

Project Gnosis

Arc 1: Cebu

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PROJECT GNOSIS SEASON ONE: MABUHAY/LOCATION: PHILIPPINES

CHAPTER 1 - Shadows of the Dead

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - NIGHTTIME

1

Narration: Fei

Darkness. Nothing but absolute darkness, as should be expected from an interior of a warehouse in the middle of the night. For most people, darkness is something to be feared for such fear is inherent in minds of all that live, because in darkness, lies the unknown. But for me, darkness is an ally that I have come to trust and rely on to keep me safe from the malevolent gazes of my foes. It is the greatest utility in stealth and a refuge for those pursued.

However, darkness can favor those foes that rely on it to trap the unwary, just as I rely on it to stay hidden. It can go either way on a mission like this. Enough musing, I open the creaky window shining light in the void.

I (FEI) descend through the windows slowly. I am no ninja but I try to navigate the large containers and trailers in the room based on the some movements from people I watched on YouTube. They practice parkour I believe.

I move up to an upstairs office and...phase through the door like it was a curtain.

Admittedly, such attempts can be exerting even for someone of my nature. I turn on the light, I can see myself in the mirror. Black hoodie and sweatpants and my face concealed with a bandana over my mouth and the hood over my head. I also have my tattoo.

My cursed tattoo. A skull head with a serpentine body.

Not much can be said of myself other than I am still here, despite everything. No rest for the wicked it seems.

(Fei rummages through different file cabinets)

Where is it? Hmmm...maybe not in these file cabinets. The computer desk perhaps?

Mission control gave me a USB drive which I put in the computer slot and type out the term: MANIFEST 64. A list of things reveal schematics and strange phrases listing dates, locations around Cebu, and names of Tagalog or Cebuano origin. The results eventually show that the file I seek is

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available but it is locked with a security password. Not a problem for me. I phase my hand through the screen. For a moment, I feel the rush in my mind the many combinations of the system until I see the one combo that works.

(beeping noise is heard) I retract my hand to reveal the file in open access. I download the file into the USB drive.

(sounds of inhuman howling are heard all over the warehouse) Something is inside the facility. Dim red lights started to appear in the darkness. Yeah, it's time to leave. I take the drive and run out the office carefully avoiding the attention of the lights.

Just as I was about to leave. I hear...something. (a woman sobbing from one of the large storage trailers)

(sighs) I know of the disappearances. The abductions. If the victims are located here... Should I? Finn won't be happy.

Dammit, best to be sure.

(Fei goes over to the source of the noise.)

There is a woman huddled by a corner of a pile of boxes. I approach her silently. I can tell something doesn't feel right. I look at her from a safe angle.

(The woman stops sobbing) She slowly turns to me and what do I see? A decayed face mangled with rotting flesh and twisted cybernetic implants. Her eyes flashes red on me.

That's new.

(Woman starts screaming like a demon infused with the sounds of AOL login dial-up)

Soon more of the same voices started howling throughout the complex.

Well I screwed up. And to add to it...(gunshot through flesh) a bullet trailed in green light grazes my jaw. (sounds of burning flesh) Snipers in the dark. Great. (draws a combat knife) A fight it is.

Lights of the warehouse turn on revealing a horde of ghouls, a cadre of undead enhanced with special implants.

(Fei turns to run for the exit but she hears more gunshot fire and tries to avoid incoming bullets and ghouls start chasing her still screaming their techno-growls)

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FEI

Sometimes, I really hate my job.

They are fast but, with technique, I easily evade them.

(Fei easily dodges their attacks, whether by slashing attacks, biting, even point lasers that were coming out of their red eye implants) Lasers out of their eyes? Very nasty hardware..

I continue dodging the attacks of the ghouls, but I notice a shadowy figure (ATE DALISAY) on the ceiling still shooting at me. Not much cover on my way out. Maybe I should? It would have alerted to my presence if I came in like that in the first place. But considering the situation, not much of a choice.

(Fei phases through the wall but she is blasted back by some greenish light that has been activated in response)

FEI

That's not fair.

I get up from the ground and frantically climb to reach the window.

I notice the sniper preparing for another shot from a distance.

ATE DALISAY

Nakikita ko ang target.

(Ate takes the shot and Fei's left arm shredded by the round)

Good thing I don't feel too much. I manage to escape the warehouse and run away through the industrial zone.

EXT. CEBU'S INDUSTRIAL ZONE - NIGHTTIME

2

(Fei runs until she finds a far enough hiding spot) Hmm, at least my jaw wound is no longer burning. And I see my arm is utterly mangled.

(She takes a spray bottle of ectoplasm to help it heal)

Okay, one. two.

(She readjust her arm so it would be easier to heal up and takes off her hood and bandana off)

Was being stupid, again. Great, Finn is going to give me such

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a hard time. (She attempts a botched Irish accent) "Reckless, Fei. Live for Reason not emotion. Blind feeling invites mistakes."

(She scratches her head)

Anyways, at least the manifest is recovered but I see things have turned complicated fast.

I'll have much to explain.

Such is the life of someone like me. Or is it unlife?

End of Chapter 1

Chapter 2 - The Werehorse Vigilante

EXT. THE STREETS OF CEBU - DAYTIME

3

Narration: Riz

In 2030 CE, Cebu, the second largest city in the Philippines, has its population doubled over the course of a few days due to the city's largest celebration, Sinulog, occurring this month. Banners of multiple colors can be seen hanging overhead on telephone wires and rafters. Many street vendors set their stalls by the road giving food, souvenirs, and much more to the locals as well as tourists. The churches are filled everyday with worshippers commemorating Sinulog to its patron, Santo Nino, a version of baby Jesus Christ in elaborate finery. I am not much of a believer, since my kind predate Spanish colonization, but I'll admit Sinulog is my favorite festival I did grow up here after all.

To humans, I would be considered pushing old age, since I was born right after the fall of the Japanese occupation. But to my tribe, I am considered little more than someone past the age of a foal. It just bothers me that they still bring it up once in awhile. I have seen much happen...just as much as almost everyone in my tribe. The Rise and Fall of many humans in power. Marcos, Estrada, the Macapagals, the Aquinos. Some were good. Some bad. But I don't believe my tribe can ever be at peace with their leadership, and so they are at odds with them.

The humans have fallen far from the times of their ancestors. Can't blame them. All the colonizers of history made the people of these lands lost to their past. They strive to pick up the pieces. However, you see corruption in governance, poverty in the streets, envy among families, prejudice to those that are different from the norm, and existential

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despair for those that feel like they bear weight of the world. They fight the good fight, but it is a struggle.

And the nonhuman races aren't actually fairing much better. We just only have a bit more self awareness of what's happening. But we are lost to the same vices as our human neighbours. Shit, getting myself depressed. Have to pay attention to something else. I manage to stop being deep in thought and snap back to reality. I watch all the activity from the rooftops, whenever I do my patrols.

Tourists flock to nearly all the places of interest. Some take pictures, their cameras making flash sounds. Others look in awe at the structures of old. As if you can call Spanish architecture old. Commotion from crowds of people can be heard. Announcements on radio can be heard from the REPORTER with news typical of this time.

REPORTER

Another mysterious disappearance here in Cebu; a 23-year old girl is said to have gone for a walk at around 8pm and has not been seen since. Parents claim their daughter would always let them know she'd be staying at a friend's house or run late. The authorities have so far refused to comment.

Ah, yes. The work of the aswang gangs of this city. They have been going at it for weeks now. The aswang are as much our enemies as they are to humans. Despite their reluctance, my tribe in order to court favor to the human government have been trying to help them out with their investigation. Unfortunately, they are always one step ahead. We need to find out what their endgame is.

Hmmm, I notice a young adult couple walking together down the busy street. They look like they are not from around here. I try to get closer from above the rooftops to eavesdrop. Not easy when you are hearing the Jeepneys, cars, and motorcycles from the busy streets.

GIRLFRIEND

Saan yung daan?

BOYFRIEND

Hindi ko alam. Panandalian lamang mula nang ako'y naparito.

I see the girl looking around and pointing to an empty alleyway.

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GIRLFRIEND

Eh, doon kaya?

Come on, don't tell me you are both seriously considering this. It looks empty. Obviously a trap. Perhaps, I should time myself how long this will take before a mugging happens.

BOYFRIEND

Hindi ako sigurado. I don't want to get jumped.

GIRLFRIEND

We aren't. There's no one down there.

The couple remain silent as The city sounds of cars and people in movement filled the void between them. I am honestly tempted to just look the other way for their blatant idiocy.

BOYFRIEND

(sighs)

Okay, pero sa palagay ko masamang ideya ito.

GIRLFRIEND

(starts walking)

Nasaan naba 'yong sense of adventure mo?

BOYFRIEND

(walks with her)

Getting mugged is not adventurous to me.

A sense of adventure? (scoffs) Now I got to see this. I see them walk down the alleyway.

Their footsteps crunch on the gravel for awhile and the boyfriend kicks a stray can down the alley. No conversation between them. Perhaps, they are trying to be extremely aware of their surroundings.

GIRLFRIEND

See nothing to---

Two figures shrouded in hoodies come from both sides of the alley. Not even two minutes and they get mugged. That is a new record. One of the FIGURES walks over to the couple and spoke to them in a guttural sounding voice.

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THE SHROUDED FIGURE
Hey Kapatid, Gaano kadami yung gusto
ni'yo nito?

He holds out something before him. Red dust in a plastic bag.
Hmm, didn't expect blood cocaine to still be dealt in the
street considering the clampdown the last couple of years.

I see the couple look at each other.

BOYFRIEND
No thanks, Hindi kami mga adik.

THE SHROUDED FIGURE
Ah, but this alley is our territory.
You want through? Sabayan n'yo na lang
kami

A click sounds from the other guy. Ok, so they are armed as
well. Bold for aswang to do all of this when it's not even
night yet.

GIRLFRIEND
Pasensya na. We will go back to the
street. Sorry to bother you.

THE SHROUDED FIGURE
(laughs in a bestial manner)
Mga kapatid, dito muna kayo. We can
have....so much fun.

BOYFRIEND
(moves in front of her girlfriend)
You leave her alone.

The figure takes off his hood to reveal his vampiric
features. Pale, gaunt with an evil grin. The sounds of his
proboscis tongue can be heard coming out of his mouth which
was on sideways. The other figure reaches out for the
girlfriend.

GIRLFRIEND
Lumayo kayo samen!

The hood of the other aswang falls off to reveal a dog-headed
man. Definitely a sigbin. Hard to tell if he looks like a
German Shepard or freaking hyena. Are hyenas from the canine
family? Wait, focus. Right, the muggers.

The boyfriend fights back in the struggle. One of the
monstrous thugs pistol-whips the boyfriend into the ground.

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Alright, time to go to work. Good thing I brought some vinegar with me. Definitely a weird weakness to most, but probably a trade off to their high resistance to bullets.

GIRLFRIEND

Help us!

As the monstrous duo manhandle the woman, I shatter a glass bottle to get the thugs' attention. A moment of silence happens until I throw another bottle right on the sigbin. It shatters on his head.

THE OTHER SHROUDED FIGURE

FUCK! It burns.

He howls as he runs around bumping into a trash can.

I see the other thug let go of the girl. She rushes over to the boyfriend, picks him up, and tries to flee with him, but not before they get a glimpse of me. My body ripples in flesh and bone, as I am undergoing my transformation to my true form. Cloven feet, hairy, bestial body, and head of a horse. They definitely sprint faster after they saw that. The aswang look above to try to see me. But they are much too slow before I make my move.

My vision of the world starts to collapse as everything I perceive turns into the warped void. Then everything re-orients itself back to the real world as I make a punch at the proboscis aswang. He staggers hard and falls to the ground.

Now the aswang see me. Tomas Augustino Rizal Dimasalang, or Riz, as I am known. A proud tikbalang, or werehorse. The sigbin burned by the vinegar regains his senses and attempts to shoot me. Before the bullet could come, the world warps again and I appear behind him taking out my rattan batons.

RIZ

((horse noises))

Nothing personal, buang.

I smack my batons multiple times at the sigbin's torso and head. The vampiric thug hisses and lunges out with elongated nails to scratch me. I counterattack by hitting both of them multiple times in a quick fashion. Just for reference, all my strikes with just batons can leave dents on tanks. They both fall to the ground defeated with some very noticeable bruises.

Asses kicked. Pride ruined. The proboscis aswang attempts to

reach for his gun. Not so fast. I take out some salt from my pouch aiming for the eyes. The thug screams as it hits his eyes. The touch sounds like that of seared steak.

THE SHROUDED FIGURE
AHHH!!!!

RIZ
I think you both should be going.
Gawas kung di mo ganahan og daghang
samok.

Both thugs **hiss at me and run away** into the darkness of the alleyways like rats.

I pick up the plastic bag with the red dust the thugs dropped.

I look to where the couple ran away and shake my head.

RIZ
Tourists. Thugs. And tenacious
tussles. My favorite things.

Then, I teleport away heading back home.

EXT. THE STREETS OF CEBU - DAYTIME

4

Narration: Fei

Hmm, Cebu. Very interesting city. Very much different from the cities back home. A mix of both old and new. Developed and impoverished. It's a city that lives in duality.

It is not only my first time in this city but also this country. Quite too hot and humid for my liking. I hear since this is January the weather is not as bad as the summer. I could only imagine. But I guess this keeps me from feeling chilly all the time.

I get off the jeepney and I walk down the street to reach a checkpoint that I was instructed to go to. It has long since been abandoned.

My damaged arm is at least recovering quickly. Too bad my black hoodie was ruined. Gotta use this red one instead. I still had a small scar on my jaw but at least it should fade away in no time at all. My so-called skin isn't normal after all.

As I walk, I could sense feelings of tension by all those

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passing by. A lot of undead have this ability to sense emotions. There's a science to it, but I wouldn't know much. I leave that to the experts.

It is natural for me to be avoided or ignored. They are probably assuming I was someone of a rather dark subculture. Being extremely pale with red eyes over black sclera tends to put people off. Because of what I look like, I didn't hold it against them. In a way, it was better for me since it ensures my missions go uninterrupted. Yeah....this is fine.

I **walked over to a bench** to check my smartphone looking for any updates from Finn. The only message I saw from him said this. They move after sundown.

Kinda wished he could be more specific.

A LITTLE GIRL sits on the bench next to me and plays on her phone. I could tell she is peeking at me before quickly looking away. The mischievous type I could tell. I take a quick glimpse at her before turning back to check for more messages.

LITTLE GIRL
You are very white.

I remain silent.

LITTLE GIRL
You also have funny eyes.

You'd think she would have better things to do.

LITTLE GIRL
Do you like to use a lotta makeup? My mom does too. She is like a ghost.

Okay, what's up with this girl?

FEI
You like talking to random strangers?

LITTLE GIRL
(nods)
It's always fun to me. I get to learn a lotta stuff.

FEI
Do your parents approve?

