



PRIZE OF ROMANTIC IDEALISM

BY

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This book is a work of fiction, and the story has a bit element Not exactly of Hitchcock's Vertigo but fatal obsession of money that brought humans to their downfall.

Names, characters, places and incidents either are the products of the author's imagination or self-experiences or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events or locales is entirely coincidental.



IN THE DRIFT

***Breasting forever the billows of time,
Backward and forward borne,
Through scenes of good forever,
And scenes of crime,***

***Now in a zone of love, and now in a clime,
Where the soul is with anguish torn***

W.J. Coughlin



**** FOREWORD ****

We have our secrets and our needs to confess. We may remember how in childhood, adults were able to look right through us, and into us, and what an accomplishment it was when we, in fear and trembling, could tell our first lie, and make for ourselves, the discovery that we are irredeemably alone in certain respects, and know that within the territory of ourselves, there can be only our footprints. –R.D. Laing - The Divided Self

The early nineteen seventies saw that culmination of an apparent spiritual awakening in Europe and America. The Far East Asia that belongs to the third world countries had a slow-moving motion towards modern civilization. The teachings of Roman Catholicism all suggested the beginnings of a paradigm from the dominant patriarchal productive- consumerist model by which they had become accustomed to living, and a real engagement with principles such as mercy, compassion and right actions. It was, looking back, a far more hopeful time than might be imagined, and as we entered the Reagan/Thatcher years, hope seemed more essential than ever to the fabric of decent life. But it seems that the general shift in attitudes people had hoped for has been effectively subverted; the cynical wars and the triumph of presentation over content or values in political life, all seems to indicate a victory for the old (new) world order. On the surface of their spiritual lives, there has been more-fold of shift: on one hand a commodification of religious ideas, reducing the spiritual to a series of products, self-help culturing their lands, sending their kids to big cities where college and universities available for their children to acquire higher education and various superficial but harmless paraphernalia to do with the 'New Age' beliefs.

On the other hand, a denial of the very existence of that soul sickness which lies at the heart of a competitive, poor overpopulated society. For lots of them, the only sphere of authenticity is the personal existence to survive, the political that appears to have become corrupted beyond redemption. The desire to withdraw, to be quiet, to stake out limited, controllable space, is widespread, and the longing for authenticity is presented, not as a profound spiritual need, but as a form or treatable neurosis.

The individual world of this book was nonetheless vividly imagined, fully in detail based on the real happening, there is in them a division of sympathy between different characters. To appreciate the mystery, you renounce the patient desire to see and read further and understand better.

One good heartbreak will provide a Novelist with a succession of different novels and the poet with any number of sonnets and lyric poems, but he or she must have a heart that can break. I hope I offered to readers a novel with an informing metaphor, a story with the stimulation of action and the roughage of fact what might have been the reason of romantic idealism.

PROLOGUE

"Palo Alto California – 1989"

Things are not always as they appear. One's real life is almost always the life one does not lead. A strong belief in something which is good but probably impossible to achieve.

Vera Valdemar, tall, skinny, fair skin with chinks eyes, at the first glance her stern look changed when she smiles but in one way charming. She had been working ten years in California when she got married to Bill Seifert an American Jewish twenty-eight years old chubby, with cute baby face, white skin, with his blue-grey eyes, black hair, standard size, he was attractive on his own right. Vera was thirty-eight when Bill fell into her orbit, she lied about her age, changed her birth year exactly ten years younger. She fell in love with the young Jewish and would give a slice of her soul to win him. To avoid any uncomfortable questions, she had the idea to make a little correction of her age. Vera worked as a Medical Technologist assistant in a hospital in Palo Alto half an hour from her town house. It is becoming late, and she must drive let alone the traffic was often a nerve-killing. It was a cloudy morning when her husband Bill left for Silicon Valley where he works as Apple Software wizard.

Few minutes after he left Vera was annoyed when her doorbell rang, run to see who the hell is coming at this hour when she must go to work. She was out of herself, extremely surprised when she saw her brother Leo Valdemar with a suitcase at her doorsteps. Oh! My God why didn't you give any prior notice that you are coming? Since she migrated to America ten years back, she had not seen her brother and there had been always a heavy constrained relationship between them. Leo unwashed, tired and hungry stared at his sister and said won't you let me in, or I should remain standing here at your doorstep? I am starving and depleted from my long journey and do not ask me now, it is an awfully long story. Vera said I must report to work, showed him to her guest room and told him help yourself whatever you find something to eat in the refrigerator. Vera in haste said goodbye, I must go, see you in the evening.

Leo packed his things out, had a long shower changed into a clean pants and shirt which made him human then attacked the kitchen. He found eggs, ham and some bread made an omelet and devoured all what he cooked. When he was satiated, he roamed around the house inspected the rooms and was glad to see how comfortable his elder sister live.

