to- Ugh.

**DOM**

What?

**ATE (V.O.)**

'Tay's dead.

**DOM**

I thought you had to trade in your sense of humor when you become a lawyer.

**ATE (V.O.)**

Dom. I'm not joking.

**DOM**

He's in Pampanga.

**ATE (V.O.)**

Was.

**DOM**

What?

**ATE (V.O.)**

*Was* in Pampanga.

*A moment of silence. She's not lying.*

**DOM**

How?

**ATE (V.O.)**

They found him in their old house.

**DOM**

How?

**ATE (V.O.)**

Ceiling fan. He- he was hanging from- from it.

*A light shines on the noose DOM strung up at the beginning of the play. DOM stifles a laugh.*

**ATE (V.O.)**

Are- are you crying?

**DOM**

No. Laughing.

*'TAY enters, walking towards centerstage. And I Am Telling You (I'm Not Going) by Jennifer Holliday begins to play, increasing in volume until it overtakes ATE's line.*

**ATE (V.O.)**

...They don't want to bring his body back to Manila. They said he bought himself a plot in Pampanga. 6 months ago. God, do you think he's been planning to- for a while? Because last time I-

*'TAY, centerstage, lip syncs to the song. At first, he remains himself, stiff, but as the song progresses, he begins to perform the song the way Jennifer Hudson/Holliday would.*

*As the song continues, MOM, ATE, and MALE & FEMALE ENSEMBLE enter, huddled & carrying stools over them like pallbearers at a funeral. They break away and each take a separate place across the stage, and set their stools down.*

*As the song climaxes, 'TAY's performance becomes violent and cathartic, halfway between a diva and a man lashing out all around them. As he holds the song's final note, the characters burst into applause.*

*When the song ends, they continue clapping as 'TAY takes a bow and exits the stage, defeated. ATE breaks away from the applause and takes his place centerstage and prepares to deliver a eulogy. She clears her throat, and immediately the rest of the characters sit down on their stools. DOM remains standing.*

**ATE**

My father was a frugal man-

**DOM**

I'm going to be translating for you. My sister, at the old age of 12 had developed her own language, to say things the way a Miss Universe would, and the more fluent she got, the more savvy a translator I became. So listen.

**ATE**

My father was a frugal man.

**DOM**

He was a fucking cheapskate.

**ATE**

He was never too excessive, when it came to emotion, unless that emotion was a... passion for getting things done.

**DOM**

He didn't have a warm bone in his body. Except for when he was yelling at someone.

**ATE**

He was always generous under the right circumstances.

**DOM**

He was always generous whenever he felt that people were beginning to think he was greedy.

**ATE**

He was someone who always, well until recently, looked and moved forward, always wanting us to prosper.

**DOM**

He made it seem like if we didn't achieve the same level of burgis excess that he did, we'd be failures.

**ATE**

His legacy will be one of inspiration - inspiring family, friends, co-workers alike to always move upwards- forward... in... all parts... in life.



**DOM**

His legacy will be as a cautionary tale of what happens when the only thing that turns you on in life is capitalism. And my mother, at one point. Disgusting.

**ATE**

So, I want to thank everyone here who's attended, and those who aren't here who've prayed for him, thank you all for joining us in this celebration of his life. Salamat.

**DOM**

DING DONG, THE PIG IS DEAD!

*ATE awkwardly moves offstage, and the rest aside from DOM solemnly exit after her.*

**DOM**

It didn't take my skills as a decoder to be able to tell that what she was saying was different from what she wanted to say. Everyone at the wake was talking about it by the pancit. She's not the most *earnest* person. She's almost seemed allergic to it, at times. Other times, rarely, she made sense. She actually... understood.

*A slide that reads "2002" is projected onstage. DOM is studying on a piece of furniture.*

*ATE enters and walks near him, and knocks on another piece of furniture. She's crying softly.*

Why are you here? If it's not to help me with this fucking thesis, then *alis, peste*.

*She accidentally lets out a few sobs. Dom notices, but doesn't look up.*

What is it?

**ATE**

I passed the BAR.

**DOM**

Congratulations. Congratulations?

**ATE**

Yeah, congratulations.

*She continues crying.*

**DOM**

That doesn't look like a... congratulatory expression.

**ATE**

It's not.

**DOM**

I'm confused. Did you want to fail or-

**ATE**

NO! No. I wanted this, I've been working for this for years.