LITTLE GIRL
I hardly see my mama and tatay.

FEI
Uh...forgive me but I don't know what
a tatay is.

LITTLE GIRL
It means papa. You must be not from
here. You look Chinese.

FEI
(smirks)
What gave it away?

LITTLE GIRL
You just look like those kung fu guys
in the movies I watch.

FEI
Well I can tell you, I don't know how
to do kung fu.

LITTLE GIRL
Really? I thought all Chinese know
kung fu. Bruce Lee is awesome.

FEI
(chuckles)
Really? You like martial arts movies?

LITTLE GIRL
All the time. If I learn kung fu, I
can fight my bullies off and protect
my friends.

FEI
Is bullying a big problem in your
school?

LITTLE GIRL
(pauses)
A bit but only because they think my
family is...weird.

FEI
How so?

LITTLE GIRL
I shouldn't say. I don't wanna get in
trouble.

FEI

(ponders)

How about I recommend some good movies about some martial artists like Jackie Chan or Donnie Yen? Or maybe some martial arts films starring women like Michelle Yeoh or Zhang Ziyi.

Gotta at least give her something since she was so curious.

LITTLE GIRL

There are movies about starring fighting women?

FEI

I am surprised no one told you about Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. Even if it is too entry-level for my liking, I like it has female leads.

LITTLE GIRL

I should check it out. You are alright...uh...what's your name?

FEI

Well, I don't really like giving my name out but you can call me---

LITTLE GIRL

It's okay. I know faces better than names.

(chuckles)

I think my tatay is with some bad people. He says in debt to some bad people. He said to my mama that he made a big mistake, so he has no choice but to at least clear it by working for them.

FEI

Hmm...how would I know what he looks like?

LITTLE GIRL

Well, I look like my tatay. Also, he has a tattoo of a rose on his right arm. Also, I just noticed you have a tattoo near your eye.

FEI

Ah, this thing? The tattoo?

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FEI (CONT'D)
(points to it)
It's nothing.
(bluffs)
Just have it because it's cool.

LITTLE GIRL
I think it's cool too.
(checks phone)
I have to go home now. It's getting
late. My mama will be mad if I take
too long. It is nice talking to you.
If you find my tatay or papa, tell him
that mom and I want him home. We miss
him.

FEI
(smiles and nods)
I will. Stay safe.

The little girl got up and gave me something. A simple watch.

LITTLE GIRL
Give this to him. I wanted to give him
a gift even though he missed his own
birthday party.

FEI
(takes watch and nods)
You can count on me.

The little girl smiles and skips away. Hmm...that encounter
was a far more pleasant experience than I anticipated. Almost
too good to be true. I look at the watch. Looks simple
enough. Not sure what the odds will be in finding her dad,
but I will take things in stride. I put my hood up and
continued on my way.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHTTIME

5

Narration: Fei

(Sounds of multiple people talking and eating is heard here. Clangs of cutlery on plates, pouring of drinks, and the chewing of food is present. FINN MACCOOL, middle age look with Irish accent, gulps down some whiskey at the bar as he watches the television.)

Wonder what Finn, my mentor, is up to. I could only imagine
drinking at some bar while watching TV. Kinda stereotypical
for an Irishman to do so. He had a strange quirk in which he
bit on his right thumb. Something to do with receiving

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moments of inspiration. Kinda silly. But who am I to say that?

I can only guess he is listening to the news.

REPORTER

We are expecting this year's Sinulog to have the highest yield of visitors compared to the last 30 years. As concerns of disappearances become an issue to the authorities during this important time, Mayor Alfonso Ramos had this to say for comment.

(The TV image then switches to an office of the current mayor of Cebu, ALFONSO RAMOS.)

ALFONSO RAMOS

We are making quick strategies to accommodate the coming of many tourists from the Philippines and beyond for this year's celebration. And thanks to our benefactors, such accommodations are possible. As for the disappearances, the authorities are well under way into busting numerous gangs in what seems to a large human trafficking operation. These people will be brought to justice and the victims brought home to their loved ones.

And knowing him, he is speaking with Yazmin, our tech analyst and fellow agent back at AGON. She usually just communicates with us online since she hated going outdoors.

(Finn finishes **gulping down the last of his whiskey and sets it on the table**. YAZMIN AL-HAZRA, (only appears voiced/ young adult female with Arabic accent), communicates to Finn through an earpiece.)

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

(scoffs)

He may say that but good luck trying foil damned vampires or ghouls.

FINN MACCOOL

(nods)

Aye. Never could really rely on local authorities. They are a dealing with big fish.

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

I have contacted the division on the paranormal in Manila. Right now they have their own troubles dealing with aswang there. They are stretched out.

FINN MACCOOL

Right....

(calls bartender)

Another one, please.

(The bartender nods and gets ready for another one.)

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

Even so, typical security and police forces are hardly ever competent especially with the types of syndicates growing here. They are growing bolder.

FINN MACCOOL

Aye. Thanks for giving us another tropical country to go to. Couldn't stand being out in the cold like back in Kamchatka.

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

Hey, if I was in your shoes, I would be kicking and screaming to assign me somewhere in my element. You wouldn't catch me dead in fucking Russia. Just don't get too comfortable. It's still a field mission. I heard the situation here is no less volatile than when you were both in Brazil awhile ago.

(The bartender **slides a cold one to Finn and he gulps a good portion down.**)

FINN MACCOOL

Another mission in a warm country with unstable political upheaval. It almost rhymes like poetry. Wasn't that what George Lucas said about---

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

Don't. Fucking. Start. Because if you do, we'll be here all day talking about my love-hate relationship with you know what. I get angry just thinking about the direction they took

for my favorite franchise.

FINN MACCOOL
(chuckles)
Aye. Aye.
(pauses for a long moment)
I should probably check on our ghostly
lass. See if she has found anything
interesting in her ops.

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA
Knowing her, probably. Just tell her,
we make a move very soon on the
aswangs' base.

(Finn **slides out of the table and walks out** paying the
bartender.)

FINN MACCOOL
Will do.

INT. BATHROOM OF A SMALL HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

6

Narration: Riz

(Riz dumps the red dust from the plastic bag into the toilet. He flushes it down. He closes the lid and sighs.) Gotta get
rid of this. Too many painful memories caused by this
accursed substance.

I hear Tito. Great, (sigh), a lecture I presume.

(His uncle, TITO RICAR, middle-aged mechanic that is covered
in oil with a towel around his neck, looks at Riz)

TITO RICAR
We could have sold that coke instead.

RIZ
(shakes head)
No. Never.

TITO RICAR
(crosses arms)
At this point, mas maayo ibaligya
nalang kaysa kontrahon ang mga aswang.

RIZ
(turns to Ricar)
Og pasagdan nalang na madaot ang ATONG
kataw-han? Not happening.

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TITO RICAR
Damn it. First you play Robbin Hood,
playing dangerous games with the rich.
Unya karon, gusto ka mag yinigilante
kontra sa mga wakwak? Samtang gabista
ang imong ig-agaw dinhi?

(Riz remains silent)

TITO RICAR
I don't understand you sometime.

(Ricar walks over to Riz)

TITO RICAR
Riz, at least try not to do something
reckless while your cousin is here,
okay? Let our brothers handle them.

RIZ
(sighs in an almost horse-like way)
It might be too late by then. The
Sinulog parade is happening soon. What
if they are planning something big,
Tito? We have no idea where they
operate. And as soon we come, they
disappear.

TITO RICAR
Kung adunay mahitabo, make sure she is
safe. Bahala'g kana lang jud.

RIZ
(slight horse sounds)
Okay. Sige, I will try to let her
enjoy her time here.

TITO RICAR
Do that and I will let you drive, Lola
Maria.

RIZ
(raises brow)
That old pile of junk?

TITO RICAR
(lightly punches Riz's arm)
Bugok, she's the finest Dyipni that
has ever to have existed. You'll see
once I fix her up.

RIZ
(smirks)
Bahala ka dira.

Maria, eh? As much as I hate to admit it, Maria is kinda badass. Tito told me, she could outrun even pimped out hot rods, despite being a Jeepney. I mean she looks a hunk of stupid, over decorated junk. But Tito proved me once or twice not to underestimate campy stuff.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF A SMALL HOUSE

7

I **walk out** of the bathroom only to be jumped in surprise by REYNA, my cousin. She has her trademark moon necklace on her. People could also recognize Reyna easily by her heterochromia. One eye was blue. The other gray. She's also pretty badass herself. Graduated in the top of her class in the States. A champion in multiple women's sports as well as intellectual competitions. A large friend circle. Someone that is far more successful in life than me. But I feel blessed that she is the only one in my extended family that is willing to give me the time of day, aside from Tito.

REYNA
Viva, Pit Senyor!

RIZ
(laughs)
Not bad. Perhaps, soon you will be fluent in Tagalog or even Cebuano in no time.

REYNA
(giggles)
Nah, not even close. I feel like I am a bit too American.

RIZ
(shrugs)
Never too late, Rey. Once Pinay, always Pinay.

REYNA
(smiles)
Salamat.
(giggles)
That was okay?

RIZ
Yes, yes! See you are well on your way. I hope my home isn't too poor for

you. Tito Ricar and I are getting by,
but times are hard.

REYNA
(leans on Riz)
Riz, you know I don't care about any
of that.

RIZ
I know your family thought I looked
like a panhandling pulubi.

REYNA
(groans)
C'mon, don't be like them. I came
because I love my home. My real home.
America is...fine, but there is
something magical about this place,
the people, the culture.

RIZ
Really? Having lived here all my life,
things tend to be dull here.

REYNA
Regardless if that is true or not, my
roots are here.
(shrugs)
Won't have it any other way.

RIZ
Even with all the disappearances going
on?

REYNA
The bad exists, but so does the good.
Everything rights itself eventually.

RIZ
(smiles)
Always with the optimism. C'mon what
do you want to watch?

(Riz takes the remote to **turn on the TV.**)

REYNA
How about a corny soap opera?

RIZ
(snorts)
We have plenty of those.

20.

(Riz and Reyna watch the TV.) Man, do I hate watching them. But it's fun when she and I make fun of the crazy editing in those shows. Like seriously, you don't need to zoom in every damn time just to show how shocked a character is. Nakakatawa!

INT. IN AN ABANDONED ROOM - NIGHTTIME

8

Narration: Fei

It is very late at night. Barely anyone is present in the street. The **sounds of crickets chirping can be heard throughout the area.**

I look at the USB drive I have in my possession and then I look outside from an abandoned room to see any weird activity in the streets. I see Finn texted me something. It said: (Begin operation). (After a brief pause, she says to herself.)

FEI
我想我应该去下一站。
(Wǒ xiǎng wǒ yīnggāi qù xià yí
zhàn.)
Let's see if this TV is functional
enough.

(She **walks over to TV in the room and lays her hand** on it.)

EXT. THE STREETS OF CEBU - NIGHTTIME

9

Narration: Fei

Trash lay around the streets. A broken TV lay on a pile of trash.

Usually, I am not keen in traversing my world. But if I am to cover more ground, best to make most of my abilities.

(The **TV then turns itself on with the sound of static being heard.**)

When one encounters me coming out of TVs, they usually first see my hand coming out from the lost haze of the image.

(The **TV is shaking violently until a full body rattles out** of the screen.)

Then my hair which is covering my face appears. Once I crawl out, usually, the **TVs explodes and becomes junk.** Yes, I know the reference. No, I don't care to hear it.

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(Fei retches and vomit up some ectoplasm on the ground.)

Oh yeah, the vomiting. You would too if you go through some warped afterlife in the airwaves.

(She stands up and **groans**.) I tie my hair in a ponytail.

FEI
我永远也不会习惯。
(Wǒ yǒngyuǎn yě bù huì xíguàn)

I have been gone from home for so long, I thought more in English than in Mandarin. But I do try to say something just so I don't forget my original language.

(A young American male, JIM, speaks from behind her. He wears a a large baseball cap and large sunglasses, which was peculiar to wear at night.)

JIM
Gonna clean your mess up?

(Fei is startled and **jumps back** from Jim. She looks at him silently but her expression gives away her astonishment.)

I am usually good at sensing people nearby. Am I being careless? From the looks of it, he is definitely out of place. A purple polo shirt, beige khakis, a large baseball cap, and....sunglasses? An American tourist perhaps?

The man raises his hands in an effort to look assuring.

JIM
(speaks in an assuring manner)
Hey, hey, hey. Easy. I'll admit you caught me off-guard too when I was taking a stroll.

(Fei remained silent.)

JIM
I can't imagine coming out of the TV is rather comfortable.

I shouldn't panic, but I am getting very weird vibes from this man.

JIM
I mean I would too if I had to crawl my fatass out of anything short of a

plasma screen.

FEI

Uh....

JIM

(smiles)

No worries I won't say anything. You being here I mean.

FEI

Who are you exactly? You definitely don't look like a native.

JIM

Just a hapless tourist. I'll admit I am a bit lost.

I look around to see if there was anyone besides us.

FEI

Isn't it a little dangerous for a tourist like you to be wandering alone at night?

JIM

Well...

(rubs neck)

...yeah. I won't dispute that. Was sightseeing all day. Taking in the beauty of this city. I take it you don't live here.

FEI

(shakes head)

No.

JIM

Fair enough.

FEI

(thinks internally)

Why am I even talking to him? Why am I even letting my guard down? Why isn't he freaked out by me? It's definitely some trap.

(speaks)

So who do you work for?

JIM

(shakes head)

Would it surprise you that I am a
manager within a construction company
back home?

FEI

You seeing me is a risk for myself.
Don't you think I should do something
about you?

JIM

(raises hand)

Not at all, my pale friend.

FEI

I am not your friend.

JIM

Maybe not now.

(makes a shit-eating grin)

But you will be.

FEI

(crosses arms)

That doesn't take away that I can't
just allow someone that claims to be a
tourist to---

JIM

I think you have better things to do
than deal with a tourist. Like finding
the aswang.

I say nothing. But I feels like I am giving myself away even
when I remained silent.

JIM

Their operation is starting in...

(checks phone)

30 minutes.

FEI

You are definitely not a tourist.

JIM

(shrugs)

You gonna check it or not?

FEI

At this point,

FEI (CONT'D)
(pauses)
to hell with it.

I **turn away** from him to follow the lead that he mentioned. I have a feeling I will have to deal with him later; I don't think it would be wise to be around him any longer than I need to be.

I don't see him smile, but I have a feeling he is doing so behind me. And it would be the type of smile that can pierce even the most stoic of people.

End of Chapter 2

Chapter 3 - Maneater

INT. ASWANG BASE - NIGHTTIME

10

Narration: Fei

The room is full of abandoned TVs and other electrical equipment. A group of Aswangs are watching a working TV seeing a debate based in Manila in the government where two politicians are in an argument over some matter involving a corporation. An ASWANG WITCH and a HUMAN THUG sit together closely seeing what may impact the whole of the Philippines.