He saw handsome wedding pictures, Leo smiled that indeed his sister was able to find a man who married her despite of her idiosyncrasy and fussiness. They were in real sense of the word *sibling* not really close as brother and sister, they grew up like strangers, but he had full respect of his sister. While growing up they rarely had fights, she forgives him, and he was patient with her. Their attitude came from their mother Luisa's strict, conservative upbringing. Leo did not normally permit himself the indulgence of sentiment. There was in his nature a cold streak and he cultivated it because it protected him.

Vera was having one of those days-no big surprise, she must call her Boss that she will be coming bit late due to family reasons. Her back was just killing her, there was so much work to do, and she had a splitting headache that her younger brother out of the blue appeared mysteriously at her doorsteps. And the hot argument with her husband the night before who was acting lately strange, coming home late often after midnight. She did not have enough sleep with Bill snoring disgustingly loud beside her like a thunder attacking heaven. Asking him was out of the question. She kept her doubts and suspicion to herself that he might been cheating on her, was kicking her brain.

When Vera reached the Laboratory, everything was fine and she was lucky to have a kindhearted employer Doctor Jake Sinclair, an Oncologist and Gastroenterologist in Palo Alto hospital, in his mid-forties, Scottish parents, divorced childless, a distinguished Doctor, an intelligent sensible, tall, brown hair, blue eyes long black lashes, speak British English, Ergo a fine handsome figure of a man. He was too good to be true. Vera acted very awkward near him during the day. He understood her fine excuses when she sometimes came late to duty that happens rarely. His soft voice sounds like a radio announcer, listening to him Vera feels sleepy. Vera could not concentrate with her work that very day, not because of her Doctor Sinclair but worried how to explain her husband about the sudden appearance of her brother Leonardo. She thought of not coming home that very night and stay over with friends, leave Bill and Leo get to know each other. But she could not escape, she promised her brother to have a heart-to-heart talk when she comes home in the evening.

Besides, she did not want that her brother would be intimidated by her husband who is becoming an arrogant ass since he got the superb job and behaved like he is the son of Allah or Mohammed whoever their Jewish God was.

She called Bill in his office to inform him that her brother Leo arrived and now stayed at their house but useless, he was not at his desk and was informed that he was out. Vera hangs up and was glad that she was not able to tell him.

The family name Seifert was originally Stokowski his father changed it for survival reasons. They were Jews from Poland, his grandparents and parents migrated to America before the Second World War broke out. Vera cannot imagine her husband might speak to Leo in Yiddish. She must come home and clear with her brother what his problem is or was and why he came like a Bank robber, or a murderer as if he feared to be seen or behaved like a wanted man. He looked like as if he committed something serious against the law. But Vera knew her brother is a good and honest person, but she was not sure anymore. She thought he would never steal or kill someone or do grievous things like that.

Vera thought, I must know what he had done and why he came dressed like a wharf worker. His wife Eva was overly cautious of how her husband look, but this was at the beginning of their marriage. Aside from the fact that she did not hear any news from her and their kids, she was disappointed of Eva's silence. As far as she heard from a friend, they are now in Chicago with her sister Charito Mendoza. Vera heard that Leo's marriage went sour, and his wife might divorce him. What a mess.

Vera used to place a long-distance call to her parents in Basilan Island at least once a month just to hear how they are. Even though connection is nearly impossible, somehow, she could pick up bits and pieces from her mother's babble. Beside from Luisa's letter that came often, she rarely mentioned about the life of her brother. Likewise, Leo did not get in touch with her for some time and she had no idea what was going on in his life. His wife Eva was neither communicative, no one knows that their marriage was not working. However, Luisa usually hears all the news from in and outside the island, but she was not aware what her son doing. Basilan Island was quite far from Manila she could not afford to travel visit them and leave Aldo alone to tend their store.

Luisa was always defensive with her children; she was annoyed when people building up negative gossips making mountains out of molehills. Verbal news travels always fast, heard a wind about Leo's marriage that was not functioning. Luisa was so proud in spirit that no one could shake her belief that she had reared two good children and showed the world how lucky parents they are. It was her right to believe about her children.

She believes that her daughter in America has a good job as Medical Technologist and got married with a rich guy. And her son a good earning Policeman, in fact promoted to be a Deputy Detective, but unfortunately Luisa Valdemar had no idea about her children's marriage. She was not even able to see Leo's family, except once when the two girls, her granddaughters were still young and had few days' vacation in Basilan. After that she had never seen Leo's family until they migrated to America.

Leo was never communicative not even a short letter, saying Hello to his parents in the island. One must get out of his way to ask him how his family doing, otherwise nobody knows. The fact that Leo had been having a double life since his wedding, it was an open secret, Leo's mother Luisa must have heard something the-like, but she never confronted her son to avoid misunderstanding. She was aware that philandering husband was quite normal in the Philippines. It was never a sensational affair if a married man had a lovey-dovey, only the problem the result in such fun, bastard children were in rampant. Some were taken cared off but mostly the children were the poor victims. The father disappeared; the girlfriend was left behind without any existential security. And this happened to Leo's family.