**DOM**

Then why are you-

**ATE**

Because MOM & 'TAY are happy.

**DOM**

...Yeah, that's reason enough.

**ATE**

I mean, of course, their child's a lawyer now.

**DOM**

And you find that... wrong?

**ATE**

Because... because they're fuck... fucking monsters!

*She gasps, as if those words escaped her against her will.*

**DOM**

...And this is news, to you?

**ATE**

Yes. It is. And yes, I know you've always felt this way, but... I always used to think you were just crazy. That you were just being a messy, ungrateful little shit.

**DOM**

Oh, I know.

**ATE**

Yes. And I'm sorry. God, knowing now... When we were younger, to you, I was always just...

**DOM/ATE**

A cunt. / Not that-

**ATE**

-great. What?

**DOM**

Nothing.

**ATE**

I want to be a lawyer, I've always wanted to be, but I just... since I took the exam, and I thought I wouldn't make it... it made me think, you know, how much of me wants this, and how much was them? And it just got worse, I just saw, every moment when we were kids that I felt they made me do or want something? And after that messed me up, it made me realize: I've done everything right.

**DOM**

Good for you?

**ATE**

Yes, but no, I mean... what if I didn't? What if I fucked up? What if I dated boys they didn't approve of, what if I was *a lesbian*, or what if I wasn't as smart or hardworking and-

**DOM**

What if you were like me?

*A short silence.*

**ATE**

Is everything just... transactional? Are all these... relationships we have with... anyone... are we just selling ourselves to make other people happy? Like...

**DOM**

*(to the audience)*

Like a sex worker?

**ATE**

-like... I don't know. Is everything just transactional? Dom?

**DOM**

No. I don't think so.

**ATE**

But for us... it is, isn't it?

**DOM**

Yes.

*A beat.*

**ATE**

And no way out, huh?

*A beat. ATE exits.*

**DOM**

*(to the audience)*

For another 4 years, we did. After the funeral, Mom migrated to the US for some job in Advertising. That's what she said she did but really, she was running from here. Running from everyone who saw her as the middle-aged shrew who made her husband so miserable he offed himself. Can't blame her. Anyone of us would have left this place if we had that same chance. But some of us settled for another way out. She was lucky.

*A slide that reads "2018" is projected onstage. MOM enters, hands DOM a gift bag, and he follows her lead around the stage.*

Mom stayed in Monterey, California - yes, like the meatshop - ever since she got her citizenship. Married some white man who probably ate potatoes raw. She redecorated their home every few years, for fun. I arrived shortly after the 3rd time.

**MOM**

Do you like it? They have real interior designers here, not just greedy contractors who think they have an eye because they graduated Interior Design. We had the couches reupholstered, I managed to fit everything else from Manila in 4 boxes. Goes to show how little I had before-

**DOM**

That cross.

**MOM**

Ha?

**DOM**

The whole room is nautical themed, and then that cross.

**MOM**

Yeah. It's not clashing naman, hindi ba? It's a teal cross.

**DOM**

Seashell, Seahorse, *PUMANAW KA, HESUS*, Seashell.

**MOM**

Well it's good to have something from home.

**DOM**

Funny. I thought this was Home.

*A beat.*



**MOM**

Mangingisda naman si Jesus, diba? Or was that an apostle?

**DOM**

I wouldn't know.

**MOM**

I didn't think you would. Considering.

**DOM**

*(to the audience)*

The bitch in me had to come from somewhere.

**MOM**

We have a guest room upstairs but we haven't unpacked all the extra sheets yet, so if you'll be staying here, you can go and-

**DOM**

No. I'm staying at a hotel.

**MOM**

Wow. And sino naman yung nagbayad para diyan?

**DOM**

A client I'm seeing in the country.

*A beat.*

I'm joking.

**MOM**

Please don't talk about those things here. We had our house blessed by Father Santino last Friday.

**DOM**

Buti nalang di ako sumabog upon entry.

**MOM**

Ikaw, ah. So, anak. Why did you finally decide to visit?

**DOM**

I brought a gift.

*He hands her the gift bag.*

**MOM**

Wow. I don't want to know what you had to do to afford this.

*She opens it and takes the contents out of the bag. Inside are a Nirvana T-shirt, Denim shorts, and a pair of sneakers. (This is the outfit DOM would have been wearing the night he came out to his family.)*

I... I don't think these are my size, anak.