Even though the aswang are monsters, they do have humans that ally with them, whether through greed, opportunity, or coercion. Usually the latter.

(A REPORTER VOICE makes an announcement.)

REPORTER VOICE
Kasalukuyang mayroong debate kasama si Jose Garza at Juan Reyes tungkol sa mga papel na ginagampanan at mga plano sa pag-unlad ng Pinnacle para sa konstruksyon at imprastraktura ng Maynila. This may impact the initiative to pass the bill to give Pinnacle more resources in---

ASWANG WITCH
Hay, jusko, ito no naman.

HUMAN THUG
Let's just see what they have to say.

(JOSE GARZA makes the opening argument.)

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JOSE GARZA

Senator Reyes, Magnus' projects have revitalized the economy and cut down the unemployment rate by half in 5 years. To not pass this initiative would go contrary to the values we stand for to ensure na lahat ng Pilipino ay may magandang kinabukasan.

(JUAN REYES counteracts the argument.)

JUAN REYES

With all due respect, Garza, ang pagbibigay ng higit pang mga konsesyon kay Magnus at sa Pinnacle sa magpapalakas ng kanilang impluwensya sa buong bansa. There is always a price when you allow such powerful entities like these companies to go rampant in our society. Do you not remember how much we sacrificed to end foreign interference in our affairs?

JOSE GARZA

They already transformed half of Asia with groundbreaking technologies. We have to compete, o maiiwan tayo sa ere.

JUAN REYES

I won't deny that. But look how powerful they have become. We will be at their mercy. Hindi sila aalis. I would go as far to say a lot of their policies are close to neo-colonialism.

JOSE GARZA

(scoffs)

mga korporasyon bilang mga colonizer? Sinisiguro ko sa iyo na--

JUAN REYES

Look at what happened in history. Like in the Congo for example. We must at least limit foreign control in these projects.

JOSE GARZA

But the nanotech used to build these skyscrapers---

JUAN REYES

(slams podium)

That's exactly what I am afraid of.
They have control of that tech. Alam
nating lahat na maaari nilang itigil
ang konstruksyon ng parehong
teknolohiyang na ginamit nila upang
itayo ang mga ito. Holding the country
hostage.

(A huge commotion can be heard from the overall national legislature.)

JUAN REYES

We let them go too far. NO MORE TO
THIS CORPORATE IMPERIALISM!

(Arguments start blaring out from numerous politicians over the debate causing disruption.)

The Aswangs continue to watch the mess on TV unfold.

HUMAN THUG

I'll admit, Reyes is bold but he will
definitely be pushed aside. Tiyak na
makakahanap ng paraan ang Pinnacle
para mapahiya siya.

ASWANG WITCH

Or have him killed.

HUMAN THUG

(looks at the witch)
They wouldn't be so obvious, right?

ASWANG WITCH

(shrugs)
A politician from Davao disappeared
after he openly denounced Pinnacle's
operations in Mindanao. Everyone down
there knows they are responsible, but
what are they gonna do? Wala.

HUMAN THUG

(nods)
A shame. Fucking Corp shitting on the
rest of us. So about the shipment...

ASWANG WITCH

Ate Dalisay wants them moved in a few
minutes. We can't keep our client

waiting.

HUMAN THUG

(nods to the rest of the group)

Sige, oras na para umalis.

One of the thugs attempts to turn off the TV. I make my move. I use my **hand to reach out through the screen grabbing the him by the collar. Then I pull him with all my strength slamming his head at the TV knocking him out.** This alerted the rest.

(The others are **quick to draw their weapons and shoot at the TV.**)

After they stop unloading, they still aim at the TV seeing if there is any other activity. (They **walk closely but cautiously** to check.)

Soon, other **TVs start turning on randomly in the room.** Deception and misdirection are usually my favorite tactics.

I quickly **crawl out of one of them nearby a thug and threw up ectoplasm at his face causing him to recoil. I quickly punched him before finding cover from more gunshots.**

The witch points at my direction for the others.

ASWANG WITCH

Butangi ang iyang kilid.

The aswangs and their human thug allies move to surround my position. (**gunshots are heard**) I **phase** through the TVs to run away from the group. The witch **telepathically threw one of them from the pile at me. I jump through the screen and disappear as the thrown TV hits one of the aswang in the face knocking him out.**

The mob look around to see where I was.

Unfortunately for one of the thugs, he gets close to a group of abandoned stereos. Time for some rock music. (**which suddenly blared out extremely loud rock music disorienting the thug and causing him to close his ears in pain.**) I appeared from behind the stereos and **knocked him out with a boom box.** (More of the mob **shoots at Fei. She runs across the room.**) Some bullets **graze me. I had to hold my side before I regenerate.** The qi present in this room is off, but enough I can take in the flow to allow to use my powers.

Some aswangs with **claws, maws, and melee weapons try to**

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charge at me. I attempt to **dodge with moves that one can see from capoeira,** something I learned when Finn and I were in Brazil awhile ago. I **drew a combat knife and slashed** at the two aswangs that were attacking me.

They attempt to counter my attacks but are inflicted with some light wounds. They pull back with the two human thugs as the **witch shot her magic at me.** I **contorted my body as I try to dodge more bullets and magic missiles.**

The witch meets with the wounded aswangs and **licks their wounds healing them.** Very odd way to mend wounds.

One of the thugs **drops his gun** and reaches for something in a nearby bag. An RPG. (He aims it at Fei.)

FEI

真的?

(Zhēn de)

(The thug **fires the rocket propelled grenade.**) With quick timing, I *take a TV and hold it in front of me.* The **TV turns on with white noise on the screen and the RPG disappears into the static world within.**

For a small moment, there is pause in the action. I bet they didn't see that coming.

The human thug lowers his gun and looks to the witch.

The witch looks at the thug.

ASWANG WITCH

What are you staring at? Kill her n--

One of the TVs **suddenly turned on with the RPG appearing out of the static abyss going straight for the witch and the other two aswang.** (blasting her along with the other two aswang close by in an explosion.)

As the smoke cleared, I could see that almost everyone in this group is downed or possibly dead, if that RPG blew that witch up. I can not only bring objects into the Static Realm but also people. I could have dragged anyone of these thugs in. But, I won't. That part of the past is behind me. It would have to be some dangerous individual to force my hand.

Despite what I am, I try not to be a killer. It's better whenever possible to subdue not terminate my opponents. I hope that I didn't end up killing the witch. However, I heard

her kind are tough enough to withstand serious damage. An RPG in this case is good enough to down them. Kill them though? Hard to say at the moment.

I see one of the conscious thugs **run away downstairs**. I would pursue him but something caught me off guard.

I stand in front of the Human thug that remains. He **drops his gun** and raises his hands out.

HUMAN THUG

I...I surrender.

I notice that the thug looks rather familiar to the girl I met earlier. And, of course, he had a rose tattoo on his right arm. Coincidence? Doesn't matter. I will take this opportunity if it works in my favor.

The thug looks at the fallen.

FEI

Where are they?

HUMAN THUG

Look, they will kill me if I snitch.

(Fei remains silent.)

HUMAN THUG

You will kill me if I don't tell?

FEI

(shakes head)

No.

HUMAN THUG

(sighs)

Oh...thank you.

FEI

It would be easier if you told me for your family's sake.

The thug's eyes widens.

FEI

We know who you are.

A sort of bluff, which easily works. The thug **kneels down** pleading to me.

HUMAN THUG

Look just don't hurt them.

FEI

I only mention them because I don't think it would be fair to them to grow up without a dad.

I walk over and lays my hand on his shoulder and give him the girl's watch.

FEI

Your family will be protected. I promise.

HUMAN THUG

(tears up and nods taking the watch)

Basement. Fourth door. Combination 2548.

FEI

Thank you. Go to them.

Sniffing, the thug **stands up**. I nod to him and he nods back. **(He runs away.)**

One of the aswang groans and reaches for his gun when a **spear pierces from the ceiling and impales the aswang's hand**. (The aswang **cries in pain as the spear disappears**.) I could hear the **footsteps of someone familiar**.

Finn **walks over** to me and shakes her head. Disapproval? Naturally.

FINN MACCOOL

Lass, what did I say about giving promises that we can't possibly keep?

FEI

I was only bluffing so he can tell me the location.

FINN MACCOOL

Yet, you also let him go.

FEI

You said everyone deserves a second chance. I'd rather not have someone resent us because we took someone's dad away.

31.

FINN MACCOOL
That's not up to us. Look, I get it.
It's not easy, but you must know we
can't help everyone.

FEI
You helped me, remember?

FINN MACCOOL
(guffaws)
Aww, it's because you were foolish
then. Shite, you are being foolish now
letting suspects go.

FEI
Then, I'll be foolish and proud of it.

FINN MACCOOL
(sighs, scratches head, and pauses)
We'll talk about this later.
C'mon...let's find the captives.

I'll admit as we leave the room, I feel a bit embarrassed
about what I said. Foolish and proud of it? It sounded so
much better in my head.

INT. ASWANG BASE BASEMENT - NIGHTTIME

11

Narration: Fei

I **enter the code given to me** by the thug and **opened the door**
revealing a group of men and women of different ages locked
inside. They looked like they were stuck here for days
considering how haggard they looked. At first, they seem
scared to come close to me due to my appearance. However,
they slowly show gratitude to me by bowing or hugging me.
Some were crying and thanking us from being through that
horrible ordeal. It was not needed, but it was a bit of a
welcome change from earlier. Finn helps those too weak to
leave by helping them up. We slowly but surely helped
everyone out of the basement.

EXT. OUTSIDE ASWANG BASE - DAYTIME

12

Narration: Fei

Dawn rises over **Cebu as a special task force consisting of
medical workers and police aware of the secret world,
complements from AGON, treated the victims from the
abductions with intensive care.** The human thugs and the
aswang gang members are taken into custody, though I am

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curious how much the authorities will treat them afterwards. I notice the witch survived but is in intensive care. That eases my guilt a bit more. Finn and I watch an image of Yazmin speak to us through a screen.

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

So let's get over this. You got the manifest. You also got attacked by cyborg zombies?

FEI

Well, I am not sure how to describe them any other way. I know they shot lasers at me.

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

Great. As if this whole mission wasn't complicated enough. Romero zombies, fine. 28 Days Later Ragers, okay but pushing it. Zombies that can shoot lasers? That is definitely not the work of a virus or some stupid necromantic curse.

FINN MACCOOL

I don't understand what is the aswangs' end goal. They usually target certain types of people in few quantities for specific reasons. Now they are doing it with wild abandon. Seems to me they are quite the chancers going about it this way.

FEI

I asked the captives if they overheard anything after we released them. But they told me they were going to be sent to the harbor last night.

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

Til' you decided to crash the party.

FEI

Well...I wouldn't say that is a bad thing. I gave you time to send the task force here.

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

(agitated)

I had to cover your ass with the higher-ups. Explain away why you

didn't wait for us before we made a move. AGON is already trying to help the local government sort out the NDAs and settling with the victims and their families to make sure word doesn't get out that fucking monsters and ghouls exist. We really don't need more complications.

FINN MACCOOL

You have to admit...
(puts hand on Fei's shoulder)
...she made the right call. It bought us time.

I smiled at Finn's comment, but remained silent on the detail regarding my strange encounter with the American, if he was American.

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

Fei, could you have just snuck into their basement and phased all the captives out without having to alert their entire group? Could have saved us the trouble to clean up the mess.

FEI

Sorry, Yaz. But they warded the exterior of their lair just like back in the warehouse. They would have found out what I was up to and that would have put the captives in danger. Best I subdue the gang first.

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

Sure. Sure. I guess. Anyway, I heard from the higher-ups that Pinnacle the company in charge of the developmental construction plan in the Philippines is very concerned about what is going on in Cebu. Sinulog is still in full swing. Processions and parades and all. Something that will be ripe for the aswangs to go abducting people.

FEI

And we can't let that happen. They should cancel or at least postpone the event.

FINN MACCOOL

That won't happen. The news mentioned the local government doesn't want to cave in to fear by altering the event. They say doing so will demoralize the city. They might just add heavy security.

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

I have a feeling there is more to this. Fei, plug in the USB drive. We need to know what Manifest 64 is.

I looked at Finn and then **plugged in the USB drive** in the port. (with **the click**) The screen split into the two revealing to Yazmin what seems to be a schematic of a bomb.

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

Typical. Bombs? Really? Oh shit, this design is pretty elaborate. Would be a pain in the ass to disarm.

FEI

I thought they were kidnapping people for ransom. Bombing the city would be against that plan.

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

Or they were kidnapping them to drink their blood as they are known to do. Though I am not sure bombing people is conducive to that approach.

FINN MACCOOL

Do the aswangs even have tech to create these devices?

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

Not at all. Someone HAS to be backing them up.

FEI

What about that Pinnacle company?

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

Would make absolutely no sense. Why would they risk relations with the Philippines by working with what is currently the cause of a lot of strife in the country? A cause the huge majority of people CANNOT afford to

35.

know.

FINN MACCOOL

(bites his thumb and thinks for a moment)

Fei, you were attacked by ghouls, right? You said they were cyborgs?

FEI

(nods)

Yeah.

FINN MACCOOL

Describe what exactly they looked like.

INT. HARBOR WAREHOUSE - DAYTIME

13

Narration: Ate Dalisay

A THUG **bursts through the door and runs over** to me, while I am smoking. He would see me with my Purplish skin, bat wings, long clawed hands, and a detachable jaw. The half of my lower body is missing beneath my waist with intestines hanging out. My lower body is walking over to reattach itself to my upper body after patrolling the interior of the warehouse. Funny. If it was any earlier time, my lower half wouldn't be able to move at all after detaching myself. A combination of a spell from a local bruha as well as an implant to allow my legs proper sense of awareness and movement does much to do more than any other manananggal could. The price, however, took my ability to shapeshift back to human form. As a result, my appearance is going to always be a monster. But looks never mattered to me. Only results.

FLEEING HUMAN THUG

Ate, we were attacked by---

ATE DALISAY

(glares)

Tanga, abi nimog wala ko kabalo?

FLEEING HUMAN THUG

(cowers)

pasaylo-a ko. Dili man siya tawo.
Makalusot-lusot siya sa mga makina na murag-

ATE DALISAY

Ungo? That bitch. Kana ang nagbungkag sa bodega. Gi pusil jud unta to nako

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sa ulo.

FLEEING HUMAN THUG

Mu-padayun pa gihapon ta sa plano,
Ate? Pwede nako adtoon ang uban para-

Shit. Have to be quick. I grabbed the thug by his shirt collar and threw him behind me just before a **large maw in the shadows would have gnashed him to be pieces with its teeth.**

The thug reeling from the throw regains his senses. He sees that I saved him just in time. His eyes widen as he sees a monster far more twisted than I am. HERODOTUS, an anthropophagus, is a creature that had no head save a large eyeball on the stump of its neck and its grotesque face is on its chest. Surrounding him are his cyber-ghoul thralls, who had implants and collars on them, completely bent to his will. **(The sounds of flesh, gums, and teeth can be heard from Herodotus as he breathes in a grotesque way.)**

I saved my own this time. I quickly glanced at the him.