Vera used to send package from California to Basilan Island containing nice gifts for her mother. Luisa always liked to show off to her neighbors that her daughter was doing fine in America. And that she receives a monthly support from Vera for her and Aldo's medicinal purposes. She could travel to Manila for Doctor's consultation and could go shopping which was the best thing women does. And she used to tell her neighbors that Vera might one day let her come and visit her in California. In those days it was a dream for older people in the Philippines to go abroad, some were able to do it, but some were not due to health problem, traveling twenty- four hours by plane is a great undertaking.

CHAPTER ONE

“The origin of the Valdemar’s - Basilan *Island Philippines* 1945- 1950”

People were just relieved from the chaos of the Second World War, and everybody tried to survive. Basilan is one of the several islands, the remotest part of the Philippines situated at the edge of Sulu Archipelago in between the Sulu Sea and Celebes Sea. The town had a Roman Catholic Church, a Post Office, a market, a Barangay Hall, a small Clinic equipped with a six-man crew, a Doctor, a Nurse and a Midwife with their assistant and helpers. The town was not big with a population of about over thousand families including children that rapidly propagated that the mayor had to widen the space of the town market to give space for the fast-growing economy. The couple Luisa and Aldo Valdemar were important member of the community. They had their small store selling various commodities necessary for daily living, almost all kinds of grocery sandy goods except textile.

At the tiny corner of the shop was Luisa’s hairdresser business for men and women who wanted to have their hair cut and curled or hair dyeing or hairstyling. With their income they supported the studies of their two children Vera the eldest and Leonardo until they finished their college at the university in Manila. They stayed in a boarding house during their studies. The small shop of the Valdemar’s situated at the heart of the town was just comfortable enough for the people to reach and buy their needs. Aldo and Luisa lived in the upper part of the house. Luisa in her early forties was an ambitious, physically unattractive woman, beauty is not a word, but she was a kind- hearted, rational and full of humor on her own ironic way. She was rather alert at her age, ears on the ground and eyes everywhere. She was the walking newsletter of the town, always up to date of all happenings, good or bad and a very enthusiastic news-spreader. Her curiosity often annoyed her husband in times when she got involved in some conflicts by transferring gossips to the wrong persons.

Aldo Valdemar in his late forties, a tall slim figure of a man rather timid, intelligent, humorous was under the thumb of his wife Luisa like a lapdog. Both never had a higher education but finished the secondary level. They worked hard to be able to send their two kids to college to acquire a higher education.

Aldo had his store and Luisa with her Hairdresser Salon kept their financial stability going. Luisa always letting her idealism get in the way of practicalities, her theory that the essential nature of reality lies in consciousness of reason. They were healthy and model parents brought up their kids with deep conviction in catholic faith. Their daughter Vera was born in 1946 right after the Second World War, a silent child, aloof and mysterious. She did not play with other kids or have friends, she always wanted to be alone and never speak much.

There was no medical assistance in Basilan Island that could offer any illuminating explanation about the behavior of their daughter. However, she was treated as a normal child despite her solipsism or being different. *During the fifties people in those poor villages in the Philippines never knew such things like psychological imbalance of children or allergy or any luxury sickness.* Children were reared like house pets, feed them, cloth them and clean them or water them like plants to survive. Children were born to be seen but not to be heard, most of them were taken for granted from their parents. Sometimes it is odd how stupid a clever parent can be that oftentimes couple blamed each other when they noticed their kids had some physical or mental deficit (or of today's term a "genetic deficiency"). Apparently ambitious parents developed certain frustrations for the future of their children. Parents blaming each other concealed their disappointments of being lack of knowledge that it is difficult to analyze the human frailty. No matter how poor people those days, they love to produce lots of children regardless of poverty, when the father was only a fisherman and mother a housewife. They are still happy with a hand to mouth existence.

After the Sec. World War, it was common world-wide that people produced numerous children. However, in the third world Asian countries people had entirely different conventions and morals. *Parents are expecting that someday their children would earn money and pay them back in return for looking after them in their olden days. This were parents' firm conviction, as if the children wanted to be born under such condition. In the olden days there was no such thing as Home for the Aged or Nursing Homes, therefore children were obliged.* Or it was in their common sense that it is their children's responsibility to take care of their parents and tend them until the end of their days. Vera the eldest daughter of the Valdemar's carried this recluse behavior as a child until she was in her puberty. Comfortingly, when she reached the age of fourteen to fifteen the period that she turned into a woman, Luisa and Aldo believed that their daughter's demeanor was only a passing stage because her nature changed. She entertained relatives and friends cheerfully. She was good in school, in fact she finished elementary level and graduated high school with no problem. Nobody knows where she got the scheme and fancied to study Medical Technology, then she was sent to college at seventeen and studied five years in the University of the Philippines. Vera stayed in a boarding house in Manila owned by Aldo's distant cousin.