**DOM**

They're not. They were mine, around 20 years ago.

*A beat.*

**MOM**

Well, it was nice of you to give me something to remind me of you, anak, but I don't think I can do anything with these other than put them in a box somewhere.

**DOM**

Don't you remember where they're from?

**MOM**

...No, I don't.

**DOM**

I was wearing that the night we were all on the couch, and I made a joke.

**MOM**

I remember now.

**DOM**

I thought you'd want a reminder. Of one of your greatest hits as a mother.

**MOM**

Really? Is that it? What do *you* want?

*A moment of silence. DOM walks around, killing time.*

We're both too old for guessing games, Dom.

**DOM**

An apology.

**MOM**

For what?

**DOM**

All of it. Or at least, most of it.

*A beat.*

**MOM**

...No.

**DOM**

No?

**MOM**

Your father and I- I was just trying to do my best. I don't know about your father, but we... what's so wrong about our parenting? You and your sister are successful. You live in a flat in Makati.

**DOM**

I live in a sex dungeon in Makati.

**MOM**

Ay nako, I don't want to hear this.

**DOM**

No, you're going to listen. What's so wrong about your kids? One of us beats people for money, and the other... God she's so afraid of becoming you.

**MOM**

What?

**DOM**

She... I've seen what she's like with Raya. She leaves her to the Yayas most of the day, but the times I've seen them together, she looks at her daughter like... like she's going to break her if she holds her for too long. Like she's poison for her.

**MOM**

Masyado mo namang dinadrama! How your sister parents is her business. Huwag na natin problemahin, ok?

**DOM**

As long as Raya winds up successful, with her own Makati flat. She can hold a gun to her head every night, considering ending it all, just as long by day, she looks & smells expensive.

**MOM**

Why? Is that what you do?

**DOM**

No. Not anymore. I have someone.

**MOM**

That Anna?

**DOM**

No. I have *someone*.

**MOM**

Ah. Ano, matanda?

**DOM**

No.

**MOM**

Foreigner?

**DOM**

No, Mom. I'm not like yo-

**MOM**

Married?

**DOM**

What?

**MOM**

Ah.

*Dom is silent.*

I'm still your mother. I know you. Did you come abroad just to tell me you think it's because of me, that you're now someone's mistress? Mister? Kabit's not the word but-

**DOM**

No.

**MOM**

Let me guess, 2 kids, 1 boy, 1 girl? I assume mas gwapo naman siya kesa sa tatay mo si, whoever he is.

**DOM**

Stop.

**MOM**



You always think- you think you can fix yourself with the boys you *make your friends*, the few times we met them, you made us feel like they were going to give you everything we didn't. But I think we both know, that's not what's going to happen this time too, Dom.

**DOM**

Why? Because I'm just some whore who makes more money than I should?

**MOM**

No. Some men out there are sick enough to accept that about you. No. Because you've always made it so difficult to love you.

*DOM is taken aback, and sits down on a piece of furniture. Silence.*

*MOM walks over to DOM and puts her hands on his shoulders.*

**MOM**

Sori na. Can we just move on, to some new topic? I haven't seen you in 5 years, anak.

*DOM grabs her by the wrists and slowly pries her hands off of his shoulder. This seems to physically hurt her, and she breaks away from him.*

Pucha. You come here, you bring up things that happened 30 years ago? Can you just stop this na? Whatever else is wrong with you, wala na iyon. You can always change those, but you- your problem's always that you can't forgive. You're always so sullen and bitter and you blame other people. But you're a grown man, a 35 year old man! You need to stop making other people take care of you for you! And stop blaming me, or your father, or your sister. This is still a family, at the end of the day.

**DOM**

You don't kill family. But we did. We did.

*Another short silence.*

**MOM**

Ayoko na makinig.

**DOM**

*(as if speaking to one of his clients)*

NO! MAKIKINIG KA!

*MOM is taken aback by this change in tone.*

You- You- You always talk about going forward, looking to the future, but some of us can't. Some of us are trapped! Trapped in the fucking past because nobody, nobody wants to take

responsibility for the bullshit we've been put through. Nobody wants to admit anything they did was wrong, so we have to feel like- like maybe all that pain being wrong, is a lie that we tell ourselves and the real truth is: we deserve it.