ATE DALISAY

Pahawa.

The terrified thug nods and runs away. But I glare back at Herodotus. All I know about him is that my superiors sent him as an outside help for the operations here. I don't know why we need him. He is not trustworthy. A mercenary, a trafficker, and a necromancer, he has no sense of loyalty to anyone. His minions are nothing more than mindless slaves. At least, I have some regard for those under me, aswang or even human.

HERODOTUS

You should have let me rend that fool
to pieces for his failure.

ATE DALISAY

(points at him)

You may be in charge of this
operation, but it is NOT your call to
devour my men.

HERODOTUS

(guttural laugh)

No wonder your kind needs outside
help. Your mercy invites weakness to
your...organization.

ATE DALISAY

Says the beast that only uses mindless thralls to do his bidding.

HERODOTUS

Nothing wrong with that. Most creatures are thralls by design, humans or otherwise.

ATE DALISAY

Do you want to get shit done or not?

Herodotus pauses for a moment, while petting one of his ghouls. He then **grabs one and devours the ghoul whole in front of me.** His backside **convulses to have some tumor like growth appear before reasserting itself back to normal.** **Green energy flashes around him. (and the gnashing of flesh can be heard.** Dalisay observes the scene before her.)

ATE DALISAY

Is that supposed to be a statement?

HERODOTUS

No. Personal nourishment. Are the bombs ready yet?

I **whistle** for a group of Aswang to deliver one of the bombs to me. They carry it to me and **set it down.** I **set a code on a keypad while green energy swirls** within. The tech looks familiar. Dangerously familiar. No...got to stay the course for now.

ATE DALISAY

Looks like they are all primed and ready.

HERODOTUS

Set the bombs at the coordinates provided before the parade on Sunday. I can guarantee you that all of Cebu will be a domain for your kind.

ATE DALISAY

And this is what my bosses planned?

HERODOTUS

Yes. And the amount of people caught in the radii will be enough for me to be swarmed by offers by necromancers all over the world. The zombie trafficking trade will reach its apex.

ATE DALISAY

Sure. I already sent you enough bodies from abductions and grave robbing, but I am getting too much heat from the locals and now international authorities.

HERODOTUS

What you sent me is enough, the bombs will take care of the rest. As for those seeking to stop us,
(twists into a perverted smile)
I'll take care of them.

Hmph, he will be useful for now. All I can hope is that my kind can carve out a new home after all that has happened. Perhaps, also for revenge on the government for pushing us too far. Still, Herodotus' plan will kill and damn so many. Excessive? Definitely. But it's either us or them. Hesitation would make everything we worked for all for nothing. Nevertheless, something in the back of mind tells me this: Is it going to be worth it in the end?

(Far above the rafters is a small buzzing fly that is listening on the conversation.)

EXT. A FEW BLOCKS FROM THE HARBOR

14

Narration: Riz

I look at my phone with the images of those known as Ate and Herodotus. Special thanks to a robotic fly my uncle made. Some say he's a mechanic but he can also engineer some cool stuff. His tinkering days go way back to before even the Industrial Revolution. He's that old. A tikbalang that mentored many a babalyan. These days, however, he prefers to stay low-key and play around with his cars and tech.

I listen in what was said. (pause) Great, I am going to need some help.

I take out a picture of a pale woman that I spied on when she was infiltrating one of their warehouses in the industrial zone. Time to see if she could be useful.

End of Chapter 3

Chapter 4 - Astral Ambush

INT. A CLASSROOM IN BEIJING - DAYTIME

15

Narration: Fei

A memory of the past. Afterschool. Here I see a mostly empty classroom all cleaned and orderly to the point it looked cleaner than an average hospital. I can see my schoolmates play sports outside the room. Some ball game I believe. Beyond the schoolyard is the skyline of Beijing. The city itself had multiple massive skyscrapers jutting out like teeth of a great beast. Part of a large infrastructure plan enacted many years ago. I could see slight reflection of myself on the window. It was me long before I died. My eyes were blue then and I was far less pale. Still, people thought I was a weirdo back then too. I heard an a voice of an older man, my English teacher. He looked like any typical Chinese man in his 60s though something about him was rather stand out that I couldn't describe to this day. He was always on my case. He had a rather harsh tone, but his accent was not of Beijing. Don't remember where he was from. He was very peculiar.

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)

Fei, 你在窗邊做什麼? 過來。(Nǐ zài chuāng biān zuò shénme? Guòlái.)

FEI

對不起老師。好像大家都在外面玩。(Duìbùqǐ lǎoshī. Hǎoxiàng dàjiā dōu zài wàimiàn wán.)

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)

也許如果你及時完成了你的工作, 你就可以在外面玩了。(Yěxǔ rúguǒ nǐ jíshí wánchéngle nǐ de gōngzuò, nǐ jiù kěyǐ zài wàimiàn wánle.)

FEI

你知道我無法完成它。這是一篇一萬字的文章。(Nǐ zhīdào wǒ wúfǎ wánchéng tā. Zhè shì yī piān yī wàn zì de wénzhāng.)

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)

回到我那個時代, 我們手工寫了這樣的文章, 而不是打字。(Huí dào wǒ nàgè shídài, wǒmen shǒugōng xiěle zhèyàng de wénzhāng, ér bùshì dǎzì.)

FEI

真的嗎? (Zhēn de ma?)

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)
 不。只是喜歡看你受苦，小女兒。(Bù. Zhǐshì
 xǐhuān kàn nǐ shòukǔ, xiǎo nǚ'ér.)
 (laughs)

He always did that. Back then, he would give so many assignments, I thought he was setting me up for failure. Now, I realize he was preparing me for so much. I wondered if he knew what direction my life was going to back then. He always called me his little daughter, a nickname for what he says is for his favorite student. Of course, that also means he was always the hardest on me in class by giving me so much work to do.

FEI
 (sigh)
 你知道我不喜歡被這樣稱呼。(Nǐ zhīdào wǒ bù
 xǐhuān bèi zhèyàng chēnghu.)

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)
 不在乎。今天你練習英語了嗎？(Bùzàihū.
 Jīntiān nǐ liànxí yīngyǔle ma?)

FEI
 我學習了，老師。(Wǒ xuéxíle, lǎoshī.)

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)
 Then why are you not saying English
 right now?

FEI
 I was suppose to--

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)
 Yes, Gotta see if my little daughter
 really was studying.

FEI
 (groans)
 So, what do I have to do get out of
 class?

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)
 Not much. I just want to tell you
 about a book report you will be doing.
 It'll be due after the weekend.

My teacher tosses the book from his desk to me. I catch it. I see that cover page had a jiangshi attacking some victim. The creature itself has a stiff posture, is wearing some stereotypical Qing official uniform, and has a paper talisman

over its face. In English, it translates to:

FEI

The Jiangshi Menace. Wait, does anyone else have to do this assignment?

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)

(shrugs)

That's not important. What matters is that you finish the report in English. But tell me, what do you know about jiangshi?

FEI

Not much. It's what the West would call our zombies. Or is it vampires?

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)

Doesn't matter what the West calls it. Still a monster, right? Instead of blood or flesh, it supposed to feed on qi, the vital essence of life of all things.

FEI

And this is important because?

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)

Don't be a smartass. Because such stories are reflections of our society. Especially from the past. Learn your past to know your future. The idea of the Jiangshi is born from anti-Manchu sentiment, you know?

FEI

I didn't.

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)

That was why you have to learn. So many people use the concepts of monsters to demonize others or ideas that they don't want to understand. I want you to be better than that.

I look to my teacher and nodded.

FEI

I understand. Do the jiangshi have weaknesses?

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)

Mirrors, vinegar, the paper talismans
used to bind them, peach tree wood,
rooster calls, fire, I could go on.

FEI

That's a lot of weaknesses.

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)

Much of it came from times of
superstition. Such stories have many
ways that they are told. So next week,
you have the report due.

FEI

Right. I should be going.

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)

Before you go, I have something to
say.

(pauses)

You might not be the best, achieving
student since your grades are average
at best even when you try your
hardest. But I always saw potential in
you just by the little things you do.
And I have been watching your actions
very closely.

FEI

(sarcasm)

Uh, that's not weird at all.

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)

What did I tell you about being a
smartass? 5 point deduction.

FEI

But...

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)

Don't interrupt. You have a lot of
work to do to be better. But I see you
try your best to be a well-rounded
person, even when others treat you
like shit. It will be important for
the future to come.

FEI

The future to come?

TÁNG YÌCHÉN (唐亦辰)

Yes, you will know what that means.

I thought for a moment of his words then. The future to come. To think I would be become a jiangshi myself was not something I expected then. I am not even that stereotypical variant found in that story I read. I am not wearing some stuffy Qing garb. Not really rotting at all thanks to the qi I already have. I don't have a stupid talisman to turn me into some thrall. And thank goodness my "flesh" does not stiffen, so I don't have to hop around like a rabbit. Even I wouldn't take myself seriously if that happened.

Plus, I don't have to feed off of humans for their qi, which is good. I can get much of it depending how the qi flows in a room, especially in the presence of technology. Something related to unconventional forms of feng shui and cultivation perhaps? It deviates from classic depictions. Access to the Static is basically a well where I can sustain myself without worry. Then again, how I came to be was not even normal for most necromantic rituals.

I thought back again what my teacher meant about the future to come until I felt a hard jab to the face.

INT. SAFEHOUSE IN THE ALLEYWAYS OF PARDO, CEBU - DAYTIME

16

Narration: Fei

Ooof. I reel back from hit as a sense of clarity comes back. I am in the safehouse. Quite large and spacious place in the outer neighborhoods of Cebu. it's a decent place to plan and rest for missions. Not much other than living essentials, a small armory that is currently empty, and a small surveillance station monitoring the exterior. Finn and I also repurposed the space to make room for sparring in martial arts.

Some of my associates in AGON are taken aback I am more familiar with western skills like jiu jitsu or capoeira than in things like karate, tae kwon do, or even kung fu. Not for the lack of trying, but I only learned official fighting skills rather recently in my time as an agent. Much of my other combat techniques are improvised based on environment. I also learned a bit or two from Bruce Lee's writings. But I learned more from it by clearing my mind through meditation than knowing fighting styles. Plus, AGON recommended I lay low when I am in Asia especially in the presence of local authorities that have ties to China.

Created using Celtx

FINN MACCOOL
Daydreaming again?

I shook the brain fog out of my head and put myself in fighting stance. Finn and I are practicing hand to hand combat now. And I was spacing out. Okay, time to focus.

I look at Finn's stance. An expert in close quarters combat would notice Finn is being deceptive in his posture. It seems relaxed but it hides experience and strength that would make many spec ops feel like army privates. After all, Sun Tzu would say:

堅強的時候就顯得軟弱，軟弱的时候就顯得堅強。(Jiānqiáng de shíhòu jiù xiǎndé ruǎnrùo, ruǎnrùo de shíhòu jiù xiǎndé jiānqiáng.)

Appear weak when you are strong, and strong when you are weak.

Hmm...Seems Finn wants me to have the first move. Dammit.

I try to make a quick offensive with multiple jabs at Finn's torso as well as low kicks to stumble or knock him down. However, Finn manages to block or even endure all of my attacks.

FINN MACCOOL
C'mon lass. That all ya got?
(blocks attacks)
I wouldn't say you fight like a wee girl. But more a wet noodle. Or even better, you fight like feckin Anglo tool.

I attempt to become more aggressive by making roundhouse kicks to Finn's head. Finn blocks those as well. Finn counters with strong side punches to get me off-guard. I evade a couple and even blocked a few blows. Soon, Finn tries to grapple me and make me submit.

Okay, this bit is kinda cheating, but I contort some of my body with some parts phasing through him in an attempt to grapple him instead and slam him down.

Finn grunts and makes a mischievous smile as he headbutts me causing my disorientation. Too slow to react. Finn counter-grapples my body and slams me to the ground. Oof.

I slowly regains my senses as I look up at Finn.

FEI
(pouts)
No fair.

FINN MACCOOL
Says the lass that I told very
specifically not to use her powers
during sparring.

FEI
Sorry, I just don't think I can beat
you in a fair fight. Or even if I used
all my powers.

FINN MACCOOL
Lass,
(extends arm to help Fei up)
You don't need abilities to win the
day. You just need
(extends thumbs up)
guile and cunning.

FEI
Thanks? Also, I didn't know
headbutting people is considered
strategy.

FINN MACCOOL
(laughs)
In the old Eire, playing a bit dirty
is sound strategy. Or is that just me?

Finn beckons me to sit with him by a nearby bench. I **follow
and sit** with him.

FEI
I see. But I still need to better
myself.

FINN MACCOOL
You are a fast learner compared to
most of my old warband, the Fianna.
You may not be the best martial
artist. But I see you at your best
when you improvise based on your
surroundings. You'll be fine.

FEI
(smiles and shrugs)
I am not much of a fighter anyway.
Much easier that we can talk our way

to victory than just punching things
to solve issues.

FINN MACCOOL

(grabs a canteen and drinks it)
Aye. Don't worry we will get plenty of
opportunities in the future. Though
these brutes don't seem like open
negotiators. Also, Yaz updated me on
the descriptions of the cyber zombies
you gave last morning. Both she and I
can recall they are the type that
similarly belong to this dangerous
mercenary company from outside the
Philippines with a reputation for
depraved atrocities. So we do know
there is someone else working with the
aswangs.

FEI

Probably would be easier to get this
mission done if we can find a native
to help us know what the aswangs and
their allies really want.

FINN MACCOOL

Aye. Aside from that issue, I am
really proud of you.

FEI

Why?

FINN MACCOOL

Can't an old man like me be happy that
his student has learned so much in
just a few years?

FEI

Those few years felt like a century.

FINN MACCOOL

If that's the case with you, imagine
me having to live 150 of the craziest
years of human history.

(sighs)

People come and go. Live and die. Seen
wars in scales I haven't seen in my
early days.

FEI

I know of all the stories you told me.

They were what kept me sane after AGON imprisoned me after...well you know.

FINN MACCOOL

Didn't think my stories were all that interesting to begin with. Just scrums with some fecked up bastards.

FEI

I mean you told me the stories where you fought alongside the Irish Brigade, the Sioux tribes, the Haitian witchdoctors, the Jotunn of Norway, the Steppe Orcs, the Djinn of Ubar, the Vietcong....You went all over the world.

FINN MACCOOL

Yeah...All to maintain the balance of power that is slowing slipping by the day. I could go all over the world. But I can never return home.

FEI

Something we have in common.

FINN MACCOOL

You know it wasn't your fault. You didn't ask to be what you are now.

FEI

I still caused a lot of grief. I honestly wouldn't mind if AGON put me in a box and threw me into the ocean. It's where----

FINN MACCOOL

Perish the thought, lass.