Years rolled by unnoticed Vera had successfully acquired her degree. After her graduation, her parents were so delighted, arranged a big house party in Basilan Island to cheer their daughter's success. Relatives and friends were invited to rejoice with them. Vera was happy to return to the small village to be with her parents before her venture to work in the big city.

Before she practices what, she studied, a month break to be with her parents, enjoyed the marvelous beaches of the island, a family bonding was just what she needed. She got a recommendation from the University and automatically got a job in a Medical Laboratory. The thing to understand, that the detachment from her parents for good has nothing to do with being ungrateful. With her degree she had no possibility to work in the island, she had to be in a big city where there are hospitals and Laboratories. She thought of migrating to America but in the meantime, she was glad to work and earn her first own money. She does not want to shock her parents by leaving them to go abroad. The capital city was far enough for her parents how much more in foreign country where they could never visit and see her whenever they wanted to. Well, there is still her brother Leo two years younger than her, who was still in his college studies, so her parents were not childless.

Vera reflected that she wishes to live by the light of her own satisfaction, thru that secret vital inwardness which was even more remarkable than her reason. In an ideal world, in her college sorority she must have some admirer or suitor but as strange as she was, no news that she had some girlish flirt. A boyfriend or dating in her college days, were not in her vocabulary. She observed her schoolmates flirting but Vera does not want any of it. Of course, her friends understood her since she was extremely serious to discover the world by immigrating to foreign countries which at the time was every girl's dream. This plan of Vera's was still unknown to her parents, she wanted to tell them if things turn out right as she expected, meaning to file her job application in one of the Medical Lab anywhere in America.

Leonardo Valdemar two years younger than Vera an active and normal male who enjoyed his teenage time. He had a strong grave round face with thick nose, straight bushy black hair, brown complexion and his eyes stared at the world with unemotional critical curiosity. He became a friend of alcohol but never abandoned his studies. He studied Criminology and muddled through until he graduated to be able to find a job. After graduation he spent a long vacation with his parents in Basilan Island. Someone said that Leo looked like an Apache Indiana although this did not make sense, it was accepted as expressive description. Leo was twenty-five when he started looking for a job in the city capital. Leo got recommendation from his professor to the Special Team of the Police Enforcement Unit, and he wrote his resume, and sent his application. Leo more than most boys of his age, lived by an idea of himself which was in some ways significantly at odds with reality. Some people smilingly described and defined his conduct as rude and prudentially violent, others, pointed out that this had an element of truth. However, Leo was neither any of these unqualified people's critic or repressed homosexual nor an Oedipus victim. He is not bound to do any depravation. He was at his age, a kind capable of development when he grows older.

A week after he mailed his application, he received a positive reply and was called for an interview. His stomach twisting with nerves, his knees were shaking with apprehension feared that he might not qualify as a Criminologist or whatever they need.

Leo Valdemar's Job Interview

He dressed formally neat, a new pants and a new polo shirt with suiting tie, a jacket not really the last cry of fashion but there was a sort of elegance, with a clean shiny shoe to look impressive. He felt confident which was the only evident of his youth perhaps with his ebullient enthusiasm of being sure of himself. He looked exactly like going to a conference or to join a merger meeting. It was said that first impression is lasting.

He must appear at the Police Department that was in the new city hall building, an attractive five-story white cemented building, a wide entrance with tall pillars and both sides surrounded by lush green lawn dotted with palm trees. When Leo entered the building, he read the long board where to find the right floor which was at the fifth floor where the department of Internal Affairs located and the office of Human Resources. He took the lift walked right on the long hallway knocked the door number 502, opened by a tall, statuesque woman in her thirties, black hair and black eyebrows and a face with a straight sharp nose and strong chin. She ushered him to the receiving room that was like a conference room, he was asked to have a seat and the interviewer will be in a minute. There were segregated rooms with glass-fronted offices designated for ranking police officers and the conference room lined the left and the right sides. Leo was never nervous in his life but appearing to a job interview for the first time in his life was quiet an experience. He felt like he was about to be convicted. After few minutes, the interviewer came in, seemed to be in good mood.

Deputy George Medina, in his late forties, short chubby was the human resources in-charge with documents in his hand entered the room. Leo bit shivering stand up immediately to greet him, good morning Sir, and he was meet with a certain smile that eased his nerves. He offered his handshake and George Medina grinned introduced himself. Leo felt Medina's strong fist whose face in repose had a calm benevolent expression took his seat opposite then said, Mr. Valdemar I went through your Personal Resume and school records, as well as your credentials along with the famous Professor's outstanding recommendation. It is more than enough that you are dully qualified to be one of us. Leo was speechless and stared to the man before him wanted to hug him, but he sat still. Deputy Medina started, well, Mr. Valdemar tell me, are you married or engaged? Leo replied in polite tone No Sir, this is my first job application, and I am still young to get married.