**MOM**

What did we do? What did I ever do? Did I touch you the way most of the people who do what you do were touched by some uncle? Did I ever starve you and your sister? Did I ever hit either one of you?

**DOM**

Maybe you should have.

**MOM**

What?

**DOM**

So we could have... something. Something to show how bad it was in that house. Because every fucke dup thing I've done because of it, looks like my fault. All those things I did to myself when I was a kid? My fault, apparently. But- You. You're clean. And all we have are a dead dad and a mother who never hit us. So look where we ended up.

**MOM**

And whose fault is that?

*DOM strikes MOM.*

What is wrong with you?

*DOM strikes her again, and again, and again until she's on the floor. Her aggression turns into fear & panic.*

STOP! You'll leave bruises!

*DOM stops. MOM is almost whimpering, on the floor.*

**DOM**

Bruises.

*A beat. DOM sits on a piece of furniture as MOM backs away onto another piece as well.*

I'm going to go.

*DOM begins to collect the items he put in the gift bag.*

**MOM**

Leave the shoes.

*DOM leaves them, and collects the rest. He walks away, and when he turns his back, MOM takes the shoes, and makes a labored exit.*

*The lights isolate DOM, and on one corner of the stage, he begins breathing heavily, as if he were about to have a panic attack. His breathing turns into laughter - a relieved, victorious kind of laughter.*

*A slide that reads “2019” is projected onstage.*

**DOM**

No.

*Knocking is heard.*

**ANDY (offstage)**

DOM!

**DOM**

Not yet. Please.

*The knocking grows louder.*

**ANDY**

DOM! OPEN UP!

*DOM takes a breath, and as if compelled to, mimes opening a door. ANDY enters.*

We need to talk.

**DOM**

I have a client coming in a few hours.

**ANDY**

We had a good night together the other night, yes?

**DOM**

Yes.

**ANDY**

Then you fucking call me last night telling me you don't want to do this anymore. Then you drop the call, no explanation. What was that about?

**DOM**

Di ba ako naging klaro? I don't think we should be doing this anymore. I don't want to do this anymore.

**ANDY**

Ayaw mo? We make eachother come what? At least 3 times, whenever see each other. Ayaw mo talaga?

**DOM**

Ayoko ng fuck buddy lang, Andy.

**ANDY**

Ok. So ano? Anong gusto mo? What? Do you want to be my husband?

**DOM**

No. You already have a wife. Let's not be greedy.

**ANDY**

Di ano?

**DOM**

You know what? Yeah, you have a wife. You have a family.

**ANDY**

And what's so great about a family, huh? You've told me how you feel and I felt it too. You fold yourself up for these people, and what? They expect it. They feel entitled to you revolving around them. Sabi mo iyan. Do you remember that night?

**DOM**

You're someone's father. Ako... I was just someone's son. It's different.

**ANDY**

Is it?

**DOM**

Yes. We don't get to choose if our parents and siblings are shit, but you chose to get married, you chose to have kids.

**ANDY**

Oo! Sure. Pero problema ko sila. Ba't bigla ka nalang nakunsensiya para sa kanila?

**DOM**

I... don't know. It just doesn't feel right anymore, ok?

**ANDY**

No, that's not just it, Dom. What happened?



**DOM**

Nothing- this woman came by, the wife of a client, went MMK all over the place-

**ANDY**

And what? You did this because a stranger-

**DOM**

And my mother. I saw her last year.

**ANDY**

Dom. You're a grown man. You're a 36 year old man. And you're letting your mother, who isn't even in your life anymore, tell you what to do. You're letting her affect a relationship that doesn't even inv-

**DOM**

I don't want any of this, anymore! I don't want to keep destroying things. Fucking things up for myself, and other people. Ok?

*A short silence.*

I told her. Your wife. Months ago.

**ANDY**

What?

**DOM**

I thought something would happen. But nothing has. Ayoko ng teleserye, Andy. She knows.

**ANDY**

You told her?

**DOM**

I thought she would have done something by now.

**ANDY**

Why would you tell her?

**DOM**

Because. This relation- what we have, we, we're- everything we do, that we've done, is because we regret everything since the last time we saw each other. And it's not because we had some kind of extraordinary first love, Andy. We hurt each other as much as we fucked each other. It was wrong.

**ANDY**

No.