FEI

Sorry. I just wish if things were different...

Finn moved his arm around my shoulder. I looked up at him.

FINN MACCOOL

Regret is the one thing worse than fear or anger. We all make mistakes and we wish we never made them. But life is about owning up to all the choices we make. Good and bad. What

will you do with the past you carry,
lass?

I slowly slide my head by his side. He's like a father I
wished I had.

FEI
Live and learn.

FINN MACCOOL
No one can't deny you're a good
student. Someday you can teach to
others what you learned.

FEI
謝謝, that means a lot, Finn.

FINN MACCOOL
So another round?

FEI
Umm...

(Knocking on the door catches the attention of Fei and Finn.
They both stand up, while Finn draws his spear.)

FINN MACCOOL
Odd, Yaz said no one should know this
location.

FEI
You think--?

Finn just raises his hand as he carefully approaches the
door. He leans on it while I am behind him.

FINN MACCOOL
If you are looking for something, you
got the wrong house.

RIZ
My mistake then, I thought you guys
needed a native for your "little
problem."

Finn quickly opens the door to reveal a Filipino, possibly a
native to town. He wore a simple green shirt and some brown
shorts. He had long hair tied into a ponytail like myself
though it was closer to the nape of his neck than up near the
center of the skull like me. He also had piercing green eyes
similar to Finn except those eyes shine like emeralds. People

would describe my eyes as rubies set in obsidian. My sclera is black after all. I walk over and observe him closely.

FEI
(narrows eyes)
Have you been listening in on us?

RIZ
(nods)
Not only that.

He takes out a photo to reveal me from my infiltration mission. Wow, I am getting even sloppier by the day.

RIZ
If you guys want to investigate in my city, you have to be a bit more subtle.

I cross my arms.

FINN MACCOOL
(leans on doorside)
You got balls I give you that. You have 20 seconds to explain yourself.

RIZ
I want these aswangs outta my home. They have been kidnapping people left and right. Didn't know it was just a lead-in to something bigger.

FEI
(raises brow)
Are you some kind of private investigator?

RIZ
Vigilante actually.

FEI
Great.

RIZ
C'mon. I only punish people that deserve it.

FEI
And how would you know they would deserve it?

RIZ

(points to his forehead)

I have a sense about these things.

FINN MACCOOL

Okay, okay. So are you telling me an average lad like you has gotten the better of these dossers?

RIZ

I wouldn't consider myself a regular guy.

(takes off shirt)

Can you let me in? Don't want to transform out in the open.

FEI

Wait a minute, what exactly are you?

RIZ

Let me in and all will be revealed. Don't you want to know what the aswangs want or not?

I look at Finn and we both shrug. We let him in. He **walks** into the middle of the safehouse. (The **sound of bone and flesh shifting can be heard** within Riz as parts of his **face, arms, legs, and torso shift** to become a completely different creature.) Half man, half horse. Oh. I should have expected it, but I can't help have that sense of wonder when I see something new.

(Finn and Fei remain silent.)

RIZ

What? Have you guys never seen a tikbalang before?

We shake our heads.

RIZ

(**horse sounds**)

Here's the information.

He shows a microchip. Finn snorts in response. Couldn't help but be amused.

RIZ

Just so you know, I am a bit offended when someone snorts at my horse noises. I am half-horse. I can't help

it.
(clears throat)
Anyways, I have conditions.

FINN MACCOOL
(takes a deep breath)
Of course you do.

FEI
Name them.

RIZ
First, whatever happens, we are doing this for the people living here. Not foreign governments, corporations, or secret organizations. Whatever agenda your superiors have, they are not the ones with the most to lose. The people here have everything to lose if things go wrong.

FEI
Well, we are here to help the people of Cebu.

RIZ
That may be true. But consider the possibility your mission and the interests of my home may not be one and the same. Just know as soon as you do something that fucks my home over, we are going to have a problem.

FINN MACCOOL
(nods)
Anything else?

RIZ
I want you to have your higher-ups pull some strings to convince the authorities to get off my back. I haven't been seen as the best law-abiding citizen here.

We listen intently until...(they heard **groaning and banging along the walls.**)

(They all remain silent.)

FINN MACCOOL
Please tell me you weren't followed.

RIZ

I wasn't.

I **walk over to the computer screen** where it records footage from inconspicuous security cameras and sensors. In view, where a couple of ethereal ghouls who look like monstrous cross of vampiric humanoids with small wings and with faces that look similar to some sort of monkey I read in a book once. I think it was a mandrill. They were **trying and failing to phase into the complex armed with ethereal weapons.**

FEI

Guys, there's a lot of them outside.
How did they even find us?

The others walk over to see who is on screen.

RIZ

Oh shit. No wonder. Bebarlang.

FEI

什么? (Shénme)

FINN MACCOOL

Aswang?

RIZ

(nods)

Aswang ghouls that can astral project from their bodies to hunt down their victims. Some that can cast magic can see through walls. Probably how they found you. What's really odd is how they have ghostly Ak-47s.

(Riz can see one of the bebarlang **load up his ethereal rifle.**)

FINN MACCOOL

Grand. We can worry about that later.

One of the Bebarlang is **casting a spell** to penetrate the ward protecting the safehouse.

FINN MACCOOL

We need to know if we can damage these projections.

RIZ

Blessed weapons will dissipate those forms back into their primary bodies.

Ghostly entities can also combat them.

I nod while **drawing my knife**.

FINN MACCOOL

Aye.

(draws his spear)

This spear was wielded by Lugh Lamfada himself, warrior god-king of Eire and of the pantheon of Tuatha De Danann. No man or creature can stand against it.

RIZ

I have no idea what any of those names mean. But I am just gonna assume that it is overkill.

FINN MACCOOL

What about you lad? Weapon of choice?

The were-horse **draws two stick weapons** that have glowing inscriptions on them. He takes a combat stance as he looks around for bebarlang.

RIZ

I can use bladed weapons too. But I always have a soft spot for smacking assholes with these.

The **ward finally breaks outside** and all the bebarlang aim for the building with their rifles.

Looking at the screen, Finn widens his eyes and calls for us.

FINN MACCOOL

Hey stand by me.

We are quick to stand next to Finn as **he slams the non-pointed end of the spear to the ground creating a shield of light just in time for the bebarlang to open fire their ethereal bullets phasing through the building at the three**. Fortunately, the shield **blocks the projectiles** that were coming through the walls.

RIZ

Ok, didn't expect that.

I smirk that our guest is taken aback by Finn's capabilities. It shows we can impress too. (In a couple of seconds, the Bebarlang **stop firing**. Some of them **howl causing some to draw**

weapons some native to the Philippines or use their claws and storm in through the walls.)

We see as more than a dozen bebarlang storm the safehouse **charging at us with ferocity through the walls.**

FINN MACCOOL
This is where the fun begins. Let's
FECKIN' GO!!!

Finn **throws his spear at one of the ghouls** and penetrates it through the **astral form causing it to dissipate.** The spear **hits the wall and teleports back** into Finn's hand.

RIZ
Damn.

More bebarlang charge as the werehorse **teleports** behind some of them and does **multiple smacks with his weapons.** (Some attack with **claws and ethereal weapons** but Riz counters the **attacks while counterattacking with teleporting abilities.**)

I **dodge the attacks** from the invaders and **run up the wall causing some of them to pursue me.** (She continues to evade the aswang with some trying to to **shoot at her with ghostly guns.**) I **slide under them and slashed them from below causing one or two to dissipate up** on the wall.

Finn use his spear martial skills to **counter more attacks** from the aswang. His range with the spear manages to keep four of them from coming in close.

Some of the bebarlang attempt to **combo their attacks** on Finn. Finn barely dodges them and whistles to me. I jumps from the wall as Finn uses his spear for me to hold on to as I make a kick that arcs onto multiple aswang.

Some of them are smacked back just as Riz uses the momentum to strike them from behind causing more dissipations.

With the fight going on the bebarlang decrease in number narrowing down to six versus three.

The caster bebarlang uses its abilities to shoot astral energy at Finn. Finn deflects this by spinning his spear. The werehorse and I move to fight the other five. (Attacks, counterattacks, parries, blocks continue until Riz and Fei were back to back to each other.)

I noticed the werehorse was behind me and we take a quick glance at each other as we fight the aswang. I am quick to

steal a ghostly gun from one of the foes and shoot one of them multiple times before dissipating.

The werehorse attempts the same but the gun phases through his hand. Not a ghost, it seems. That takes him by surprise and the bebarlang manage to slice a wound on him. He winces at the wound but he retaliates with slamming both sticks to the sides of aswang's head taking him out the fight.

Finn fights the caster more until he throws the spear up catching the caster by surprise. Finn slides underneath the caster and the spear up on the ceiling teleports in Finn's hands which appears inside the caster destroying his astral form.

Finn then throws the spear where me and the Filipino are fighting the remaining 3. The spear penetrates 2 of them at once leaving only one astral form left. Seeing that us three bested his team, the last bebarlang looks at us now waiting on his move. He looks at us with fear and drops his rifle.

The aswang dissipates himself leaving us three alone in a wrecked safehouse.

Relieved from victory, we relax our guard as we look at each other.

FINN MACCOOL
Not bad, lad. And good work, lass.

RIZ
(winces from the wound)
Could have gone better.

I sees the gun I stole dissipate from my hand. I see the werehorse wounded and go over to tend to him.

FEI
You're hurt.

RIZ
(horse laugh)
Just a flesh wound. Ow.

I check the wound over his back. (She gets a med pack and treats the wound with some rubbing alcohol and bandages, as Riz transforms back into his human form.)

FEI
Okay, tough guy.
(looks to Finn)
(MORE)

I assume we can't stay here
considering those were just
projections. They will tell the
others.

FINN MACCOOL
And come back in greater numbers.

RIZ
(sighs)
As much as I don't care for it, I know
where we can go. I just hope Tito
doesn't freak out.

Finn and I look at each other a little confused about what he
means.

End of Chapter 4

Chapter 5 - Refuge

INT. RIZ'S HOUSE - DAYTIME

17

Narration: Riz

As sunset approaches, I can see from the window that Reyna is
cooking different food for the upcoming celebration. Lumpia,
pancit, and even lechon she received from neighbors. She
tastes the pancit and smiles as she chews it.

I see Tito approach Reyna and smell the food.

TITO RICAR
This is really good, Reyna. Your ma
teach you how to prepare these?

REYNA
(shakes head)
She is usually a busy woman. She's a
nurse after all. I had to figure this
out on my own.

TITO RICAR
Still good. By the way, have you seen
Riz?

REYNA
I thought he was working with you on
that old Jeepney you have.

TITO RICAR
It's...a work in progress. As for Riz,
I thought he went to the procession
with you.

The door **swings open** to reveal myself and my companions
appear into the small house. I have a large bandage over my
back hidden under my shirt as Fei and Finn look around the
house.

FINN MACCOOL
(nods)
Pretty fine.

Reyna and Ricar appear in the living room to see us.

TITO RICAR
Ok, who are these people?

RIZ
Uh...new friends.

Tito Ricar looks at Reyna and back at us.

RIZ
I will explain everything. But can I
just get my "guests" comfortable?

REYNA
I can prepare some food for them.

TITO RICAR
That would be best.

Reyna walks out and calls back.

REYNA
I hope you guys like Pinoy cuisine.

Tito suddenly becomes more guarded as he looks at the two
guests.

RIZ
She can't know about what I am about
to tell you.

TITO RICAR
Syempre kabalo ko ana. Unsa'y
problema?

RIZ

Bebarlang. But I can--

TITO RICAR

(rubs temples)

Fuck. Giatake ka ni Aswang? Swerte ka nga giprotektahan nako ang among balay.

FINN MACCOOL

Look, I am not sure what you are saying but know this. Your nephew came to us. And those bastards managed to find us at the same time.

FEI

We can't go back to our safehouse.

TITO RICAR

Oh...so you're what? Pulis? espesyal nga pulis?

FEI

In a way.

FINN MACCOOL

We think the aswang bastards are planning a terrorist attack on the parade tomorrow.

TITO RICAR

What? usa ka pag-atake? Dinhi? To what end?

RIZ

Tito, English, please.

Tito approaches me and speaks in a low voice.

TITO RICAR

Your cousin may know we are tikbalang, but I rather not get her involved in the serious shit you are up to. Do they--?

RIZ

They know of us. They aren't exactly typical humans themselves.

FEI

I am undead actually.

TITO RICAR
So you are. So is there anything else
you need to tell me?

RIZ
We need old Maria.

FEI AND FINN
(look at each other)
Maria?

Tito Ricar waves his hands disapprovingly.

TITO RICAR
Hell no. She is not even ready yet. I
still have to make sure the storage
room doesn't end up succumbing to
spatial collapse. Not to mention, I
didn't get my tires baptized yet. And
I really want them blessed before we
run over something unholy.

FEI
Is this some magic vehicle? What
exactly do you mean by baptized tires?
How does that even work?

Tito Ricar makes a **shhh sound** before Reyna enters back in the
room. I agree with Fei. Really, Tito? Neither of us are even
Christian. What's blessed tires gonna do? Resurrect in three
days if they end up damaged? Drive on water? Keep the spirits
of dead dinosaurs away from the Jeepney in case we end up
using improperly refined gasoline? That happens more than you
think by the way.

REYNA
Ok, food's ready. Hope you like it.

FEI
I actually--
(Finn bumps her with his elbow)
would like to try some. I am starving
so much I can eat a...(pause)

Tito and I raise our brows at her, since we basically know
what she was going to end on. And she knows too, because I
can tell she definitely looks embarrassed.

FEI
Nevermind. What do you have?

REYNA

C'mon I'll show you.

Fei and Finn **follow Reyna to the kitchen** while I speak with Tito Ricar.

RIZ

Gisultihan ko nila kung unsa'y nahitabo. Kinahanglan nato ang tanannga tabang na pwede makuha aron mapug-ngan ang mga bomba gikan sa -

TITO RICAR

Mga bomba? Ginoo ko. Pundokon nako ang pipila ka mga higala aron kamatabangan. Ang pipila ka mga tikbalang ug tawhanong higala.

RIZ

Sige. Fei and Finn have the locations listed.

TITO RICAR

Good, the gang has been waiting for places where we can strike the aswang. They have been evading us for too long. We notified the local pulis that we will take care of the aswang. As for your cousin. She is looking forward to watching the parade with you.

RIZ

I won't be available if we are going to give the aswang a thrashing.

TITO RICAR

Then you best have a good explanation why.

RIZ

(groans)

What a week.

INT. RIZ'S KITCHEN - DAYTIME

18

Narration: Fei

Reyna, Finn, and I are **eating dinner together**. Reyna looks at Finn.

REYNA

Thanks for trying out my food, guys.

FINN MACCOOL

No problem. Very delicious this lumpia and...the noodles?

REYNA

Pancit.

FINN MACCOOL

(nods)

Mmmmm. Nice.