A wife and children were not a part of my master plan right now. Aside, I could not afford to support a family and the enormous responsibility towards a family for the time being is inopportune. George Medina smiled and said Well, it's good for you not being hooked yet but be careful there are so many beautiful witches raging in the night at bars and dinner parties looking for a good catch. Leo gave a slight grin and smiled.

The interviewer continued I was already hooked and have two children, am still contented with my married life, showing a sign of his fingers in question mark. Marriage is a compromise business; real love can be sometimes boring. Well, I don't want to discourage you. So back to your first job, we will put you for the first year as Deputy Dispatcher, equipped with badge, uniform and a monthly salary. If the evaluation of your performance satisfactory, you can be promoted to another Unit where job is like an FBI detective, as Criminologist you have the chance. Leo could hardly believe what he heard that he got a job. After half an hour easy discussion George Medina asked him, do you think you can start on Monday, eight o'clock sharp the 15th of January 1973, someone had to get your measurement for your uniform. Leo not so enthusiastic but eager said, no problem Sir. I would be here and thank you Sir, can I call you Leo? Yes, Sir its nice meeting you. George Medina said just call me George it is enough; you do not need to address me like a professor, and they laugh together. Leo assumed that the interview is over, Deputy Medina stand up walked towards the door but said before you go, I must give you a tour of the building downwards to know where to find the offices of people you need and who inhabit this new building.

They took the elevator to the fourth floor entered the room, Leo was astounded to see the center of the vast area with several desks arranged in three rows, each desk equipped with each own typewriters, two drawer file cabinet, normal chair and side benches. At the corner side of the rear area, concealed from view by a heavy door that was always kept closed, was a long narrow lockup used for temporary detaining offenders who were being charged and booked. Officers tried to concentrate on their paperwork and ignored the distractions.

At the third floor were offices of defendants Lawyers and the office of so-called Special Team Enforcement Unit. At the second floor were more offices for various Police officers and surveillance detectives and the ground floor were courtrooms and auditorium used mostly occupied for meetings of high officials. At the end of the hour, they shake hands and Leo left the building, he was thrilled and cannot believe with his luck that he got a job easily with recommendations. *He thought in this world either you have money, or you have connections to back you up, or you are a contemptible outcast bastard.*

His interview went perfectly as he expected with the nice recommendation of his professor, he got the job easily. The problem is he had to prove to his professor that he was worthy of his recommendation. He walked out to the road exuberantly happy, the cars from all directions inched toward the building where the Police station situated. Leo's exhilaration was in high gear all he wanted was to drink of his happiness and get drunk.

He walked to a nearby coffee shop asked to use the telephone and called two of his close buddies Joey Vallejo and Edward Diaz to divulge the news of his luck to have been accepted to work as a Deputy Dispatcher at the Special Police Enforcement Unit. They were amazed to hear their good friend that exactly right after their graduation already find a job and ready to join the relentless dirty world full of crime and prejudices. Since his two friends and former University mates were sons of fortune from a well-off family, they do not necessarily need a job and money at the moment or after finishing their studies. They arranged a rendezvous to meet at their favorite restaurant in Makati where Leo quickly reserved a table for three for a delicious dinner. Leo knew how his friends were always well-dressed in designer clothes and with his attire for the interview was quiet right that Leo looked dignified enough.

His two friends, men in their mid-twenties where devastatingly handsome male species came with their expensive designer jeans and jacket, muscular, sport lover, fun of wine and women. When Joey with Eduard parked his BMW sports car in front of the restaurant, the three boys greeted each other hugged Leo and said in unison, you are a clever lucky boy Amigo and you just look lustily fantastic, maybe this is the reason you got the job. Several eyes of men and women were on them curiously thinking these lovely three men looked like movie stars. They went inside the restaurant cheered, took their seats in a silent corner table, away from the eyes of curiosity seekers to be able to discuss about their future.

Joey and Edward, Edie in short were happy to see their friend and university buddy, hurrahd to him who is luckier than them in terms of looking for a job, we hope you will not arrest us if we make some pranks and laughed joyously. When the waiter with his stiff white-collar uniform appeared to take their appetizer drinks, they ordered San Miguel Beer. The two guys laughed and bragged, we took our time to look for a job to enjoy our days first, before we face the serious part of life. Leo was aware that his two friends were breed from a good stock with money and wealth they did not came from pauper family.

Joey Vallejo, the third in line of his five siblings whose parents owned a vast Lands in the island of *Bohol best known for a geographical wonder called the Chocolate Hills*. Between towns stand more than one thousand haycock hills of unknown origin. The rest are obscured by mist because here you are on a plateau 2000 feet above sea level.