**DOM**

Everything I do is wrong, Andy. And I'm getting too old to think that's somehow fun, or exciting, or good for me. I keep running from things, from people, and I've never given a fuck about who I've been stepping on - I found fun in *knowing* I've stepped all over people. I just want to do something right, okay?

*A beat.*

**ANDY**

Di tangina ko.

**DOM**

Now we can... both just move on.

**ANDY**

What?

**DOM**

Now you know what you want- what you *don't* want.

**ANDY**

You're fucked up. Gago ka. Gago ka talaga, 'no?

**DOM**

I'm just- Something has to come out of this, Andy. For at least, one of us.

**ANDY**

Who the fuck do you think you are to tell me what I'm supposed to think about this? All you are is someone's whore, Dom. So many someones.

**DOM**

No. I'm not theirs. It's the other way around.

**ANDY**

Sino yung binabayaran, Dom?

**DOM**

They don't pay me to fuck them, Andy. They pay me to, to feel good about themselves, I know you won't understand-

**ANDY**

Feel good about themselves? You beat them, you fist them, you tie them up-

**DOM**

Because some people love that. It might sound wrong to you, but-

**ANDY**

Love!

**DOM**

Yes! It's the only way they feel like whatever's happened to them can be fixed. Can be controlled. They love what I do to them. What I do for them.

**ANDY**

Because you're so easy to love.

*A beat. DOM suddenly strikes ANDY. ANDY retaliates, punching him again and again until DOM's on the ground. He takes a paddle from the rack and hits him with it several times. DOM struggles to hit back, and grabs the paddle, struggling to wrest it away from ANDY.*

**DOM**

*(Strained)*

God, I love you.

**ANDY**

I love you too.

*ANDY throws the paddle down, hits him with his fists again, then grabs him by the throat. He squeezes until DOM is rendered unconscious. He puts him down gently, with DOM's unconscious body falling into the position he was first seen in at the beginning of the play. He checks DOM's pulse, then wipes his hands off on a handkerchief.*

See you next sunday.

*ANDY composes himself, then exits.*

*A beat. DOM sits up, slowly.*

**DOM**

Well. Here we are.

### **Part 5: Saint Andrew's Cross**

*A slide that reads: “**St. Andrew's Cross:** Sometimes called the X-cross or X-frame. A piece of BDSM equipment shaped like an X onto which a subject is bound in a spreadeagle position, and sometimes rotated or stretched. Named and modeled after the crucifixion of the titular saint.” is projected onstage.*

*DOM gets up and walks to the position he was in when he began narrating the play.*

**DOM**

It's... cheesy to say, but you'll understand. I need a silver lining right now. Anything. I'm thinking. I'm thinking. Well.

*A slide that reads "2016" is projected onstage. THE SENSEI enters, coffee in hand, and sits next to DOM.*

**THE SENSEI**

Your apartment was nice. And your... office, reminded me of *someone else's*.

**DOM**

Really? I didn't want it to be an exact replica of your place, I even changed the color of the berkley horse.

**THE SENSEI**

Sure, but same carpenter. I'd recognize Mang Mito's cushionwork anywhere.

*A beat.*

I heard you haven't been working.

**DOM**

Yeah. Na-bad trip ako, 2 weeks back.

*A beat.*

We started, like usual, but then he suddenly decides he wants to switch roles. I told him no, he kept pushing, so I told him no-

*He makes a whipping gesture.*

Again, with force. He grabbed the paddle and threw it down, then he went to where his pants were, kinuha niya yung wallet niya, and he asked me again, and again, throwing a thousand at me everytime I said “No”, and he kept asking “How about now?” after he threw the money, and I was backing up, and I was against the cross when he ran out of bills and started hitting me with his wallet. And, may pera siya, dami niyang libo - it was a sturdy wallet. Leather. It went from playful jabs to slapping really fast. I realized - I was against the cross. Fuck. He could lock me onto it and do whatever he wanted. He could’ve raped then killed me if he was thinking straight. But he stopped. and while he was standing there panting, I punched him- I didn’t know what he did to make me do that-

*(to the audience)*

Except that I did. He put his hand on my shoulders and apologized, but not really.

And I punched him again, then I dragged, threw him out. First time that’s ever happened in 9 years of doing this. The Dealer said I was lucky that it took this long for something to happen to me. “*Some women - A lot of women in this business, DIE, you know?*”



**THE SENSEI**

She's not wrong. We're the lucky ones.