He **tasted more of the food** as I tried my best to **eat convincingly**. I struggle **to swallow down** the lechon. It's been so long since I actually ate that I forgot to eat. Not to mention this food isn't completely agreeable with me.

REYNA

You okay? I hope my food isn't giving you trouble.

FEI

(**swallows slowly**)

It's...good. I just...haven't eaten in awhile.

REYNA

Oh so you must be starving. You want more?

FEI

(shakes her head viciously)

No! No. It is alright. This is enough. I...have a small stomach.

Finn raises a brow at me. I just shrug back. Reyna just chuckles.

REYNA

No worries. Just happy enough to share food with new friends.

FINN MACCOOL

Glad we are pleasant company.

REYNA

Yes! So just wanted us to introduce each other. I am Reyna, Riz's cousin.

FINN MACCOOL
A good name. Finn's mine and...
(points)
this is Fei.

FEI
You....I noticed you have two
different color eyes.

REYNA
Ah...One of them is a fake.

She points to her gray one **tapping on it.**

FEI
Oh, forgive me if I am prying. But
what happened that made you lose an
eye?

REYNA
(chuckles)
Just an accident. Nothing special. But
it's fine. It only means that my other
eye is sharper than before.

FINN MACCOOL
Don't know if that's how human eyes
work.

REYNA
(shrugs)
It seemed to work for me. But what
about you, Fei. What's up with your
eyes?

FEI
Uhh...ummm...you see...

FINN MACCOOL
She's one of those really hardcore
goth scene girls. Went as far as to
have her eye whites tattooed black.

FEI
Wait...wha---

REYNA
That's so....cool. Tattoos are
awesome. I know many of relatives have
the traditional types that determine
their lineage. You should check them

out someday. And you are really brave
to go as far as having you eyes
tattooed.

FEI

Thanks?

I look at Finn confused. He just smirks at me. Well, a
compliment is a compliment.

REYNA

Well, I was wondering because I don't
think a change of eye color is
something typical to your undead
nature, Fei.

Finn and I pause.

REYNA

What? It was kinda obvious. I mean I
am cousin to a family of tikbalang.
What? You thought I didn't know what
my relatives are?

FINN MACCOOL

Fair enough. Though it is odd how you
are related to them.

REYNA

Ah, long story. But my side of the
family had a long tradition of being
attuned to the old magics.

FINN MACCOOL

Hmmm... You know any special tricks
then?

REYNA

(giggles)

I wish. My family's connection with
supernatural has....diluted
significantly. But maybe being back
here will help me gain a reconnection
of what was once lost.

FEI

Well, I hope you find it.

REYNA

(cheerful demeanor)

Thanks.

Riz comes into the kitchen and looks at Reyna.

RIZ

Hey, Rey. I just wanted to tell you I need some time alone with these people?

REYNA

Is there something wrong?

RIZ

No, just planning out tomorrow.

REYNA

I thought you were going to be with me for the parade. I heard it can get very crowded. I even heard people throw paint out of nowhere.

RIZ

Well,

(sighs)

I am sorry. Something related to my work came up. These guys,

(points at Fei and Finn)

are involved. I should be done before the parade is over.

REYNA

(looks down a bit but smiles weakly)

It's...okay.

(looks up smiles a bit more)

I am sure Tito Ricar can guide me through the parade. You stay safe. I am going to check on Tito.

Reyna leaves the room. I can feel her sadness. That much is obvious. Finn and I look at Riz. We remain in awkward silence, until Finn talks.

FINN MACCOOL

Right...so the plan as we discussed on our way back here. You also mentioned we are going to have backup?

RIZ

It may not seem like it, but my tribe along with the allies of tikbalang have been doing what we can to counter the aswang. We disrupted their blood

cocaine trade, which is how they originally made their buck. But one of my own told me that an outsider convinced Ate Dalisay, the Cebu aswang lieutenant, to switch to human abductions.

(there is scene of a tikbalang spying on the likes of Dalisay and Herodotus)

I don't know who this outsider is though, but he is not of Pinoy origin.

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA (V.O.)

I think I can answer that.

A **voice comes out** of Finn's earpiece.

FINN MACCOOL

Ow, too loud.

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

Too bad. Just checked on the details of the cyber zombies. Gotta warn you guys and your friend Bojack about who is really running the show.

RIZ

Who the hell is Bojack?

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

Shh. You are dealing with an anthropophagus.

FINN MACCOOL

You are not acting the maggot, are ya, lass?

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

What the hell...Does anyone know what he is talking about?

Riz and I shake their heads.

FINN MACCOOL

Thought you were well-versed in phrasing. Just an Irish slang. And anyways, quite a fancy name for the biggest baddie of the bunch.

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

Well, he's no joke. Herodotus of the

Rotten Moon tribe. His lot are involved in dark magic in addition to being man-eating creatures. They are also a group of mercenaries that wage proxy conflicts for their clients. What makes him stand out is his practice of cybernecromancy. The same nature of magic that created Fei's curse.

Riz's eyes widen and looks at me. I know of it. Know of it all too well. Not much to get into about that. The name basically speaks for itself.

RIZ
Cybernecro-what?

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA
It's a long story. But in short, his minions are definitely implanted with Pinnacle tech. Which is odd for the aswang is working with him, as they are enemies of that corporation.

FINN MACCOOL
Hmm, I heard of the Rotten Moon. Infamous even by merc standards. My sources tell me rumors that they recently became subsidiary of the Nadir, a sister company to Pinnacle which both belong under the same conglomerate. They specialize in weapons development and the creation of many private military contractor groups. I know Pinnacle and Nadir like to cross over and share tech and research. I wonder if Herodotus could have taken those implants with Pinnacle's blessing. They can't be used when stolen, right?

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA
There's a failsafe that deactivates them when used without the consent of Pinnacle.

RIZ
But they already have the country in their pockets. Why risk it all on aiding aswang gangs?

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

Remember Manifest 64? I did some more research and the bomb schematics are definitely Pinnacle's design. The ciphers used to guard information in the schematic are consistent to what a subsidiary to Pinnacle uses for security in their missile defense systems. Like the Legazpi M-1565 defense system. In fact, it's referenced here having the same subroutines in its programming as the bombs, which isn't obvious to most unless you connect the dots.

RIZ

I know of it. That system destroyed many aswang settlements and lives in the wilderness during the government's purge campaign a few years ago. It is why many of them moved to the cities in the first place and started their gangs. Even hearing the reference to Legazpi will rile them up. Still doesn't explain why Pinnacle would be involved. The aswang are very anti-corporate.

FINN MACCOOL

Not every group is a monolith. Even their own will have their special diverging agendas despite the past. Also, the American corporations of our age are insidious in ways beyond surface awareness. Remember they are the power that rules the Western Hemisphere now. So Yaz, Pinnacle and Nadir's interactions might need exploring.

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

I will keep researching on that. But that may take time.

FINN MACCOOL

Hey Fei, you have been awfully quiet. Something the matter?

FEI

Yeah...Riz, may I talk to you in private.

YAZMIN AL-HAZRA

Wait, now? But we have to...fuck it. I will brief the rest to Finn.

Finn smiles and lays his hand on my shoulder then **walks off** from the kitchen.

Riz leans on the counter.

RIZ

Something on your mind?

FEI

Yeah...I am not usually upfront about other people's business but if it weren't for the fact some monsters wanted to blow up the city, I would want you to spend time with your cousin.

RIZ

(raises brow)

I would but...wait why are you so interested in that?

FEI

To be honest, I haven't voiced it out but I am a bit envious of the people in this country. So many are celebrating together with family. Eating together, dancing together singing together.

RIZ

Well we do love our karaoke here.

FEI

(snorts)

Right. It is a shame the aswang want to ruin this festival.

RIZ

Well, aswang themselves are outcasts. To the human citizens here, they have a history of being predators by nature. I pity them honestly, considering aswang and my kind have a common similarity in not being human.

FEI

But do they have be like that? There

is no peaceful resolution to this?

RIZ

The government wishes to see them exterminated because of their primary nature as predators of human society. But then again, that same government doesn't trust my kind or any other nonhumans in the Pilipinas though we are at least tolerated.

FEI

I see. Your cousin knows who you are. Is she concerned about what you do or what is going on here?

RIZ

Not really. She always hopes for the best. And she had to be after what she had to deal with in the past. I was surprised she managed to get out of America before shit hit the fan there.

FEI

Yeah, I am all too familiar with what's going on in the Western Hemisphere. People are trying to get out to the point of applying for refugee status.

RIZ

And what's your story if you don't mind me asking?

FEI

(leans on the wall in deep thought)
I don't usually talk about myself. But I will give you this. When I see the families here celebrating the festival, it makes me wish I had a different life growing up.

RIZ

Bad family too?

FEI

I was a bit of a disappointment for my parents. Add to that, we were from the countryside, a particular part of the land that had...a reputation of strange things going on. When we moved

to Beijing, rumors started spreading in the schools I have been to about my background.

RIZ

So you were seen as an outcast. As expected from those that don't want to understand.

FEI

(shrugs)

Maybe. I grew up with very few friends and they eventually drifted off. My life was fairly boring. Nothing stand out. At least until college.

RIZ

What made it stand out?

FEI

Something that was both the best and worst thing that has ever happened to me.

RIZ

How can something be worst and best at the same time?

FEI

You would know if you understand what I mean, Riz. It led to a lot of....things. A little hint...it rhymes with dove.

RIZ

Hmmm....

We both remain awkwardly silent for...seconds? It felt weird that I was opening up to someone I met on the same day. I guess either it's something about Riz or I am getting more personable by the day. It usually doesn't happen.

RIZ

Aside from our so-called troubled pasts, what else do you think we have in common?

FEI

No idea. This is the first day we met. And the first thing we do is fight spectral thugs together.

RIZ
Hmm...would you prefer another
activity? Like having coffee at
Starbucks?

FEI
We would probably be on our phones.

RIZ
Eugh...Hell no. Do know how many
people I encounter that do that?

FEI
Yeah, same.

(Fei and Riz both chuckle together.)

RIZ
So, you wanna see Maria, The Jeepney
Tito is working on?

FEI
We can later. I actually wanted to ask
if we can at least cheer Reyna up
before we stop the aswang tomorrow.

RIZ
(smirks)
Hmm, I know she likes to try karaoke
when she feels down. I can hear some
singing in the other room.

FEI
(slight smile)
I would like that.

RIZ
Great, let's check the other room.

INT. RIZ'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAYTIME

19

Narration: Riz

Fei and I walk into the room just as Reyna finishes singing
in front of the TV. Tito and Finn are lounging on the couch
clapping for Reyna's performance.

RIZ
Hey we just finished our chat. How
well did you do Rey?

REYNA

Alright. I am a bit rusty with singing nowadays. But if you like, you two could go next.

RIZ

Sure.

FINN MACCOOL

How about you let Fei try? I haven't heard her sing in awhile.

FEI

Finn!

FINN MACCOOL

C'mon, lass. You should show what you can do.

REYNA

Yeah. You should. It'll be fun.
(chuckles)

FEI

(sighs)
Alright, but what should I sing?

RIZ

Anything is fine. Tito, see if you can pull any song from online that Fei wants to sing.

FEI

Hmm, I know what I like to sing. It's a Chinese lullaby from the northeastern region if that is alright with you.

FINN MACCOOL

Oh ho ho. I think I know what she is talking about. 3000 pesos that your jaw will drop by the end, Riz.

RIZ

What? Hmm, well if it's money you are willing to lose, sure.

I can see that Tito and Reyna quirked their eyebrows in curiosity. C'mon, I am not someone so easily impressed with singers. Those idol shows have a full range that I saw. So not sure how Fei will impress me with her approach.

73.

I see her choosing something on the TV with the remote. A song with Chinese lyrics and a moon background.

The song started playing. Hmm, definitely traditional. Let's see what she can do.

(Cradle song sung by Fei)

Time seems slow after I see her turn around after finishing the song. If she wasn't undead, I think she would be blushing. I look to the others who were all smirking at me. I just notice my jaw is open this whole time. Goddammit.

FINN MACCOOL
Well, lad?

RIZ
Shut up.

(sigh) No choice but to fork over some pesos to him. I see Fei chuckle. Well, at least she has a sense of humor. Don't know many undead that do.

INT. HERODOTUS' WAREHOUSE - NIGHTTIME

20

Narration: Ate Dalisay

What makes an aswang a monster? It's something I always mused about, even back in my early days as manananggal. To the average person despite any origin story that explains our emergence, it comes back to insatiable hunger we had for another living being. Flesh, blood, or in my circumstances, an unborn fetus. Do they ask what makes manananggal hunger for new life? They don't. After all, an evil action no matter the context will still remain as such to these people. But hunger is in core of all life.

We must consume to live. Should a tiger or a crocodile be condemned for feeding on another animal? Or maybe because we are self-aware beings and we continue to subsists on fresh life. Fairly rarely is there anything else that can satisfy and sustain our being, our bodies demand a high consumption of newly created life force or we die.

I lean on the railing of the second floor of the warehouse. I look at a picture of man in standard priest garb before putting it inside my coat. I take a cigarette and start smoking. Bad habit. But need to calm my nerves. The lower-half of my body is **walking up the stairs towards me**. Slow as always. All the implants and cybernetics recently applied to my legs is starting to feel heavier now. Last thing I need is

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to have Vader-type legs, but it's a big day tomorrow.

The ambush by my bebarang failed. It only caused our foes to retreat somewhere more secure. We don't have time to pursue them. I should have shot them for their failure. But I can't afford to lose bodies for something this big happening tomorrow. Everyone is needed.

The lower-half **reattaches to my body** and I stop leaning while facing one of the SIGBIN.

ATE DALISAY
Everyone ready?

The Sigbin merely nods.

ATE DALISAY
Make sure you tell the other gangs
that STAY away from maneater. I can't
promise that he will not eat you.

The minion nods once again before **scurrying away** as Herodotus walks over to me.

He **munches on some raw, dessicated meat** of unknown origin as I dump my cigarette. I look onward as I see my aswang subordinates and Herodotus' undead preparing for the operation.

ATE DALISAY
Your thralls can handle something this
delicate? I doubt it.

HERODOTUS
(**finishes eating the meat**)
The dead are there to check on you and
your rabble. Otherwise, I'll just let
them feed.

ATE DALISAY
(sharply turns on him)
Keep your threats. The sooner we
finish this. The sooner we stop
working together.

HERODOTUS
(**laughs in a guttural manner**)
Doubtful. Your superiors in Manila
wish to add this mission to the
greater plan for the Philippines.

ATE DALISAY

Cebu is my business. I care less for Luzon.

HERODOTUS

I will leave that to you and them to discuss that after this beautiful bloodbath ends. As for now, I will base myself on the ground to seek the meddlers.

ATE DALISAY

Sure...And I will be at the highest point in Cebu to check progress.

I **retrieve a sniper rifle and load it in preparation.**

HERODOTUS

It is time we gave the souls of this city our own festive gesture.