Joey's Father, Jorge Vallejo, with some Spanish blood inherited vast of lands from his father, a plantation of fruit trees, mangoes, oranges, pineapples. The organic products were sold fresh, and the rest were made into various conserved fruits supplied the department stores all over the Republic. Most of their products went for export to foreign countries. Jorge Vallejo was married to Carmen Velasquez, a pure Spanish bred, a daughter of fortune as the usual rule of life, money marries money. Grinning with his drink in the hand, Joey teased maybe I'll take further studies in America and join the US Marines. Perhaps my old man will give me credit and might show a little appreciation of my achievement, because till today my father never said anything like I am proud of you son that you graduated Criminology which was not his plan for me.

The two men Leo and Eduard asked him, what does your old man wanted you to be? A movie star or something like to become a President of the Philippines? All three laughed and were tiddly. Yeah, maybe something like that. He wanted me to be a something like going to politics which I have no drop of blood to be interested in politics. Leo said in heightened tone, you see he want you to become a Senator if not in the Philippines, perhaps in English Parliament or in the US Senate. The three of them were laughing like they were small boys playing marbles.

Joey Vallejo had two older brothers and two younger sisters. The eldest Ricardo a Doctor of Medicine work in Switzerland, it was said that he lives with a girlfriend but not married yet. The second Benito, still single, a typical business type who studied Agriculture followed the footsteps of his father and possibly in the future take the oar of his father's business. The fourth is Daniela a Nurse who married Edgar Santiago, a man from a plain Filipino family, in the eyes of her parents a *meaningless man*, no money, no profession but a very handsome fellow, a sport enthusiast with nice muscles, well-defined in Silver Star suit, the thorn of Daniela's parent's eyes. He does not fit to their class, but their daughter decided to have him. The youngest, the fifth in line is Mildred still in her studies enjoying her life as a teenager who had everything served in a platter.

The Vallejo family were famous in Bohol, but since the children were sent to Manila for their studies, Jorge Vallejo bought a huge house at the outskirts of the city and the children were catered by a chauffeur in going and coming home from school. They were lucky creatures and of course had their own circle. They do not mix with the common Filipino kids; they were very protected and conscious of their status. Their parents were well-known in entire Bohol and Visayan Island as well as in Manila due to wealthy family of their mother Carmen Vallejo formerly Velasquez, apart from the large chain of manufacturing companies built by Joey's father.

Eduardo Diaz drives a Mercedes sports car the only son and one sister, his father Domingo Diaz, a Surgeon and mother Patricia Diaz, a University Professor live in Green Hills village, few kilometers from Manila proper where the cream du la cream had their residences. Edie said with his daring smile perhaps I will join the FBI as their errand boy to buy cigarettes for them and escort their mistresses and all three young men laughed over their own jokes. Added in gaiety tone my old man wanted me to proceed and study Law, then have my master's degree in England, he said I have still time to deal with my father's dream. Leo and Joey whistled Wow! A Lawyer in stiff Armani suit and a tie from Winston UK. "What an ambition" and the two asked Eduardo are you interested to face disgusted clients, hysterical abandoned wives, wealthy murderers, rapists and embezzler or child abusers all your life?

He said my parents had worked for their money and they wanted to spend it for us children, in fact my older only sister Christina is now in England doing her master's in psychology. Joey said Oh! My God a scary family of Academic Professionals. Edie said in cheerful tone, my old man did not give me yet his *final decree*. Joey said laughing I would never dare to touch your sister, otherwise I will end up in an island of mentally deranged people. *Eduardo said, crazy who knows what she is really doing in England maybe seducing the British stiff collared men, who used to pronounce (unbelievable as on-believable and today pronounced as to-die) and stiff like mummies.* The three of them laughed loudly that some people from neighboring table looked at them like they were already drunk.

Edie said in real sense both our parents were more ambitious than we are, I think it is normal to all parents. Leo said my parents never told us what we are going to be, they were happy and proud enough that I did finish something so that I could earn and support myself. Most of all for my sister Vera two years older than me, graduated her Medical Technology degree who now work in San Francisco General Hospital Medical Laboratory. In one way or another my parents were proud of us. After a minute of silence, Leo asked Joey are you serious with what you said further studies in America? I am not yet sure what I wanted to do with my Criminology knowledge. The waiter came again to take their order for the main dish, Joey's favorite pork chop with salad and rice, Eduard's grilled chicken with chili sauce and Leo's specialty grilled beef steak well-done with steamed rice and coleslaw salad. They devoured their dinner and relish their fruit desert pleasurably to have energy for the delights what Joey and Eduard had in mind in the later hour. Joey said tonight is my treat and settled their bill of their dinner as celebration of their get together. Leo and Eduardo shrugged and said, well, let us paint the town red, hit the mark or the headlines.