**DOM**

It's just funny. What do they say? *If you can't take it, don't dish it out?*

**THE SENSEI**

You know, in some cultures, some acts of violence are considered to be restorative acts.

**DOM**

Cultures like this one?

*A beat.*

Can't believe he got elected.

**THE SENSEI**

You can't?

**DOM**

You're right. I can't believe I couldn't believe he got elected.

*A beat.*

I have a client lined up for this thursday. Ube.

**THE SENSEI**

So soon?

**DOM**

The Dealer thinks I've been taking too long of a break. I thought, you know... I was gonna come back eventually. So I might as well do it now. I have to. I don't really know how to do anything else anymore.

**THE SENSEI**

You used to... do something, in writing?

**DOM**

I wouldn't go back to that even if 10 men tried to beat me.

**THE SENSEI**

Then why do you do it? Because you have a degree, don't you? You're not helpless without this.

So why keep doing it?

*A short silence.*

**DOM**

Because for an hour at a time, I'm the most powerful man in the world. No one can touch me. No one can tell me I'm wrong. I could be beating a woman the way only a husband could and still be the greatest man alive. Nothing else makes me feel like that.

**THE SENSEI**

And nothing's worth giving that up for, 'no?

**DOM**

Yes.

*A beat. THE SENSEI stands, taps DOM on the shoulder, and exits.*

*A slide that reads "2014" is projected onstage. ATE enters, and sits across from DOM.*

**DOM**

That painting in your home office. It's new.

**ATE**

Yes. I bought it at some gallery in Makati.

**DOM**

Montero?

**ATE**

Yes. How'd you know?

*A beat.*

**DOM**

Business.

**ATE**

I'm not going to ask.

**DOM**

I'm done talking, then. So. Why did you need to see me so bad?

**ATE**

Who said I have to-

**DOM**

You said you'd buy me lunch, and you know I don't say no to a libre.

**ATE**

It's the only thing you don't say no to nowadays. Right. I'm pregnant.

*A beat.*

**DOM**

Is it yours?

**ATE**

What?

**DOM**

*(to the audience)*

She was always a tough crowd to play to.

*(to ATE)*

Congratulations! Congratulations?

**ATE**

Yeah.

**DOM**

That doesn't look like...

**ATE**

Yeah. No. It's-

*She sighs.*

Do you think we're cut out for parenthood? Or, at least, am I cut out to be someone's mom?

**DOM**

The bar isn't exactly high around here.

**ATE**

Yes, but. A *real* mom. One who actually does it right.

**DOM**

I don't think we even know what right is.

**ATE**

I've been thinking - maybe it's simple. Just remember everything Mom & 'Tay did, and do the opposite.

**DOM**

No. God, no. Everyone thinks that. "We'll be better parents just by being the opposite kind ours were". All it does is make them a different kind of bad. Probably what Mom & 'Tay did.

*A beat.*

**ATE**

Well, I have 7 months to figure it out.

**DOM**

If one of us can, it's you.

ATE exits. A slide that reads “**2019**” is projected onstage.

*(to the audience)*

God knows I can't even figure out how to end a relationship without knuckles flying all around.

It's all... upsetting isn't it? You must be tired. I know I am. And it's not the... you know, bleeding through my ribs.

*DOM brings out his phone, and calls ANNA. She enters, staying on the edge of the stage.*

**ANNA**

What is it, puta? I'm grading papers on class analysis - it's rough.

**DOM**

Do you remember what happened between me & Andy before grad practice in high school?

**ANNA**

Dom, I've had enough of vague anecdotes for tonight.

**DOM**

Well, he fucked me up, and he did it again.

*Dom coughs. A beat.*

**ANNA**

Tangina, Dom... Are you okay? How bad did he- Are you alone?

I'm coming. I'll be there. Traffic lang ngayon.

**DOM**

Yeah, it's ok. Take your time. I just have a client coming in for an hour.

**ANNA**

Dom. You're not... you just got beat, Dom.

**DOM**

Yeah. Well.

**ANNA**

Dom! You could be concussed or-



**DOM**

Come by at 9:15. Ok, puto?