Herodotus **walks away** as I turn to my lieutenants among the aswang.

ATE DALISAY

Everyone, Time to move.

The aswang **howl** as they rallied to me **walking outside** the facility to wage my war on Cebu.

End of Chapter 5

Chapter 6 - Monsters

EXT. RICAR'S GARAGE - DAYTIME

21

Narration: Riz

Finn, Tito, Fei, and I **walk together** to the garage to see a very elaborate vehicle in front of them. The Jeepney is a mix of being rundown and intricately decorated. The look is definitely the form of a classic design that can trace its legacies close to the first generation of Jeepneys. Different colors swirl around the vehicle in the form of many abstract designs. The hood of Jeepney has 4 statuettes of horses on it. Even the wheels have designs in the form of strange spirals focusing on the axles.

FINN MACCOOL

Shite...You have...interesting sense of taste, Ricar.

TITO RICAR

Hey, it works well enough. Plus, the utility on Maria has unlimited potential.

FEI

Care to explain?

TITO RICAR

She can drive on water. Has a expansive storage container that is bigger on the inside than outside. And she is more armed that a typical tank.

FEI

Woah....you really went all out with her. And that's why your "baptized tires" are called as such? Because they drive on water?

TITO RICAR

They also repair themselves in three days.

FEI

Hmm...does such items work for non-Christians?

TITO RICAR

It's not about being Christian. Blessed items of any kind are based on the principle not necessarily on the will of a higher power, though such powers set the knowledge of these blessings in place as a matter of convenience for their followers, but divine miracles and blessings function as ritualized links to call upon the natural laws of the universe to reassert itself when certain types of magic circumvents----you know what? How about I give you a book later on that?

FEI

Uh...thanks?

I **answer my ringing phone** and listen for a moment before hanging up.

RIZ

Guys, we gotta move. The organizers are starting the parade early because of weather conditions. Security is forming on the ground while the tikbalang are guarding the rooftops. Our allies say the aswang are already moving to their positions. Tito stay with Reyna while Fei, Finn, and I head out now.

TITO RICAR

As long as you know how to drive Maria. If you wreck her, you pay for the insurance.

RIZ

(rolls eyes)

We can talk about this later.

Everyone other than Ricar goes to Maria. I **start the engine which roars loudly**. Fei and I could see the variety of buttons, levers, and switches on the dashboard.

FEI

That's...a lot of stuff here.

I grasp a Rosary hanging on the mirror and pause for a moment.

RIZ

Tito doesn't know when too much is too much. As the humans say, he lets his inner nerd get the better of him. Let's go.

FINN MACCOOL

I'll be in the back.

Maria **starts to move and drives off from the garage into the road beyond**.

EXT. STREETS OF CEBU DAYTIME

22

Narration: Ate Dalisay

Music blares in speakers all over the city. The streets of Cebu are filled with its denizens. Many of them are **marching with floats already on the move**. The banners on the rafters are **waving wildly by the wind**. Many dancers in their traditional dresses are **dancing with some holding replicas of**

78.

Santo Nino. More **crowds of people start clustering together** in the sidewalk.

On the rooftops, squads of aswang and undead **are setting up special devices and priming them up for detonation.** We will need to be quick, because I am sure someone would have caught wind of this operation.

Suddenly, a group of tikbalang **port next to them and attack them silently with special spears, bows, and small modern arms.** Aswang and undead attempt to counterattack with their weapons or their very claws but too many of them are taken by surprise.

Multiple of squads of aswang and tikbalang are fighting in discrete places, while the humans below remain ignorant of the battles in the hidden places of the city.

EXT. HIGHEST BUILDING IN CEBU - DAYTIME

23

Narration: Ate Dalisay

I fly into the top of the tallest building in Cebu and set myself in secure position. I set my sniper rifle up and go prone aiming at any targets below with my scope. I see one of the tikbalang is about strike one of my brethren. Before he does, **I shoot at a him hitting him through the chest** alerting his squad and forcing them to retreat. I send a message to my men through a communicator.

ATE DALISAY

Got your back. Keep yourselves out in the open. They know I can shoot them from afar.

ASWANG MINION

Salamaat, Ate.

Always satisfying catching them unawares.

EXT. THE STREETS OF CEBU - DAYTIME

24

Narration: Fei

The jeepney **goes deeper into the city while trying to navigate to places where it is allowed to drive in.** We look around to see if anything odd is happening around. Finn suggested earlier I bring the USB drive just in case it has information about disarming the bombs. Yazmin did a full analysis on the manifest. She noticed there is a section that was locked by a code that she wasn't able to crack yet. But

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she noticed it was based on a cipher the aswang crime bosses use to communicate with each other. That is odd. Why have such sensitive information locked in something the aswang can easily gain access to? Maybe it will add up into something later. I pocket it in my sweatpants.

Riz **answers his phone again**. Listening intently, he then curses and hangs up. He activates the screen on the Jeepney dashboard to see a GPS activate about where we are going into the city.

RIZ

Fuck, we have a sniper. Some of our guys are being picked off one by one.

FEI

Do you they know where the sniper is?

RIZ

Considering all the places they are shot at, there is probably one place where the sniper is at. The tallest building in the city,
(Siri dings)
and NO Siri I am not talking to you.

FINN MACCOOL

Great, we might have to split up to make sure we can cover the teams fighting the aswang as well as disable the bombs.

RIZ

Did your bitchy friend say anything special about these bombs?

FINN MACCOOL

Aye...they are bioweapons that release special spores. Turns people into undead. Considering that the mastermind is a necromancer...

FEI

He would have an army of thousands.

RIZ

If not more. All the more reason we have to take him down. We have to find him as soon as possible.

FEI

I could also fight the sniper. But from here, it will be a long stretch to reach there. I can probably cross through any electrical equipment to traverse inside the building quickly but I don't know that will be fast enough to get to the top from the inside, not to mention they could know I am present the moment I enter a room.

Finn nibbles on his thumb for a moment.

FINN MACCOOL

Fei, give me your phone.

FEI

(hands Finn the phone)

You and your thumb. Always planning something together.

FINN MACCOOL

Riz, some string?

RIZ

In the compartment.

Finn opens the dashboard and takes a roll of string and wraps it around **the phone** to **his spear making sure it's firmly in place**.

FINN MACCOOL

Riz, call your backup. I am going to throw this spear in the direction of that building.

(points at the building)

Can you tell them to take this spear and throw it as far as they can into the side of that building? We might have to chain out throws depending on distance.

RIZ

(makes a call on the phone)

We have a plan to take down the sniper.

EXT. ROOFTOPS OF CEBU - DAYTIME

25

Narration: Riz

81.

I see one of the **tikbalang in battle** nod to me from the top of the building, as we are driving by. He **switches calls to inform the others** about the plan as he uses his **hooved foot to step on a zombie's face**.

EXT. THE STREETS OF CEBU - DAYTIME

26

Narration: Riz

Finn **gets on top of the roof** of the Jeepney and aims his spear at the building. He **throws it as far as he possibly can**.

EXT. THE ROOFTOPS OF CEBU - DAYTIME

27

Narration: Riz

One of the tikbalang **ports close to where the spear is**, grabs it, and throws it further at the building before **porting out**. More **tikbalang seeing the spear close to them do the same as well...until**.

EXT. HIGHEST BUILDING IN CEBU - DAYTIME

28

Narration: Ate Dalisay

I hear something **land right underneath the top of the building where I am**. I **detach my lower half and it walks on the side of the building to find the source of the sound**.

EXT. THE STREETS OF CEBU - DAYTIME

29

Narration: Riz

Fei prepares herself as Finn gets his phone ready.

RIZ

You are telling me she is going through what?

FEI

Trust us. I have done this before just not with such a small screen.

FINN MACCOOL

Good luck lass, don't do anything too reckless. Think with your head.

FEI

(nods)

I'll try not to screw up.

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RIZ

More like DO NOT screw up.

I say this as I make a **sharp turn to a different street.**

Fei looks deep at Finn's phone and **then touches the screen. Her body starts contorting in a bizarre way to the point where she can fit through the smartphone until she completely enters through it.**

RIZ

That's really weird.

FINN MACCOOL

She is used to it. Makes me wonder what it is like traversing through a phone.

RIZ

Yeah, now that I think of it...wait why is this street so empty?

We realize we entered a street with no one in it save a group of kneeling cyber undead and a strange monster sitting cross-legged in the middle of the street. His eyes open and his gaze turns to the Jeepney.

FINN MACCOOL

Oh shite...he's real ugly, isn't he?

RIZ

I assume that's the leader?

The headless monster **stands up along with his minions.** He takes his staff from his neck stump and **slams it on the ground creating a shockwave of green energy rocking nearby objects back. The sky around the area warps and twist like this street is phasing to another plane of existence.**

FINN MACCOOL

This sob must have been anticipating us. Fei should not take too long to traverse. She's not the type to faff about. I'll recall my spear soon.

RIZ

Just make sure this fight doesn't spill outside this street. It'll turn to a bloodbath quickly.

FINN MACCOOL

It won't. The spell he's using takes us to an alternate reality cut from the real world. Maybe he wants to be thorough that we won't get aid.

RIZ

So you seen this spell before.

FINN MACCOOL

Yeah, from a different foe.

He must be Herodotus. He stares down the Jeepney and then calls his minions.

HERODOTUS

You like that I meet you in an empty street? As much as I would have like collateral damage happen among the civilian population, I'd rather not be interrupted as I have my fun.

We stare back not showing fear. Necromancers are cowards, no matter who they are.

HERODOTUS

MY CHILDREN! Feast.

The **undead howl and charge at the vehicle**. I counter the charge by **flooring the pedal in attempt to ram at Herodotus running over many undead**. Herodotus manages to **jump over the Jeepney on its roof denting it with his landing**. Finn **climbs on the roof** and engages the monster.

I take a quick glance at Herodotus as he **opens his mouth wide and green fire starts igniting from his throat and then breathes it out in a fiery blast**. Finn dodges it in time by sidestepping to the right side while holding on the window of the Jeepney's side. **Hearing the fire, I hit the break pedal disrupting Herodotus' channeling**.

The zombies **swarm the vehicle** at me. I am quick to **transform and port out**. I **attack the zombies with my batons**, while Finn **climbs back on the roof while kicking Herodotus' left shoulder causing him to stumble and drop his staff**.

Herodotus regains his stance, and **with his hands and feet igniting in green flame**, he attacks Finn **with burning kicks and then a salvo of burning punches**. Finn attempts to block the flurry of attacks but the **sleeves of his coat burn from the touch of the maneater's attacks**. He removes his coat and

counterattacks with his own kicks and punches at the maneater.

Meanwhile, I continue to **fight off the zombies who try to attack me with maws, claws, and the lasers coming from their eyes. I block and dodge most of them but still receives cuts, slashes, and bite marks.** I set my stance and attack more aggressively **hitting as many as I can while I ports multiple times all over the mob. I take one and port myself and the undead out into the air. We fall but I port out just as we land, while the zombie gets splattered by the landing.**

I port to Finn trying to strike at Herodotus with my batons. The maneater **reaches for his staff and blocks the attack.** Suddenly, the monster ports out in a green light as well and **reappears from inside a zombie causing it to explode.** Herodotus then **takes another zombie and eats it whole. His whole body then ignites itself in green flame.**

I notice Finn's burnt bruises.

FINN MACCOOL

Yeah, fighting him like this isn't going to work.

RIZ

You have any great suggestions? Now's the time.

FINN MACCOOL

Give Fei more time, and then I'll get my spear so I can engage him more easily.

Herodotus **breathes out more green fire at us while the horde of undead charge at them.**

RIZ

This is going to fucking suck.

EXT. THE STATIC - DAYTIME

30

Narration: Fei

Flying infinitely into the abyssal static, this is my experience every time I enter this realm. The chaos of image and sound of the black and white void can make it very disorienting to navigate. I can see different channels and shows in floating screens as well as lost souls swimming in the nether unable to leave the realm. I look around finding my way out. In the midst of the white noise, I could see my

85.

phone screen from a certain distance. I fly towards my destination until I reach my portal out of the static sea.

EXT. HIGHEST BUILDING IN CEBU - DAYTIME

31

Narration: Fei

I come out of the screen in a warped and contorted way, as I notice there is a disembodied pair of legs trying to dislodge the spear. I throw up on the legs, **causing it to fall until it manages to grasp a flagpole** jutting out of the building.

I see that my phone is busted from my entrance but I can worry about that later. Too much is at stake. I continue to climb up the building.

The lower half manages to find its footing and **shoots a grappling hook that attaches** to one of my legs.

(Fei grunts as she tries to hold on to the ledge, while the hook tries to pull her down.)

I look down and notice the legs' knees **open up and shoot lasers at me**. I narrowly dodge both of them.

Then, I see the sniper aiming at me point blank. I had to be quick. I dodge the shot in time. The bullet hits the cable that was dragging me down. With it severed, **her lower half** goes off-balance and falls down the building crashing to the ground.

ATE DALISAY

Shit.

As she reels back in pain, I **kick the rifle from sniper's hands then go into a stance ready to fight her**. Then, I realize this must be the aswang crime boss that Riz mentioned before, Ate Dalisay. She is the sniper from the warehouse and I realize her lower body is missing. Riz did mention to me back in his uncle's place that she has the ability to bisect herself. Recovering, Dalisay uses her wings to stand up in way that makes her look very tall, as a way to intimidate me. Her claws elongate like very long knives.

ATE DALISAY

You! From the warehouse. You should have just minded your own business.

(Dalisay tries to claw Fei, but Fei dodge her attacks.)

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FEI

It's hard to ignore someone trying to
blow up a city to make zombies.

(Fei narrowly avoids an arcing swipe from the manananggal.)

ATE DALISAY

Not my plan. That ugly bastard's.

FEI

Even so, you know the entire country
would take notice and try to hunt you
and your kind down if you pull this
off.

ATE DALISAY

(scoffs)

I won't have to worry. But you should
worry about yourself.

FEI

Is it worth it though? To let
thousands if not millions die? To make
the aswang known and vilified further?

ATE DALISAY

You do not understand us.

The flurries don't stop from Dalisay as I try to appeal
whatever nature she has that doesn't want to do this.

FEI

I know the government and those aware
of your kind want you all dead. In
fact, I am an exile as my homeland
considers me unnatural. We are both
unwanted by our homes.

Dalisay stops for a moment.

FEI

If what you are doing is an act of
revenge against humanity, I...can
understand that. I tried to commit
revenge on all those that wronged me
in life.

ATE DALISAY

Then why are you trying to stop me?

FEI
Because...why prove these people right
about us? That we are monsters?

ATE DALISAY
We are monsters. We exist to make them
live in fear. To make them know their
place in a hostile world.

She draws her claws and I duck just as she scrapes the walls
violently.

FEI
Who says we have to live for that?
That is not who I am.