After their dinner, the three young horny male species aware of their handsome features that women glanced at them twice, decided to have a drink in a prestigious Hotel bar in Dewey Boulevard. Eduardo said our drinks is my treat, Leo said, and I was the one who invited you funny fellows then you are paying for it? Joey and Eduardo in unison said, yes because if we landed in Police hands you must save us Amigo. Again laughter, they were like kids in their school days. They piled in Joey's BMW sport car and drove in direction to Dewey, after few minutes slowed to a lumbering stopped in front of Bay View Hotel known as short time fountain-paradise. They entered the hotel bar and Leo completely disoriented in the semi lighted bar murmured, I feel you guys are frequent visitor at such amenities. He saw the beautiful young Trollope's hanged around waiting for young men who hungered for quickies and quick money. Joey signaled to Leo three hundred pesos an hour.

Wow! This amount in late seventies were equivalent to one hundred dollars. The braless young girls had attractive faces and ravishing body like hell that pass for fashion models sited in every dark corner. Their faces had rarely trace of make-up, pointed nose, with each frequent smile their lips spread wonderfully and folded their cheeks into neat transient, hollow dimples. Joey and Eduardo knew that Leo is a straightforward bloke. Joey held Leo's arm murmured do not be spoilsport buddy, life is too short. We are here to enjoy and make the best of it. Leo nodded and thought Joey Vallejo must have been in such venture before since he acted like a businessman dealing a simple transaction with the girls. While Joey busy talking to his selected three beauties far from hearing distance of his two buddies whispering each other, Leo took a side glance to the beauties; he wondered why these young girls sell their bodies when they can absolutely work as fashion models or at an expensive escort service instead of hanging around in a hotel bar.

Edie whispered they might be beautiful but empty headed, daft like chickens, but good in screwing, so they landed in this oldest profession use their body to earn easy money. *Leo asked him when and how for God's sake you knew this is the oldest profession?* Eduardo laughed provocatively, did you ever read the Holy Bible? Leo said never seen any. Sipping his beer whispered again to Leo's ears, prostitution existed ever since Maria Magdalena, the woman known to be a prostitute who kneeled at the foot of the crucified Jesus Christ begging his forgiveness of her sins. Leo laughed and said, do not tell me that you have read the Bible, Edie replied playing the tip of her glass beer not really, but this part of the Bible is famous. The two men at the Hotel bar glancing to the young girls at the shadowy corner of the bar while waiting for Joey transacting business which girls he takes and two for his buddies to go upstairs, they were discussing about the Holy Bible at the wrong place in the wrong time.

Alcohol played a little role in their brains just about time to deal with their sexual urges. After half an hour Joey was able to choose a girl for each of them and before they went upstairs to separate rooms. He instructed to enjoy for two hours, what is six hundred pesos plus tip for the sons of fortune, Eduardo whispered to Leo if you do not have enough, just give me a sign. Leo was glad to have enough money with him to spend with a beauty. As soon as they entered the room the timeline is on. His partner Janette, a native from Davao south of Mindanao where the Spaniards kept at bay for many years. A nineteen-year-old still studying as a nurse in Manila had to earn to finance her studies. She had a face that could pass on cinema screen, a ravishing figure who could pass for the catwalk. She was not only seductive but able to arouse Leo and rode him like a real Spanish horse rider.

Joey's an experienced sex lover, his partner's name Charlotte, a beauty like Marilyn Monroe, blended her black hair a whiff of blond highlighter, came from Bacolod, part of Visayan Islands. An eighteen-year-old know nothing girl, perhaps had never seen a school room, shallow brain like a fish without scale, parents unknown but she can do the right thing how to suck Joey's aroused Dingus.

Eduard's partner name Sally, an eighteen-year-old high school graduate came from Cebu, the queen city of the south, the second capital province of the Philippines. Sally wanted to save money and planned to go abroad, probably as a slut. She was a professional tiger who liked doggie style, worked up having Eduard in various position that he released again and again, sucked his brain that he never forgets in his life. The girls had the control and see to it that they rendered their service only for the exact hours what was arranged and agreed or else the guys had to pay more when they wanted more. The three young men were even generous to give each of the girls a hundred pesos tip.

They celebrated the day, enjoyed and sexually sated until dawn, as if it were the last day of their life. It was all Joey Vallejo's marvelous idea that Leo and Eduard must thank him. Afterwards the three young men piled in Joey's car directly to his spacious apartment in a wealthy part of the city, where they had a nice bed to sleep. Joey's fridge was filled with all kinds of alcohol, so they had a nightcap until morning before they reached their bed at Joey's guest room. When the three men awoke the next day around three o'clock in the afternoon with their hangover, they were awake and need another shot of gin tonic or whiskey with Aspirin to bring back their energy and get sober. Leo and Eduard were the ones hardly hit with their sexual escapade; they approached the limits of their new experience.