**ANNA**

Dom-

*DOM puts the phone down. He looks up at the noose, and steps onto the piece of furniture he stepped on to string it up.*

**DOM**

Maybe you think it's fucked up. What I'm about to do. But you heard me. It's all I know how to do anymore. I just... don't want to think. It's all I do, it's all I've been doing since you started listening to me. It's always the same. Me. Selfish me. Everything they say, just echoes. It's always the same. I just don't hear it until it hurts. All I am is just someone's, right? Someone's son, someone's brother, someone's lover, someone's whore, someone's.

What did I say about silence? Distance? Yeah. That's what I need. All I want. Maybe I'm everything they say that I am. But I'm tired of thinking, aren't you? I think I'm going to go do... what I was always meant to.

I see you looking at me there, in your Nirvana shirt, those shorts, those shoes we don't have anymore. Could we have done better than this? Yes. No need to think about it. I... don't know if we're ever doing this again, but thanks for listening.

*Knocking is heard. DOM grabs the noose and sets it down.*

**DOM**

Pasok.

*FEMALE ENSEMBLE (as Neapolitan) enters. She notices Dom's condition.*

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

Ok ka lang ba?

**DOM**

Oo. Yeah.

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

Ok lang naman, if you need to-

**DOM**

I'm fine. I'm fine. You should see the other guy.

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

I can resched-

**DOM**

Neapolitan. Nia. You really wanted to book me tonight, and I don't have another opening this month. I'm fine if you are.

*A beat.*

Cash?

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

Ok. Ok. Um, here.

*She hands him an envelope, and he counts the contents. He's satisfied, and puts it away.*

**DOM**

Alright. Ready?

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

Yes.

*DOM exits. FEMALE ENSEMBLE sits on a piece of furniture and closes her eyes. DOM re-enters, flogger in hand.*

**DOM**

PUTANGINA! ANONG GINAGAWA MO? SINABI KO BA NA PWEDE KANG UMUPO?

BABA, INDIO!

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

Opo, Senyor!

**DOM**

GAGA KA, 'NO? PUTA KA. ALIPIN KA LANG. ALAM MO BA IYON?

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

Opo! Opo.

**DOM**

ALAM MO NAMAN ANG KAILANGAN MONG GAWIN NGAYON, DIBA?

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

...Hindi po.

**DOM**

ABA! BOBA KA RIN.

*DOM flogs her, until she's down on the ground, crouched like an animal. DOM takes the noose from where he set it down and wraps it around her neck. He holds it like a leash. He sits before her, and sticks his shoe in front of her face.*

PAKINTAB.

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

Paano- Paano po?

**DOM**

DILAAAN MO, PUTA!

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

O... Opo.

*She takes his shoe in her hand and licks it slowly. He suddenly grabs her head.*

**DOM**

ABA! GINASGAS MO, AH! BUNGALIN KO DAPAT IYANG MGA NGIPIN MO.

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

Huwag.... Huwag po.

**DOM**

EDI ANO'NG DAPAT KONG GAWIN SAYO?

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

Paluin niyo nalang po-

**DOM**

SIGE. PERO HUWAG. NA HUWAG. MONG ISIPIN NA KAYA MONG SABIHIN SAKIN KUNG ANO DAPAT KONG GAWIN SAYO. WALA KANG SILBI, PUTA. WALA KANG SILBI KUNDI MAGING TRAPONG PAMUNAS NG TAMOD NG MGA PARI.

*He throws her down to the ground, and walks over to where ANDY dropped the paddle earlier. She stifles a smile as he picks it up. He stares at it for a moment, then stands behind her, jerks her leash, and she gets on her hands and knees.*

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

NEAPOLITAN!

**DOM**

Oh. I'm sorry, what is it?

**FEMALE ENSEMBLE**

Wala. It's just... you're doing great.

## DOM

Thank you.

NOW LOOK DOWN.

*She does so, and he spans her with the paddle. Lightly at first, but increasing his force with each blow.*

*As DOM continues to paddle her, he begins to tear up, degrading into a mostly silent sob. Dreaming by Blondie (or another song just as melancholic and assertive) begins to play, and the other characters enter and take positions across the stage, responding to DOM's whipping as if he's struck each of them.*

*DOM's sobbing begins to turn slowly into laughter. FEMALE ENSEMBLE moves away from DOM's whipping, but he continues just as if she was there, physically whipping an empty space. The rest continue to be struck until they're on the floor, crying out in pain. The music gradually increases in volume, drowning out the sound of DOM's strikes, his laughter, & their pain.*

*Blackout.*

**END OF PLAY**