ATE DALISAY
I know it is what I am and if you
remain my way, I'll shred you like the
rest.

Dalisay pounces at me slamming me to the ground.

ATE DALISAY
No more talk. I don't know why you
thought talking to me would work.

FEI
So you are doing this for revenge, for
yourself or someone important to you?

Dalisay pauses for a moment. She seems to be lost in thought.

FEI
Would they want you to do all of this?

ATE DALISAY
Don't presume.

FEI
I am not. That is why I am asking you.

Thinking carefully about what is going to come next, Dalisay
considers her options.

FEI
I am not even asking you to change
your ways. Just know this whole plan
is not worth to everyone involved.

ATE DALISAY

You know if I decide to listen to you,
it is not going to change what is
happening in the eyes of the
authorities. Or my people. It won't
make sense to turn back now.

FEI

I know that Herodotus' bombs are
Pinnacle technology and so are his
thralls' implants.

ATE DALISAY

That much is obvious.

Ate still holds me down, but if I can get through to her;
maybe further bloodshed can be averted.

FEI

And I can prove that to you. Manifest
64 has the term Legazpi M-1565 in its
schematics.

ATE DALISAY

Hmm...you think I don't know that? I
had a feeling about it. The tech is
something I am not proud of using.

FEI

(takes out the drive)
I have the manifest from the
warehouse.

Ate Dalisay raises a brow in surprise.

ATE DALISAY

Hmph...what do you expect me to do
with that drive?

FEI

I am giving it to you. Please, we
couldn't access the full information
from the drive. I think you access it.
It has a cipher from your people.

I hand over the drive, which only adds to her expression of
confusion. She slowly stops pinning me down and rises up to
look at the drive.

ATE DALISAY

What are---

FEI

Please....just take a look at it.

Dalisay raises a brow and plugs the drive on an extension on a communicator she has. She enters the code without issue. The screen gives a bunch of data that she scrolls down. She gives an expression showing distress.

FEI

What have you discovered?

ATE DALISAY

I am...such an idiot. I helped him. If those bombs detonate---

She gives me the communicator and I read on the screen. The data reveals the bombs would not only will turn humans into undead. The effect of the spores will kill all other life on the island of Cebu, including aswang.

FEI

So I guess, now you have a reason.

ATE DALISAY

The Luzon gangs betrayed me. There's much they have to answer for. The data was right under my nose in the very warehouse I secured. Is this why the Kuyas said there wasn't nothing worthwhile in the manifest other than what I already know?

FEI

So you'll help me?

ATE DALISAY

I wonder why the drive had an aswang cipher. It's Pinnacle property, like someone on the inside wanted me to know.

I hesitantly **walk over to Dalisay and lower her claws.**

FEI

We can worry about it later. Let's make sure Herodotus doesn't get his way. You have the power to turn the tide and make things right.

ATE DALISAY

Like calling for peace? Not possible.

FEI

I doubt we can heal the rift between the aswang and Cebu but we can at least stop things from escalating further.

Ate Dalisay sighs. She beckons me to grab onto her. She **spreads her wings.**

ATE DALISAY

Hang on. We can reach Herodotus. We need to take him down to disorient the undead.

FEI

Let's go then.

Dalisay **flies with soaring speed to the direction** where Herodotus is as she knows where he is positioned.

EXT. THE ROOFTOPS OF CEBU - DAYTIME

32

Narration: Fei

As the **fight between different squads ensues**, the aswang lieutenant and I fly overhead while she barks orders on her communicator. I could see an immediate effect as some aswang pause from the fighting hearing new orders. Some are confused but ultimately retreat from their opponents. The tikbalang are taken aback from the retreat but nonetheless take the opportunity to **destroy the undead** and to **extract the bombs** from all over the city.

We see the sky distort around an area of the city. As we closely enter, Dalisay stops.

ATE DALISAY

I know this spell. Herodotus traps his victims before he claims them by cutting off the area to a different level of reality.

FEI

How do we get in?

ATE DALISAY

You don't.

FEI

(pauses)

Can you turn on your communicator?

91.

Dalisay pauses in confusion, but she decides to follow my request. She turns on her device and I enter it and disappear back into the Static.

EXT. THE STREETS OF CEBU - DAYTIME

33

Narration: Riz

Finn and I **fight off the undead** while we take cover behind the Jeepney from the **fire breath attacks** of the maneater. Herodotus then draws a **twisted twin-barrel shotgun with leech-like protrusions and fires green shrapnel at the Jeepney causing it to rock back.**

FINN MACCOOL

How tough is this jeepney?

RIZ

Tough enough to survive most anti-vehicle munitions.

FINN MACCOOL

How did your uncle---?

RIZ

Don't ask. Gives me a headache.

FINN MACCOOL

I am going to recall my spear. Hopefully, Fei has reached her point by now.

Finn **calls upon his spear which ports back on his hand.**

He **throws it** through the Jeepney window at Herodotus' **shotgun destroying it.**

The beast **roars as he slams his staff on the ground creating a greenish shockwave that pushes everything even the Jeepney away.** Finn retrieves his spear and resists the attack. He charges at Herodotus and **they spar with long-range polearms.**

I get on the Jeepney and **activate its defense system by pushing some buttons.** The Jeepney's **hidden guns fire at the undead devastating them.**

Finn starts getting the upper hand on Herodotus now attacking more aggressively at him.

HERODOTUS

YOU. PERISH. NOW. HIBERNIAN!

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FINN MACCOOL

I am not the one losing the fight.

Finn **jabs his spear into Herodotus' side and wounds him.**

The maneater **roars and ports away into his last undead minion as it explodes as he reappears. Herodotus channels all the corpses nearby activating their implants causing them to detonate. The bodies disintegrate, but a torrent of green energy motes starts getting absorbed by him. He starts becoming bulkier and even more monstrous from his transformation.**

Finn **hurls his spear** at the monster. It **bounces off of him.** Finn is caught by surprise as he gains **his spear back.**

HERODOTUS

Am I losing this fight now?

RIZ

Finn? Any more ideas?

FINN MACCOOL

Kinda tough to think in the heat of the moment.

As Herodotus advances, I **try to fire the Jeepney's weapons at the monster** but they bounce off of him.

Finn slowly backs up as Herodotus **prepares for a fiery attack from his maw.**

HERODOTUS

I feast in glory.

Suddenly, I see the TV screen on the Jeepney explode as Fei bursts out to stand with us ready for battle.

RIZ

Took you long enough.

FEI

How are you both fairing?

FINN MACCOOL

Not great.

The maneater shoots green flame yet again. I port way to the side, while Finn slams his spear to make his light shield. Fei phases through the flames and rushes to Herodotus. That's some guts right there.

The Maneater attempts to slam Fei with his burning fists. He misses and Fei slides underneath the monster. She turns and jumps on his back, where she phases her arm through his body...and rips out his heart. Goddamn. The maneater coughs acidic blood, as he stumbles. Fei jumps off until he twists his body 180 degrees and grabs her. He throws her at a car, which she phases through it but ends up becoming corporeal and smashes into an electronics store.

RIZ

Fuck, didn't she rip out his heart?
Does he have more?

The maneater stands up and rushes me. I try to port behind, but he twists again. I port again to the front. Suddenly, his back opens up with a mouth and shoots more green flames. I teleport to the side but he swiftly does a sweeping kick that I am too slow to dodge. I can't believe I just said that.

(Riz trips and falls)

The maneater attempts to step on me, but Finn attacks him from behind catching his attention. I see Fei walking out with her torn hoodie holding a plasma screen TV monitor. She runs to us. The maneater claws at Finn who blocks his assaults with his spear.

Fei rushes by Finn to Herodotus. She dodges his burning attacks and jumps **into his maw whose mouth is erupting in green fire. Though on fire herself, Fei touches the screen of the TV to activate what seems to be a portal.** The beast tries to **close his jaws on Fei with some of the teeth cutting into her ectoplasmic body. She concentrates as she contorts into the TV.**

Herodotus goes wide-eyed when he **contorts as the TV inside his jaws causes him** to be sucked into it. He and Fei disappear entirely with only a wrecked TV screen **falling to the ground.**

RIZ

Holy Shit.

FINN MACCOOL

Fei!

We **run to the wrecked TV looking at** it. I notice the sky warping back to normal.

Finn frantically tries to turn on the TV but to no avail. I sigh and put my hand on his shoulder.

RIZ
Sorry about Fei.

We both remain silent until my **phone started ringing**.

RIZ
(answers phone)
Can I call you back, I am in the
middle of...

The **phone explodes** as Fei in a mangled and wounded state
reappears from the phone landing on me. She then throws up.
Happy to see her back but does she have to do that?

RIZ
Eugh.

Finn goes to hug Fei in her messed up state.

FINN MACCOOL
Reckless again, Lass...

Fei shrugs while she slowly tries to re-adjust herself.

FEI
Sorry, but it worked didn't it?

RIZ
Where's Herodotus?

Finn starts **snapping Fei's mangled body back together** to make
it easier to heal. These guys are weird even for me. But I am
glad they were around.

FEI
Hopefully, gone for good in the
Static.

FINN MACCOOL
Didn't expect you to go through
bringing someone into your realm.

FEI
Herodotus was dangerous. I don't think
we could easily defeat him other than
vanquishing him to some place where he
can't endanger lives here.

FINN MACCOOL
I am not sure how I can write this in
the report. Not to mention how you got

here.

FEI
Finn, no need to know right now. Let's
just take it easy for now.

FINN MACCOOL
What about the bombs?

A fellow member of the TIKBALANG tribe **ports before the us
catching** us all by surprise.

TIKBALANG
The bombs are disarmed and the aswang
are retreating.

I raise a brow and look to Fei.

RIZ
I suppose you had something to do with
the aswang retreating?

FEI
Riz, can we just rest for the moment?
Besides, your cousin is waiting for
you right?

RIZ
Shit, yeah.
(looks at tikbalang)
Tell others that I will join them
after I take care of a few things.

The tikbalang nods and **ports out**.

RIZ
If you are two are able, you deserve
to at least observe the parade.

Finn and Fei look at each other and then nod to me.

I can see Fei look up above. I look at her direction to also
find to be a lower half of a body join the upper half of...a
manananggal? I could see her vaguely nodding with approval
before disappearing in the rooftops.

EXT. THE STREETS OF CEBU - DAYTIME

34

Narration: Fei

The **parade continues without incident**. The **crowd continues to**

celebrate the closing parade of Sinulog. The tikbalang organize their own party together watching the parade from the rooftops. Riz back in human form finds Reyna. They hug and both watch the parade together. Finn supports me as we watch the event unfold from the second floor of a building. I could see the little girl with the former human thug I let go watch the parade too. The girl notices me and waves back smiling warmly. I wave back smiling as well.

FEI

The ending to our mission is much better than what happened in Brazil.

FINN MACCOOL

Don't remind me. Remember we are still on probation for that. Hopefully, our success here will let command lighten up a bit. We will have to explain all the details. And I have a feeling you haven't been forthright with me.

FEI

The aswang boss switched sides when she found that the bombs would have killed the aswang too. The manifest had some details specifically to allow an aswang crime boss to access through a cipher.

FINN MACCOOL

Why would Pinnacle's manifest allow an aswang to have access to their files?

FEI

I think someone on the inside wanted her to know, like this was part of a plan.

FINN MACCOOL

I wonder who would that be.

FEI

Finn, we can get there when we get there. Can we at least make this moment a small relief from all the action?

FINN MACCOOL

I didn't expect someone like you to be tired. You're dead after all.

FEI

You know what I mean.

Finn and I **hear footsteps** as a tourist comes by and leans on the railing looking at the parade.

JIM

Nice sight, isn't it?

Finn could tell I am caught off-guard by the new arrival.

FINN MACCOOL

You know him?

JIM

Hey, Jim's the name. Enjoying the festival?

Somehow I had a feeling I would see him again, though I say otherwise.

FEI

Umm...yeah...we are. Didn't expect to see you again.

JIM

Well, I was busy with work for the last few days but I managed to get the time off for this special occasion. But I am more concerned about you. You look...really beat up.

FEI

It's nothing special. Just an accident.

JIM

(snorts)

You are taking it very well. Your clothes are ripped up and I can see you're bandaged up here and there. Nothing special about multiple injuries?

FINN MACCOOL

What's your business with us, Jim?

JIM

There's going to be a time where I will need your help.

Finn and I look at each other confused.

FEI
Our help?

JIM
(nods)
Yes. I made a deal with AGON for aid.

While we are on the second floor talking, I see from the side of my eye Reyna looking on from below. She has a quick glance of Jim before turning to Riz and they continue watching the parade. Odd. Hmm...

FEI
So you aren't just a tourist.

JIM
(shrugs)
Wasn't it obvious?

FEI
It was very obvious.

JIM
I tend to stick out like a sore thumb.
(chuckles)
I am leaving the country soon. Lots of plans within plans. You and your allies will be called to action very soon. The world is in the midst of falling apart. And the right kind of people will be needed to take on the threats to come. The question is do you have what it takes to face what's out there?

Jim said that last sentence with a sense of foreboding.

FEI
Finn and I have been through much.
Whatever happens, we will be there.

JIM
Hmm, that's what I like to hear. Enjoy the parade, and Viva, Pit Senyor, you two.

Jim walks away, and I see in the back pocket of his pants a wallet that has the symbol of Pinnacle, a triangle with yellow outlines with lines inside nearly reaching each other.

They look like hands praying to a god. He looks back and winks at me before going down the stairs. Finn looks at me strangely.

FINN MACCOOL

I think you have some explanation for me.

FEI

(sighs)

Yeah, a lot.

From a distance thanks to my acute vision, I see Reyna **text on her phone** to an unknown number saying only three words. Words that make me feel that I will have to keep an eye on her and Jim.

(MAGNUS IS HERE)

Magnus? The family that owns Pinnacle and the other corporations that dominate our world?.....I think we have brought ourselves the attention of some big players.

As the parade died down, I told Finn that I could support myself and that I wanted some time alone.

Finn would go down to meet Riz and Reyna, while I went to the roof.

(Final Movement of cradle starts playing.)

I sit on the ledge and look outward to the city of Cebu. So much has happened in a few days. I met new enemies, but I also met new friends as well as those who seem to play both sides.

The sun is setting, and I could still feel the subtle sting of the sunlight upon me. However, I am happy I can feel it at all. It just shows I am not numb. And I refuse to not feel anything, even if it hurts physically or emotionally. Even in death, I am still human. And I have come to terms that I am here to stay among the living. There's more to the world I have yet to see. And the more I do these missions, the more I realize my curse is a hidden blessing. A second chance to do good and be around people that I can proudly call my friends.

I see Riz come up and sit next to me smiling. We say nothing to each other as we look at the horizon. I wonder if Riz wants to join Finn and I. I hope so. I welcome his company.

Whatever happens next, good or ill, the adventure continues.

100.

We may be monsters or legends, but we will be there for those who need our help in the present as well as those in the future to come.