After taking a cup of coffee at Joey's very tidy kitchen, Leo thanked his buddies said, guys it was the loveliest and most exciting, unforgettable moment in my whole young life, I never had before. He hugged his two friends before leaving picked up a cab went home back to sleep. They promised each other to stay in contact, left their telephone numbers to meet again to update their achievement in life. They agreed that they would repeat the same get together in the future and make the best time of their life while they are still young and robust. Long after that night with his friends Leo had wet dreams remembered how he was manipulated by a prostitute; it was an intoxicating experience. He just loves those moments with his buddies. Joey gave Eduardo a lift since he lives at the city outskirts.

Leo tried to catch a sleep, he felt the city that never sleeps had fallen into a fitful doze, though never perfectly quiet, at this time in the morning sounds were muffled, less urgent, almost still. He was wide awake as he had been most of the night lying in bed, paralyzed by the thought of being always alone. Finally, he went to the window and watched the disappearing cloud that signal rain and typhoon is coming. It was like going to be one of those days when it felt as if a nuclear bomb had been detonated in the night and the sun would never shine again.

A year had slipped by unnoticed, Leo working day and night, observed his Police colleagues how they eluded women like hungry hounds. He never had a girl since that night with his buddies. He summoned up his life resentment, his sense of cosmic injustice, and his awkwardness of not knowing how to capture a woman or flirt, his inner hatred of his colleagues that they can just snap a finger and women came running was unfair. He started to have valuable contempt for women. It was his first time when he was with his buddies and end up with a young beautiful girl for three hundred pesos an hour. However, in a wink of an eye this feeling changed when he happened to meet Eva Mendoza an old-time acquaintance.

Meanwhile Leo's parents Aldo and Luisa, back in the Basilan Island was proud to hear that their only son found his way, finished his Criminology studies and found a job. His parents gave him certain amount as a starter for his apartment rental which he found just in a walking distance near the building where he works. He thanked his parents for their kind-hearted generosity, their endless love and care. Leo wanted to show his parents that he was worth the money they financed for him out of their hard work since he and his sister went to school. He wanted that his parents will be proud of him of what he achieved, especially his mother Luisa who was always showing off to the people in the Inland, how successfully her children acquired their degree.

CHAPTER TWO

"Leonardo Valdemar's Coincidental Encounter"

February and March were months that often rained in the Philippines. Leo had been working for three months, he was happy with his job and his little apartment. He had the feeling of fulfillment to have found a good job and earn his money for the first time in his life. While walking on his way home after work the rain rolled over his nice uniform, he noticed a woman walking at the sidewalk towards the school Library to the next building few meters from his apartment. Incidentally, he was surprised to recognize the girl or the woman to have known her in his student days, she was walking not aware of her surroundings seemed to be in hurry to reach her destination. Leo run after her catches up and called Eva Mendoza, is that you? It is nice to see you again. She turned around and was scared why a man in Police uniform tries to call her. She had done no punishable sins in her life. Leo said have you forgotten me Leonardo Valdemar, you used to call me Leoni or Leo. I used to do research in the library where you worked before, do you still remember me? Eva stopped entranced after a minute she looked at Leo's face and said is it really you the one used to sit in the library staring on the air? Yes, now I remember you, a Criminology student and I think we went once for a coffee break at the opposite coffee shop The Moonlight. Leo grinning said, exactly right indeed.

Leo noticed that she was so ashamed talking to a Police Officer in uniform on the street. He said I live in the next corner, the apartment on the left. At last, I graduated my Bachelor of Criminology and worked now as a Deputy Dispatcher at the Police force. Eva said I work at the next building in the Public-School Library as a Librarian. Leo asked when you usually finish with your duty. Eva amused said at about five thirty in the afternoon. With a romantic tone Leo invited her for a drink after her work. Do you have time to reminisce the lost years? Leo enthusiastic said, Eva in truly sense we are old friends, we just lost track for few years, I did not know where you were, and I disappeared after my graduation to be with my parents in Basilan. I would like to invite you just a small dinner in the Bistro after your duty. I change my outfit and come back to pick you up, do you agree? Leo waited for a moment and Eva wondering for a second said Okay for old time's sake I will go with you. Leo's heart gave a lift, he could have respected if Eva had said No, to his invitation, he would respect her indecision of a gentle timid girl he used to know but still acting like (a virgin he thought) unable to decide. Leo even loves the vagueness which torments him, the fuzzy shadowy helpless non-logical uncertainty and lack of definition which he somehow associated with the girl whom he would perhaps one day love or marry. That very evening during their simple dinner at the Bistro, Leo invited Eva for a picnic at the Lunette Park in the following weekend specifically on Saturday that happened to be his off duty.